



Maximizing Student Potential



Investing in the Lives of Students to Help Influence the Future

Jamy Bechler

*Author of *The Leadership Playbook**

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MAXIMIZING STUDENT POTENTIAL

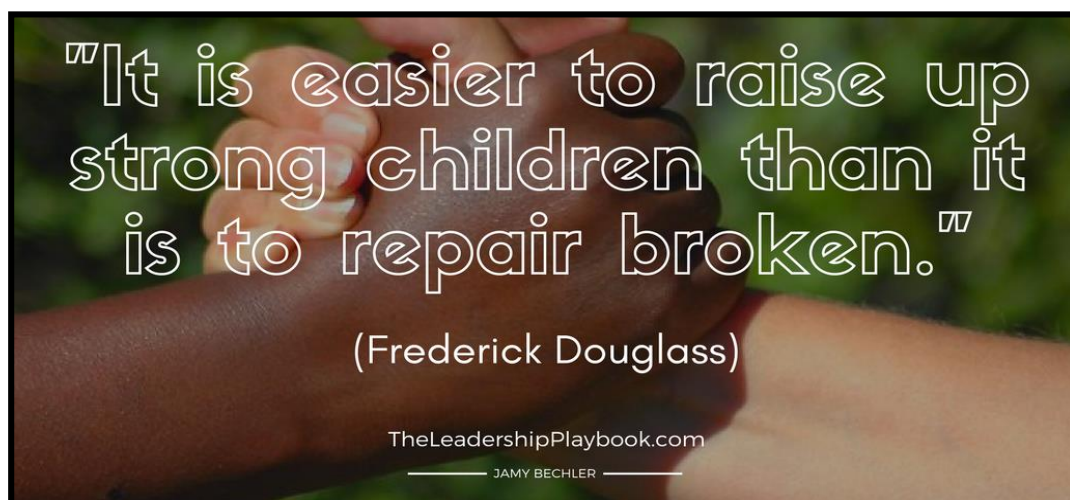
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Written by Jamy Bechler. Edited by Tristen Gonzalez & Megan Welch.

The information contained in this eBook is designed to help you better motivate and inspire the students that you interact with. Some ideas will be new and other ideas will be reminders of what you already know. Please feel free to pass on this eBook or use the information in whatever way will benefit students. Jamy works with school districts and teams across the country to help them maximize potential and increase opportunities for success. You can contact Jamy at Jamy@coachbechler.com

Regardless of what role you play in the educational process – administrator, coach, teacher – you have a great responsibility, but also an amazing opportunity.

When you invest in the lives of your students and help develop them, you are also helping to shape and influence the future.



As an educator, you know that it is not always easy but it is definitely worth it. You have been trained and you have experience. Most people reading this eBook know the how-to when it comes to teaching the content and material required. You know the X's and O's so to speak. However, just like coaches teaching their players, sometimes knowledge is just a beginning.

In order to truly reach and motivate your students to be their best you will need more than just knowledge. In order to transfer what is in your head to your student's heads and then get them to apply it, will sometimes require your students to be inspired in your classroom.

This eBook lays out some practical tips and ideas that can get your mind percolating and help you best reach your students. You might see something that get your creative juices flowing and you see a way that you can implement it with the students that you interact with. Though it is true that you can't do everything, you can do something. You might not be able to implement every new idea that you have, but you can always start today to do something better.

WARNING:

The following thoughts are detrimental to the educational process and the motivation, learning, and growth of students.


- "That won't work here"
- "You don't know my kids"
- "You don't know my situation"
- "That's not the way we do things"
- "I just don't have the time to do this"
- "We've never done it that way before"
- "Even if I did this it wouldn't matter anyway"
- "I'll start doing something like this next year."

*"The best time to plant a tree is twenty years ago.
The second best time is now."*

I first knew that I wanted to coach in 7th grade when my English teacher gave me a book by the legendary UCLA basketball coach John Wooden. It was entitled “They Call Me Coach”. Even though I was young, I loved that John Wooden cared about his players regardless of their status or skill level. That appealed to me because I wanted a coach that cared about me whether I was playing well or not.

The great Evangelist Billy Graham once said that “A Coach will impact more young people in one year than most people will do in a lifetime.” There is no doubt, that the same could be said for a teacher. No matter what your role in the educational process, your interaction and involvement with young people can be impactful and life-changing.

When people ask you what you do, you might answer “I’m a coach”, or “I’m a teacher”, or “I’m an administrator”, or “I’m a custodian”. But what you really do is that you provide direction, guidance, and encouragement in order to help take a young person from where they are to where they want (and more importantly, need) to be. You help people reach their potential and maximize their success.



The story is told of a man who comes across some bricklayers and asks them what they are doing. The first responded, “I am laying bricks.” The second said, “I am making \$17.50 an hour.” The third says, “I am a building a wall”, But the fourth one said “I’m building the most beautiful cathedral in town. Years from now people will be able to come here and worship.”

What about you? What would you say at any point during your day working with students? What would they say that you are doing? What are you ultimately trying to accomplish? Why did you choose to be an educator? For most, that reason revolves around the theme of wanting to make a difference. They want to make a difference in both individual lives and in their community. A teacher might have had a positive impact on you and in turn, you want to return the favor or give back.

Simon Sinek is famous for asking us to start with the why. Why do you do what you do?

When you are teaching your material, the how is great. You need to know how you will teach. You need to know how you will prepare the lesson plans. But if you don’t remember your why. If you don’t remember why it is that you do what you do, then the how won’t matter – especially when you start to get overloaded or stressed out.

As a coach, I really wasn’t there to teach them the game of basketball or the game of volleyball or the game of football. I was there to develop kids using the tool of basketball, volleyball or football. Certainly there content that you are teaching in your classroom is needed in life and there is often practical use for the knowledge that you are providing. However, you can also look at your material as a reason that you get to interact with them in the first place. You can’t have a positive impact on someone that you are not interacting with.

“From the moment students enter a school, the most important factor in their success is not the color of their skin or the income of their parents. It’s the person standing at the front of the classroom.” (President Barack Obama)

Adding Value To Others

Your students have wants, desires, and needs. They want to feel significant, successful, or safe. They will tend to listen to whomever can provide this. How will you add value to their lives?

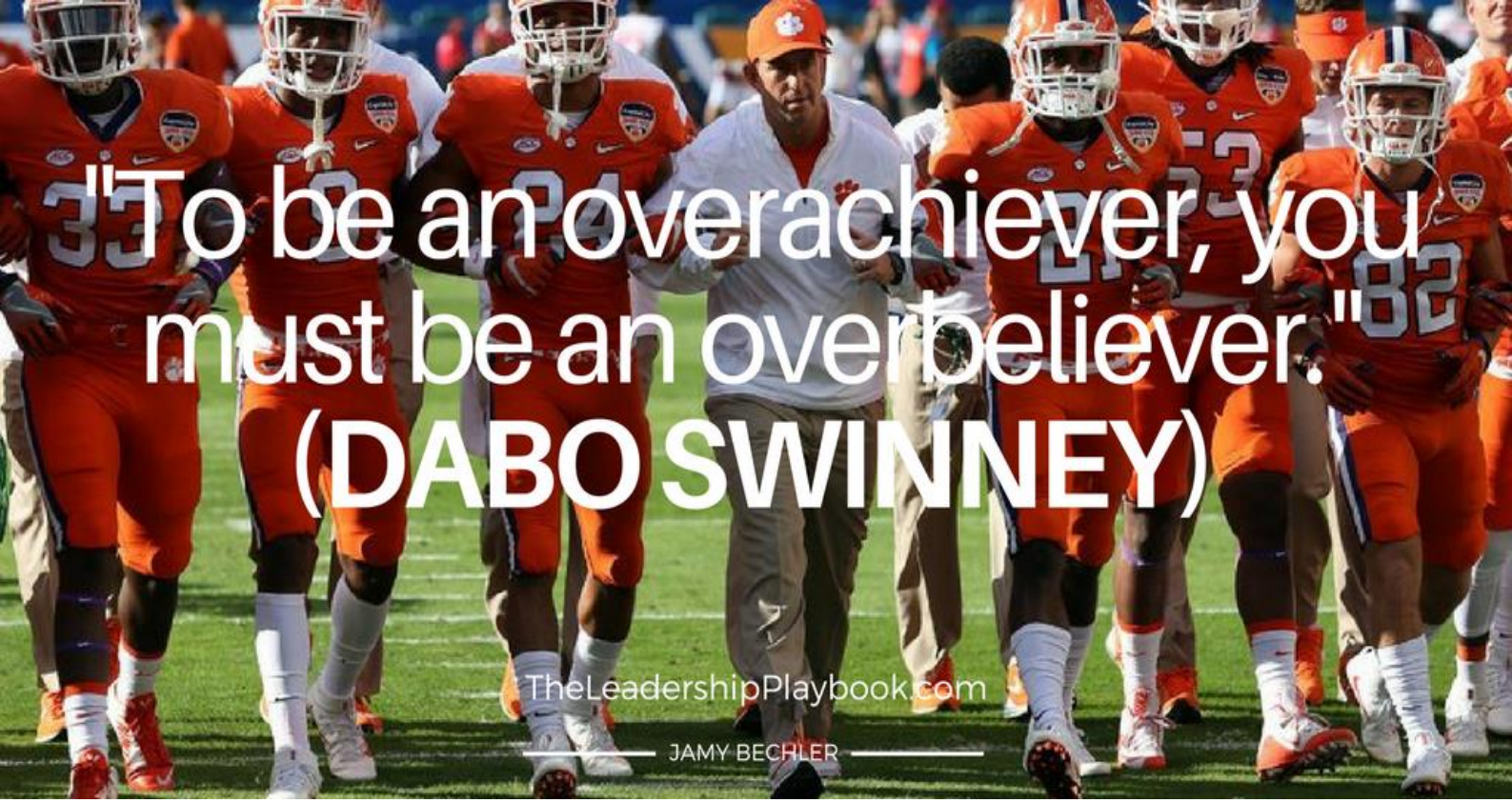
National Soccer Team coaches Tony Diccio and Colleen Hacker wrote a book years ago entitled “Catch Them Being Good”. Even though I was a basketball coach, I read it and it changed the way I coached. I started finding reasons to empower, encourage and lift up my players. I wanted them to believe that they could reach their untapped potential.

When I was in 7th grade, I had a friend named Bill. We would go over to each other’s house and play GI Joe or football in the backyard. We were in a class together. We had an assignment that we were to do together. Bill and I put a lot of work into that assignment. We thought we had something good. When the grades were given, I got an “A” and Bill got an “F”. I will always remember the teacher telling us “Bill, there is no way that you did work on this because you rarely come to school, fail most of your classes and are always in trouble and I know that Jamy is a really good student. He had to have done all of the work on this.” A little over 5 years later, after spiraling out of control with poor choices and drug abuse, Bill killed two people in cold blood.

I have no way of knowing what would have happened if he had gotten an “A” like he deserved but I do know for sure that at least one time in Bill’s life, a teacher had an opportunity to catch Bill doing good instead of taking the easy way out and labeling him. You never know when you might have a chance to impact someone’s life in a monumental way. If you forget why you are in education or get calloused then you may miss out on some of these opportunities.

Let’s face it, though. Rarely will be faced with life or death situations (though we may have gang members or kids making poor choices with drugs). But if we don’t add value and encourage our students to reach their potential then who will?





Very few people gave the Clemson Tigers a chance in the 2017 National Championship when they were facing the seemingly unbeatable Alabama Crimson Tide led by Nick Saban. However, Clemson pulled off the upset in the National Championship game. Clemson’s coach Dabo Swinney was described as an overachiever but he refuted that label. He said, “I am not an overachiever, I am an overbeliever”

Research from Harvard University supports the ideas that the emotions that you feel are contagious and can affect the people around you. Your students are just as likely to get your bad mood as they are to catch your cold. Likewise, they can also catch your good mood. When you walk into your classroom, the break room, or see others in the cafeteria, are you a germ or a big dose of Vitamin C?

Apple’s founder Steve Jobs was famous for inspiring his team to do more, create more and become more than they ever thought possible. His employees called this his reality distortion field. He was able to distort their reality from pessimistic (some would say realism) to optimism. He didn’t want to accept the norm. Just like Dabo Swinney, he believe in the ability of his people to go higher and accomplish more.

You don’t have to invent the iPhone or have an ivy league education or be a championship coach to add value to others. All you need to do is intentionally seek out ways to help the people around you do more, create more and become more than they ever thought possible.

“Success is when I add value to myself. Significance is when I add value to others. Leaders become great, not because of their power, but because of their ability to empower others.”

(John C. Maxwell)

Managing Your Responsibilities

It doesn't matter the profession, it seems that we are busier than we've ever been. Especially with our smart phone, it seems that we can never truly escape our work responsibilities. When we have a better handle on managing our responsibilities, we are more effective in our roles.

Ask – Don't be a lone ranger. You are not an island unto yourself. If you don't know something or have a question, then ask! This is one of my greatest weaknesses. I don't like admitting that I might not have all of the answers. Too often I add more work and stress to my already full plate because I try to reinvent the wheel or learn it on my own instead of asking for help. This would cut down considerably the time and mental energy that I expend.

"Being able to say no and make sure school breaks during the year are exactly that: breaks! It's not always a popular decision when the band won't be at this event or that event but it's important for the students to have breaks and be normal students. Same for me as a band director. I'm a dad and a husband and I need the time to make sure that I'm keeping the most important relationships in my life well maintained!"

JOSH HUFF, Marion H.S. ISSMA All-Music Award recipient

Only grade the minimum amount of student work – This doesn't make you a bad teacher because you simply want to manage your time better. Try having a schedule in which you grade your student's work. For example, each student has a designated day in which they turn in their notebooks for the week. This will reduce your grading each day and spread it out over the course of the week. If you want to manage time better in the classroom, assign an in-class assignment and have individual grading conferences with each student. They bring up their work to you, you read through it together, and then you share immediate feedback.

Clarify objectives and priorities – This applies both professionally and personally. We can get caught up in majoring in the minor. What are we trying to achieve this week? This day? This class period? Lots of things might be important but they might not be urgent. A great example of this is the day before you go on vacation or when you will be having a substitute come in. You narrow your focus to what is most important. This should be done both at work and at home. You might think the work you do at home is important, but at the end of the day spending time with your spouse or kids will pay more dividends than an additional phone call or email. Budget your time. Figure out how you want to spend your time.

TIME MANAGEMENT & PRODUCTIVITY RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS

- www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2013/oct/12/time-management-worklife-balance-teachers
- <https://www.pinterest.com/explore/time-management-activities/>
- <https://www.teachthought.com/the-future-of-learning/25-teaching-tools-to-organize-innovate-manage-your-classroom>



“The book “Perfect Day Formula” has been very helpful. I start my workday at 5 am and do my hardest tasks first thing in the morning. Each day I set goals, a plan to reach those goals, and then I execute the plan. When my work time is over, I do my best to disconnect, so that I can reconnect with myself and my family.”

**LUKE WILCOX, East Kentwood H.S., 2017
Michigan Teacher of the Year**

Exercise. Find a hobby. Unplug. – It is proven that people who exercise live happier, healthier, and longer lives. It’s important to have an outlet to unplug from all the work responsibilities you are faced with every day. Simply going on a walk before you head to work will benefit your mood all day. You will not only be happier, but you will be ready to challenge any task at hand. We should manage our responsibilities in a way that allow for us to have this in our schedule. Plan a walk or run with your significant other every night. Get together for a yoga or exercise class twice a week. Take your kids to the gym with you. The options are endless!

Don’t sweat about the small stuff – Speaking from experience, its hard to not be a perfectionist. I want every line straight, I want every handout to be identical, I want all my work that the students receive to be PERFECT. Why though? The students are going to learn whether my lines are perfectly straight or not. Focus on the education itself rather than the little things. Manage your responsibilities on spending your time wisely. For example, you could use pre-made sticker borders instead of sweating over the perfectionist inside of you.

Plan for interruptions – We know every day isn’t going to go exactly how we plan it. There’s always something that will come up to mess up your whole schedule. Try to manage your responsibilities in a way that allows time for any interruption that may occur in the day. If we get so fixated on completing the tasks at hand, one interruption may break your entire focus which will make you spend even more time trying to re-engage in what you were doing.

Learn to say “no”, nicely – The word “no” has such a negative connotation, yet sometimes its necessary. Its okay to not be busy 24/7 and accept extra work that will only keep you up late and rising early. Manage your responsibilities by only taking on tasks that you can complete within your desired time frame. Know how much time you’re willing to put in outside of the classroom because ultimately that takes away from your family. It is okay to say “no” sometimes to extra responsibilities.

Maintain a healthy mentality and perspective – One of the best ways to manage your responsibilities is to live in the present, as well as control the controllables. It does you no good stressing about the future. Don’t worry about the what ifs, but rather control the controllables. Control what you know you can and you have to let the rest be. You can’t stress about things that are out of your control. It’s on you to decide how you want to be seen as a teacher and how you want to live your life. Think about all the choices that surround each situation or task that comes at you. That might ease your mind or settle your anxiety about not managing your responsibilities.

“I have learned that it is okay to say no to non-obligations. I work efficiently during my planning periods and on work days, but I do so not just because I want to get my work done in a timely manner but also to ensure that I have time to allot to my own personal interests. I make family time a priority so that my husband and children have quality time with me, and I make gym time a priority so that I can have quality time to invest in my health (both physical and mental) and in my personal goals. I feel far less stress because I expend my anxious energy in a much more positive outlet and can really find inspiration and a resurgence of creativity in that way.”

**ERIN FOX, Gaffney H.S., 2018
South Carolina Teacher of the
Year**

Working with Challenging Students

Some of the most satisfying stories a teacher or coach will share are those that involve a challenging student overcoming some kind of obstacle to grow, develop, or improve. In many instances, you might be the only positive influence in a kid's life.

Give students more responsibility – Challenge them! Allow them to feel useful by keeping them busy with mild responsibilities and some simple classroom tasks. If you give a more difficult student, more responsibility it can calm their behavior for a few moments. Since it's not going to change their behavior you are going to have to allow some failure. Give some tasks that make them say to themselves, "I can't believe my teacher gave me this task to do". This challenges them to complete something that is going to take some hard work or critical thinking, then you and the student are able to see what they are actually capable of.

"I try to approach them with a learning style and curriculum that coincide with their personal preferences. I try to find ways to engage them in the learning objectives that build upon interests they already have. I also try to use alternate assessments that encourage their best talents and abilities so that they can showcase other strengths and intelligences."

ERIN FOX, Gaffney H.S., 2018 South Carolina Teacher of the Year

Talk to them in private if possible – Provide that 1-on-1 discussion with your student. Allow them to feel that your entire attention is on them. I think this is also important to get to the root of the problem; to understand why the student is acting out and being difficult. This saves them from embarrassment in front of all the other students.

"What should we be doing"? – Sometimes when we initially have to deal with someone that is challenging we just want them to do exactly what we say. However, I believe one of the best ways to handle this situation is to have the student think for themselves. Yes, you already told them what they should be doing, but try asking them to tell you what THEY think they should be doing. Why what they are doing is not optimal. This engages their mind and gets them to think about what the right thing to do is.

Disapprove of behavior, not the student – The line between these two can sometimes be challenging to see. A child who feels that they are disapproved of, will continuously act out. However, if you are careful to show that you are disapproving of their behavior and not them, it will put you on a path towards a better behavior and more disciplined student. Criticism leads to more defiance. I believe that patience and respectful approaches to their disapproving behavior will help the child see that you don't hate them or you're not picking on them, but rather you want to help them and you want to make them see what they are doing wrong.

"Everybody is a genius but if we judge a fish by its' ability to climb a tree, it will live its' whole life believing that it is stupid." (Albert Einstein)



Don't lose your cool – As I mentioned earlier, you should take it personally (in a good way). You must keep your cool. You can't allow them to get under your skin or lose your emotional control. That will raise the tension in your classroom and with the other students. If someone is being difficult, take a deep breath before they get to you too much. Keep the peace in your classroom.

Notice the positives – Make sure you are dealing with the bad behavior, but also, you have to give them praise for their accomplishments. Behavioral issues are rooted in deeper problems, maybe its because they are seeking more attention. Instead of giving them attention when they are bad, give them attention for doing something positive. For being good, for making a good choice, for exceling on a homework assignment, for participating in class, etc. It is also important to not give false praise.

Build trust – Difficult students are underappreciated. Build a trusting relationship with them. Its not going to happen overnight, but show them that you care. It might be an instance where they don't have a lot of self-worth and are easily discouraged. Once you build trust through constantly challenging them with more or continuing to grow a relationship, this will reveal to them that you actually care about them. They will probably discover new skills or new things they love.

Choices – When you need to discipline the student and you are talking with them, give them choices. It is more effective than just making demands at them. instead of saying you need to do this, trying talking through options and make the student decide what they would rather do. I like to call this tough love. Even though you are disciplining them, it can show them that you care how they feel because they get to pick the best option to them.

Seek assistance – You have a great source of help with the colleagues around you. Talk to them to see if anyone has dealt with this student or seen their issues. Do this, not to complain but to gain assistance. See if any other teacher has noticed any behavior standing out. If they have, it can probably help you when trying to help the student. You can learn what works with them and what doesn't. If you aren't the right person to help this student with their behavior, maybe you can get them in touch with someone who can. Don't be afraid to see

“Students are disruptive for a reason. The key is to find out why the student is being disruptive and to target the source. However, it is imperative that a connection is made with the student. Authenticity, trust and compassion are essential.”

CHRIS GLEASON, Patrick Marsh Middle School, 2017 Wisconsin Teacher of the Year.

Be stubborn about your goals but flexible about your methods.

“Find something they are passionate about and let them work on that. Make the subject relevant to them. Create some real-world projects.”

KATHY WORLEY, West Hills H.S., 2017 California Teacher of the Year Finalist

Communicating More Effectively

Communicating is so much more than lecturing, sending an email, or posting something on social media. True communication takes place when your message is accepted, perceived, and acted upon in the intended manner. Miscommunication can sabotage progress.

Maintain composure – Do not get carried away in a situation and say something that is not directly helpful in resolving it. Choose to avoid unnecessary comments about no one else in the classroom misbehaving or about how you will not put up with the behavior everyone else does. This kind of remark can cause other students to tease this child and embarrass them. This will not resolve the first issue, but possibly create more issues in the classroom.

Use positive reminders – Remind students of what you would like them to be doing instead of what they should not be doing. An example of this would be to say “work on your assignment” rather than “stop talking to your classmate.” Typically, students are more receptive to acting on what you would like them to be doing rather than avoiding what they should not be doing. As a coach, I would say things like “be strong with the ball”, instead of “don’t turn the ball over.”

Redirect instead of correct – Rather than scolding a student by telling them to stop what they are doing directly, try redirecting a student to focus on what you are teaching or complete their work. An example would be to tell a student to start on his assignment instead of saying “stop getting distracted.” This can be accomplished verbally or non-verbally. An example of redirecting non-verbally would be to tap a student’s assignment to remind them to get back to work.

Have an open forum – Allow the students to give their input in a safe way. Having a meeting every couple weeks to discuss what you believe the class is doing well and where it can grow is helpful to the students. Let the students voice their questions, concerns, and suggestions. The students will appreciate their voices being heard and the classroom will be able to grow to its full potential.



“Two monologues do not make a dialogue”
(Jeff Daly)

Listen through Observation - Dr. Albert Mehrabian, author of “Silent Messages”, conducted several studies on nonverbal communication. He found that 7% of any message is conveyed through words, 38% through certain vocal elements, and 55% through nonverbal elements (facial expressions, gestures, posture, etc). Subtracting the 7% for actual vocal content leaves one with a 93% statistic of communication without words. This makes it very important to observe situational and contextual cues. We must be able to read a person’s mood, attitude and the overall environment of the communication. If we are not observing fully what is going on, both with the words, ideas and non-verbals being used then we may not be able to effectively communicate our message, nor understand the other person’s message. Finally, the business management expert, Peter Drucker said, “The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn’t said.”



Dynamic communication – Communication is more than one-sided. It is not what you teach or say, it is what the student learns or takes away from what you say. It should be their job to learn, but that is not the case in our current culture. Students who are bored end up being students who do not learn. Although it is not a teacher job to entertain a classroom, dynamically communicating increases interaction and will keep the students engaged.

Actively listen – Really listen. Don't just hear words. Your students should know that you are listening. Also, even though you are in charge you can always learn. You might be the expert on the material, but you may not be the expert on what makes each student tick. Learn to listen and listen to learn. Every student is different, so the same techniques will not apply to each individual. It is crucial that a teacher would take the time to notice and really listen to a student to understand their needs and how to teach them best. Dr. Covey in his book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* said, "Most people listen with the intent to reply rather than the intent to understand."

Repeat again – Be patient and explain your material over and over again, making sure all students understand what you are talking about. You know how difficult it will be for them to learn further, if they do not get the basis. Even if you explain the material in a way that anyone would get, remember that not everyone will get it – for a variety of reasons. Find ways to simplify your already simplified explanations. Different learning styles, lack of focus, problems at home, slower comprehension all make it difficult for your students to learn. Be sensitive to this.

Verbally encourage good behavior – When the class is following the rules verbally express how you are pleased. This reinforces that this is good behavior and will increase this behavior in the future. An example of this would be to say "You behaved well today and learned a lot, I am proud of you guys!" This can also be expressed non-verbally with a thumbs up or a nod. It is so important to acknowledge students for doing the right thing, because this encourages this behavior and reinforces that it will lead to good things. This promotes the students having good behavior in future scenarios.

Connecting With Students

Connecting is all about others. Before you can add value to others, you must first learn to value others. Connecting goes beyond words and only happens intentionally. All positive relationships are built on common interests and values.



Share a smile – Seems like the simplest thing to do, and it kind of is. Sometimes we forget that kids just want to be loved. Sometimes the best part of their day can be the smile you give when they walk into your classroom. Students are willing to be more engaged with a teacher they like. You have a chance to connect with each student every day with a smile. It makes you more approachable and more trustworthy. Smiling is proven to help people feel people. Show those pearly whites to your students and watch your connections flourish!

Say “hi” – Start each class by taking the first few minutes to engage with your students. Say “hi”. Have a casual conversation. Find out about any exciting plans they have for the week(end), what kind of hobbies they like to do outside of the classroom, a recent movie that came out that they all love... A few minutes a day gets the students to feel special because you make them feel that you are interested in their lives. In return, you get to learn more about your students. You can figure out everyone’s favorite things, how big or small their family is, and what their parents are like. Saying “hi” and starting a casual conversation with your students will build trust. When I coached, I would make sure that I talked to 3-4 players each day before practice in a very non-threatening, subtle, and informal manner. This way I was touching base with all of my players during the week. I would mix up the days so that they didn’t catch on that I was always talking to them on the same day each week. I would give some thought to the question, comment, or topic with each player ahead of time.

Attend their activities – There are so many opportunities for you to connect with your students because of all the extra-curricular activities that go on around your school. There are chess tournaments, soccer games, tennis matches, plays, ROTC events, musicals, and so many others. Show an interest in what the kids like to do in their spare time. Make an effort to attend the extra-curricular activities that your students are in. this way, you can connect with them AND their families. If the students have family at the events that you have conversations with, it can really show that you are invested in their child. Maybe by showing up to a student’s extra-curricular activity might show that they matter because sometimes they don’t even have family that support them. This is such a simple and fun way to show your students that they mean something and that they have value.

“People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.” (John C. Maxwell)



"I have found that bringing true energy and a positive attitude and mindset into the classroom (and school as a whole) motivates students. Students absolutely have to know that you are present in mind, body, and spirit and are giving 100+% of yourself in order to truly engage in your lessons. The more often you genuinely do that, the more motivated they will be."

ERIN FOX, Gaffney H.S., 2018 South Carolina Teacher of the Year

"The ability to deal with people is as purchasable a commodity as sugar or coffee and I will pay more for that ability than for any other under the sun." (John D. Rockefeller)

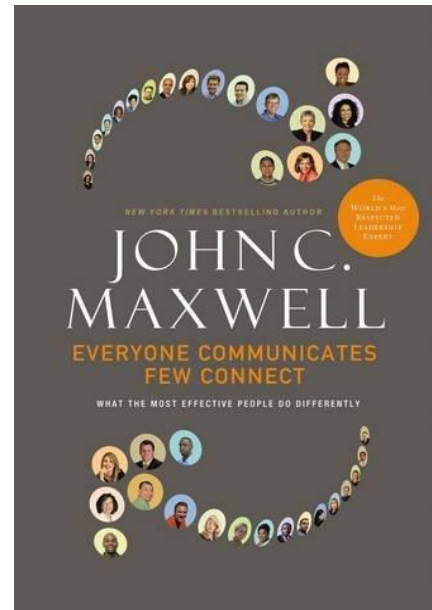
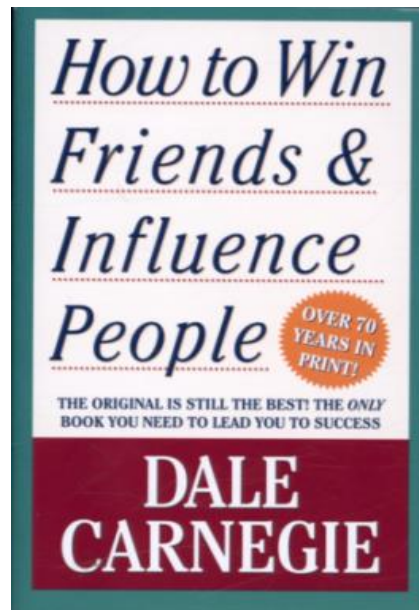
Be available – Set aside specific office hours that your students can come to you with anything. Homework problems, a topic they didn't understand in your lecture, or maybe something that is going on in their life. During this time, you can even allow students to just come and hang out – to relax, draw a picture, or read a book. You might be surprised at how many students are eager to attend this extra time you have for them! By creating time to be available for your students, you can connect and build deeper relationships. Sometimes students just need someone to listen to them or a quiet place to sit. You can easily provide just that.

Lunch break – Let's be honest, it doesn't matter how much kids love school, for some, their favorite "subject" is lunch. This is a time where real conversations happen, lots of laughter occurs, and relationships grow. You can use this time to connect with your students. Give yourself a break and go have lunch with some of them. Maybe once a week you eat with a different kid. Maybe one time in the year you order pizza for your class and encourage them to join.



Have fun – A great way to connect with students is to have fun with them. Try playing a game with them and showing them that you aren't just a teacher who is going to tell them what to do. Create laughs and memories that will make them run home to share with their families. Make fun in the classroom a priority. You can even schedule fun games that have to do with learning. Make a fool out of yourself every once in a while, I bet that will let you connect on a whole other level.

SUGGESTED BOOKS



Notice the little things – If you see a change in the way a student is acting, or you feel like they just aren't being themselves, you should sit down and talk with them. Bring up things you know that they like to do or some of their favorite games and try to connect on that level first. Then you can continue to make sure they know that they can come to you if they need to talk about anything, and make sure they are okay. Notice the little changes in your students. Have that open line of communication with students because maybe they aren't the ones who are struggling but they have a family member or a friend that is really struggling. You could potentially help a bad situation from escalating.

Community involvement – The community is a great way to get connected with your students and their families! Maybe you have a student whose parents own a family restaurant. Take the time one day to go eat there and then talk to your student about the great experience. If you try to invest into your community, even if they aren't your students' parents, parents will recognize you and your efforts. Parents love knowing that their kid's teachers are well-invested into them and take the time to care. Run a 5k in your community. Go visit the museum. Sit at the park. See what you can do to connect with your families on a new level!

Students lead - Have class discussions where you aren't leading it. Start with a topic and let students share any kind of information that they want to. Encourage them to share experiences from their communities or anything else that is happening to them outside of the classroom. Student led discussions give students the opportunity to listen to others, to develop their ideas, and to build narratives. You can also learn a lot about your students by allowing them to do something like this. It's fun for everyone!

"I go fishing up in Maine every summer. Personally, I am very fond of strawberries and cream; but I find that for some strange reason fish prefer worms. So when I go fishing, I don't think about what I want. I think about what they want. I don't bait the hook with strawberries and cream. Rather, I dangle a worm or a grasshopper in front of the fish and say: 'Wouldn't you like to have that?'" (Dale Carnegie)

Collaborating with Others

TEAM – Together Everyone Achieves More. It might be a cliché but it doesn't mean that it is wrong. It takes many people to help impact the future. It takes people in different roles to positively influence a youngster. Working together provides a greater likelihood of success.

“Individually we are one drop but together we are an ocean.”



*“Coming together is the beginning.
Keeping together is progress.
Working together is success.”*
(Henry Ford)

Impact students from all directions

– Understanding that you cannot serve a student or athlete best alone is a hard realization, but once you acknowledge this truth it opens a new door of potential. A team of loving and supporting mentors is the best way to reach, develop, and grow a child. Even if you are the biggest influence in a student's life, you are not the only influence. Use all of the people in a student's life to most effectively reach them.

Keep your perspective in check

– Even if your administration causes you headaches, do not return the favor. The lower-maintenance you can be the more your administration will appreciate it. Although you cannot always see it, they are putting out fires all day.

Have a team mentality – You are not in this alone! A person working alone, no matter how great or experienced that individual is, usually cannot top that of a team effort. Realizing you cannot do everything alone is a humbling thought, however, it will lead to greater success. There is more insight and support around you than you could ever know; you simply have to reach out and tap into it!

Take action – Don't wait for others to make the first move. Sometimes it takes one person to make the first move and others will then react. It is vulnerable to put yourself out there and initiate a collaborative relationship with another, but in order for this path of communication to form someone must be willing to take that risk. The first step is the hardest, but once you gain momentum every step becomes easier.

Appreciate the significance of your role – If you are a coach, for instance, you may be able to do things to motivate student-athletes that others may not be able to do. Do not take your position in a student’s life lightly. As a coach you have been put into a position of incredible influence and can choose to use this influence on a student or to ignore it. By first recognizing the significance of your role, then acting to motivate a student with it, you will be able to impact students more than you could have ever imagined.

Let the students hear new voices – Instead of lecturing everyday, bring in guest speakers or presenters. You would be surprised who is willing and able to help! Utilize local college teachers, administrators, or coaches. Even ask alumni to talk about their experiences. These different voices will keep students engaged and offer insight from different perspectives. Try co-teaching. Ask a coach, administrator, or fellow teacher to come in and be a guest speaker in their area of expertise, whether that be in academics or even interests outside of the classroom. They might do this if they have a rare prep period that is free. In return, you could do something for them. This will add something different to your students.

Encourage- Be an encouraging voice to those around you. Teachers, coaches, and administrators are constantly having to deal with difficult situations and this wears down on a person! Sometimes an encouraging word or two is enough to get a colleague through a hard day or enough to make someone feel appreciated who in that moment feels as if no one notices all of the hard work they are doing.



“I can do things you cannot. You can do things I cannot. Together we can do great things.” (Mother Teresa)



“I am in constant contact with parents and coaches, as well as administrators. Parents are often a part of my Remind groups as well as Google Classroom. I also send cards home to parents throughout the school year and by the end of the year, each student has a positive note sent home to them.”

MEGAN LARGE, South Webster H.S., Ohio District 17 Teacher of the Year



“If the students are involved in sports, I have often found coaches to be a huge leverage point.”

LUKE WILCOX, East Kentwood H.S., 2017 Michigan Teacher of the Year



“For the past eight years we have commissioned a professional composer to collaborate with our students in the creation of a new piece of music. The students help to generate the ideas and then work with the composer as the creative process unfolds. The culminating event is the world premiere of the new work with the composer in attendance.”

CHRIS GLEASON, Patrick Marsh Middle School, 2017 Wisconsin Teacher of the Year

Practical Tips & Creative Classrooms

What follows are a few ideas that might get you thinking outside the box or differently than you currently are. You might not do something that is mentioned but it might lead to another idea. The key is to be always thinking how you can better help your students learn.

Break the barrier - Move away from the front of the classroom. Walk round and engage with the students meeting them close to where they are instead of staying far away in front of the room. Even rearranging desks in a fashion that allows everyone to be close to instruction and allows you to teach in the center where everyone can see you is an option.

Use a variety of teaching methods - Motivate students by mixing it up. Teaching in a variety of ways ensures that all types of learners are able to grasp the material. This can be done in an orderly fashion in which students already know what to expect in the classroom, but know that it will be dynamic. Deliver the information in many different ways. You can use books, videos, music, presentations, and speeches. Reinforce the lesson with several different methods of teaching. Give them the information visually, audibly, and tangibly to reinforce the lesson.

Use random selection - Random selection can be used to call on students for answers, asking students to solve a problem, and saying their name to keep their attention. If at any moment a student could be asked to do something, this will keep them on their toes and ensure they are paying attention and monitoring their own comprehension. Examples of this technique would be pulling popsicle sticks with student's names, calling on a student to summarize the topic, or asking students to write a paragraph on what they learned.

Introduce an objective - Before teaching a new topic, it is good to summarize the objective of what the student will gain. This is helpful for a teacher to reiterate the goal in their own mind, but also helpful in the fact that the student will clearly understand what they will learn today. Having clear objectives and plans will ensure that what is most important will be accomplished.



*“Attend their community activities.
In house student tutoring.
Classroom learning contracts. Built
partnerships with parents to create
hands-on wood working projects
students create and use to excite
them about concepts.”*

**MATT LUGINBILL, Cuyahoga
Heights Elementary, 2017 District
10 Ohio Department Teacher of the
Year**

PREPARE & REVIEW FOR TESTS IN A DIFFERENT WAY:

- Put students in teams
- Classroom Olympics
- Nerf Hoops
- Card or Board Games
- Students Create Game
- Scavenger Hunt
- Use QR Codes
- Have Snacks
- Themes/Dress Up Day
- Name Association Game

Connect the lesson – Make the lessons relevant to student’s lives. If the information is connected with their experiences they will remember the lesson. This can be as simple as using their name in a word problem. This can also mean coming up with an example of how this will help them in life. Simply connecting what is being taught with the activities they do day in and day out will not only engage them, but also make them remember the information for a long time to come.

Teach holistically – Teaching holistically is about developing and engaging the whole person. Human beings are multi-dimensional and should be viewed as such in the classroom. Teaching holistically means that although you are teaching a student a certain concept or subject, it can be related to the world and who they are. Isolating a subject or concept can be easier to teach and, however, for student comprehension, they might not fully grasp it or apply it to who they are.

Create opportunities for student collaboration – Set up lessons so that students can work together. Although this may take a greater amount of time and not all students will be initially positive about this, most students are grateful to do projects together and solve problems with their peers. In the classroom social interactions can promote the achievement of common goals. The biggest aspect for teachers to win in group work is creating groups that will ensure one student is not stuck doing all of the work.

Reward good behavior in the classroom – Create incentives for good work and following the rules. Privileges such as prizes or fun activities can be earned to excite students. Some examples of this would be time to talk with peers, game time, watching videos, reading, or small prizes. Remind the classroom what can be earned if they behave well or focus on their studies. Adding privileges rather than taking them away is more helpful in reinforcing good behavior, because it does not focus on the bad behavior.

Reward good behavior outside of the classroom – Extra credit or an alternative assignment can be offered for service projects, culturing experiences, and other activities outside of school. Rewarding students for these experiences encourages engagement outside of the classroom. There are many creative angles to take this, but the key is to reward students who are fully engaged in their education and community.

“I believe that any practice that allows students to experience success encourages learning. My students have a set routine and are allowed to redo any assignment/celebration of knowledge (test) for a higher grade. All students know that success is not only possible, but probable. Each week students learn a life lesson. I also am a member of our Be the Change team which is student led. In addition, I often help students with volunteer activities and attend extracurricular activities.”

MEGAN LARGE, South Webster H.S., Ohio District 10 Teacher of the Year

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR CREATIVE CLASSROOMS

<http://www.bestcollegesonline.com/blog/37-ways-teachers-should-use-pinterest>

<http://www.bestcollegesonline.com/blog/28-creative-ways-teachers-are-using-twitter>

<https://www.canva.com/learn/19-ideas-to-promote-more-creativity-in-your-classroom>

<https://www.teachthought.com/pedagogy/25-things-successful-teachers-do-differently>

Advice for Younger Teachers

The profession you've chosen is as important as it gets. Very few careers offer the opportunity to make the world better and have an impact on the future. Teaching does this. The following thoughts might be directed at younger teachers, but could also be applied to all teachers.

One step at a time - You can change the world (at least the world around you) but it won't happen today. Be patient. Do the things today to make the world a little bit better tomorrow. Do things tomorrow that make the world a little bit better the next day. Repeat.

Find a mentor – Seek guidance from someone who has more experience than you and is a positive person. You don't want to find a teacher that is going to constantly complain about the struggles of being in this profession or someone who is going to tell you all that you are incapable of in the classroom. Seek guidance from someone who will challenge you to be your best and will help you connect with the students. Have someone that you can go to if a problem arises or if you have a question about how to handle a situation.

Maturity – It's important to remember that you are the one in charge. It's not a dictatorship, but you are the adult and the mature one in all situations. Starting out, you might have high standards with your class, but it's better to have to lower them a little bit than have your classroom be out of control and you have to attempt to tighten the reins. You can prevent things from getting out of control.

Fail forward – You aren't able to win every time. I'm sorry. Sometimes you will lose but the best thing to do in that situation, is to fail forward. This means, you need to learn from your mistakes that you made so that you can continue to move forward. Almost all mistakes you may make as a new teacher can overcome. I'm not saying make a lot of mistakes and be okay with it. I'm encouraging you to push through all mistakes or hardship and learn from them.



“The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires.”
(William A. Ward)



Avoid Gossip – As a new teacher, you’re going to get so excited about all your students and want to talk about them all the time. Both the good and the bad. You have to remember, however, that gossiping is not the right route to take. If you want to praise your student, go ahead and praise them for their great accomplishment. You are a professional so make sure you always act like it. Complaining, joking, or sharing negative stories about your students is not beneficial to anyone.

Pull from your resources – The internet is a great source. So are all your other teachers. Take pictures of bulletin boards or libraries or posters or how classrooms are set up. You can even find special projects that your students would love. When you pull all these resources, you can figure out exactly what you want for your classroom. You will be happy to take all that you have and to make sure it is unique to your personality and the ages of your kids.

Words of Encouragement – Keep a folder of nice letters from parents, uplifting pictures from students, and anything else that might help you when you are having a rough day. Having a folder containing words of encouragement, will help remind you or your WHY and your passion for teaching. Remind yourself that you are making a difference in student’s lives.

Model – It is your job to model the morals and behavior that you wish your students to act within. If you are respectful, they will be more likely to be respectful, as well. You are a very important role model in their lives and that’s why you have to show what is desired of them. Throughout the whole year make sure you are continuing to instill excellent attitudes and behavioral traits. Show them love, kindness, and patience.

Be courageous with different – Be brave enough to try something new if your current plans aren’t working out. Everything you plan isn’t going to go perfectly. Sometimes you will have to adjust your lesson plans or what you want to accomplish in the day for lack of time or resources. Sometimes you might have to try a new teaching style of a subject because your students just aren’t grasping the concept. It’s okay to try something different, it doesn’t mean you fail at being a teacher, it just means that you get to experience something different. It will only make you a better teacher.

“When educating the minds of our youth, we must not forget to educate their hearts, as well.” (Dalai Lama)

Case Study:

East Kentwood HS

Learning from others is one of the best ways to improve and grow. Why re-invent the wheel if you don't have to? When we study someone else, we must remember that they aren't perfect but they can still provide some applicable guidance and insights.



Luke Wilcox, from East Kentwood High School, was the 2017-18 Michigan Teacher of the Year.

In 2012, East Kentwood High School was ranked in the 4th percentile for schools in the state of Michigan. This classified them as a priority school in which they were identified for needing improvement because of low achievement. In 2016, the same high school was ranked in the 49th percentile in the state of Michigan. How was one school able to improve so dramatically in a small amount of time? The answer lies with the dedicated teachers and administration of East Kentwood High School and their commitment to helping their school and ultimately the students in it.

An important fact about East Kentwood High School is that it is the most diverse high school in the state of Michigan. Students from over 60 countries attend the school and 24% of students are considered English-language learners. Throughout the improvement process, East Kentwood did not try to change the environment of their student population, but rather catered to the specific needs and situations of the students and families within the school. They did not want to change the nature of the school, so they found a way to create change and improvement without fighting who they were.

After realizing the school needed to change and grow, the teachers went to the drawing board and adapted their programs. They asked "What can we do to make sure our kids have the opportunity to be as successful as possible?" They came up with 5 necessary improvements that have made the school what it is today.

(1) Hire the best and grow them: This consisted of recruiting the best up and coming teachers from surrounding colleges and creating programs that would accelerate their growth. The Rising Teacher group was created with teachers in their first three years of teaching at Kentwood Public Schools. The group meets on a regular basis as a social support system and for professional development in the beginning years of their teaching career. The topics are dictated by anything the teachers need to discuss or brainstorm about. New teachers are supported from the moment they enter the school.

(2) Shared leadership: This is the concept that every voice is able to be heard. They wanted to empower as many teachers as we can. The staff was right on board trying to fix the problems, brainstorm ideas, and lead their students to success. Everyone was connected to the overall vision.

"Education is the key that unlocks the golden door of freedom. Education is understanding relationships." (George Washington Carver)

Top 5 Strategies for Motivating Students

(www.LukeWilcox.org)

Teachers spend years of hard work and thousands of dollars to become experts in their content areas, with degrees and teaching certification to prove it. We develop curriculum maps and teaching calendars to be sure to cover the appropriate standards. We endure hours of professional development so that we are well versed in all the current educational pedagogy. We collaborate with colleagues so that we are all using best practices in the classroom. We develop assessments for students so that we can track their progress. When all this doesn't work, we have intentional interventions aimed at getting students back on track.

But students are still failing.

The problem is that many students are not motivated to learn. Even with the perfect lesson plan in place, an unmotivated student will not learn. Some teachers claim that motivating students is not their job. It is a teacher's job to know the content and to teach it well; the student must take responsibility for his or her learning and find his or her own motivation. This old-fashioned idea is what limits many teachers to being average. A great teacher recognizes that student motivation is necessary for success in learning and that teachers are in the perfect position to improve student motivation. Here are some strategies that can be used in the classroom to help motivate students:

1. **Promote growth mindset over fixed mindset.**
2. **Develop meaningful and respectful relationships with your students.**
3. **Grow a community of learners in your classroom.**
4. **Establish high expectations and establish clear goals.**
5. **Be Inspirational.**

(3) Positive Relationships: Teachers intentionally developed positive relationships with students. Because the school is so diverse, it is important for the teachers to get to know each student so that they could know each student's individual potential and know how to help them reach it.

(4) High Quality Instruction: The school began to cater instruction based upon research. They began to use data and test scores to meet the needs of students effectively. They removed policies like attendance rules that could cause a student to fail a class regardless of their grade. The teachers also began to learn from one another. They would host learning labs, where teachers could observe and learn from one another. These cross-curricular labs helped teachers learn new ways to facilitate instruction.

(5) Demand Equitable Outcomes: This required teachers to focus on demand equitable outcomes for ALL students. Because all students are different, they all have different needs to achieve. This initiative promoted teachers providing resources and filling the needs for each student to find his or her success.



These 5 changes pushed East Kentwood High School dramatically forward in only 4 years. The teachers were empowered and inspired to collaborate. They helped their students beat the odds of their circumstances and reach their highest potential. The state of Michigan is now modeling their initiative to be a top tier school system in 10 years after the changes made at East Kentwood High School. It is incredible what can be accomplished in students' lives when teachers and staff unite over a shared vision for improvement.

Learn more about East Kentwood H.S. and their 2017-18 Michigan Teacher of the Year Luke Wilcox by visiting www.LukeWilcox.org

A Word For Administrators

The importance of administrators to the educational process cannot be overstated. Even though you might not be in the classroom on a daily basis, your leadership influences the entire learning process. Your role is crucial in the development of your students.

The culture of your school starts with a choice. What do you want your culture to be? A choice is made intentionally each day. Either we intentionally emphasize those habits, behaviors, and standards that we desire, or we don't. We are what we repeatedly do. Our culture will take on the characteristics of what we emphasize daily. You get what you emphasize, model, and celebrate.

Culture is more than just a mission statement, fancy posters on a wall, or a slogan we memorize. It is about your people. It is about them taking ownership and becoming vested in what you are trying to accomplish.



"Leadership is not about titles, positions, or flow charts but about one life influencing another. When you empower people, you're not influencing just them; you're influencing all the people they influence."
(John C. Maxwell)

The following are seven core areas that we teach and help organizations understand so that they can create a championship culture within their organization.

- 1. Clarify Purpose** – What are your core values and purpose and how will you emphasize it daily?
- 2. Team Members that Fit** – Find the right team members and then put them in the right positions
- 3. Enthusiastically Add Value** – How are we equipping, encouraging, and empowering others in a positive manner to make others the best that they can be?
- 4. Communication** – How can we communicate most effectively and honestly with our shareholders and students?
- 5. Connection** – How are we developing mutual trust, respect and concern for one another so that we can work together to maximize potential?
- 6. Collective Responsibility** – How does each team member's role fit together and complement one another?
- 7. Growth** – How do you and your team learn and improve in order to add value to the students?

"The culture precedes positive results. Champions behave like champions before they're champions; they have a winning standard of performance before they are winners." (Hall of Fame Football Coach Bill Walsh)

I previously wrote an eBook entitled “101 Ways to Motivate Employees: Ideas to increase employee satisfaction and inspire the people you work with.” You can download a free copy at <https://jamybechler.com/101WaysToMotivateEmployees>. There are a bunch of great ideas that you can use. Additionally, some of the ideas might generate other ideas as the creative juices start flowing. You might not be able to pay your team members as much as they’d like but you might be able to do other things to help them be more satisfied.

Southwest Airlines has been profitable every single year since they started the company. They are also consistently ranked as one of the best places to work. How do they do it? One of the major reasons is that they have a culture that PUTS THEIR EMPLOYEES FIRST.

Wait, what?!? How can that be? Aren’t businesses supposed to be about the customer? For Southwest, it’s about the employees. This is a paradox of leadership. This is a different way of thinking. But this doesn’t mean it’s wrong. Southwest’s mission



and culture statement states their vision as being “to become the World’s Most Loved, Most Flown, and Most Profitable Airline. They want to be profitable but they are going to do it because their employees want to be there. Happy employees equal happy profits.

In a Business Week article, Southwest ranks employees first, customers second, and shareholders third...

“We believe that if we treat our employees right, they will treat our customers right, and in turn that results in increased business and profits that make everyone happy”.

My wife and I fly Southwest only. We have never had a problem with Southwest that couldn’t be solved with a smile and a ‘can-do’ attitude. I have traveled a lot. I have eaten at restaurants. I have shopped at retail stores. I have been around sales people and employees and I can say that Southwest employees are different. Not every business has employees willing to go the extra mile or even act like they enjoy their jobs. Imagine if all employees were satisfied and happy at work. This enthusiasm can be contagious. This enthusiasm can be transferred to customers so that they have a good experience.

Why does this matter for you as you run a school? Your customers are kids, shareholders, and parents. If your teachers, custodians, secretaries, support staff, and coaches enjoy their jobs then that will rub off on your “customers”. It’s not that Southwest neglects their customers, it is just that they believe their customers will be treated better if they go about it differently than other companies. Southwest wants their culture to be such that employees enjoy their work, which will then show when they interact with customers.

Just like the Southwest Airline employees, the more satisfied your team members are, then the more excited they might be about their job. The more excited they are about their job, then they will probably pass this enthusiasm and passion on to your students. In other words, if you want to better motivate your students, then you need motivated staff.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Connect with Jamy:

Website – www.JamyBechler.com

Email – Jamy@CoachBechler.com

Twitter - [@CoachBechler](https://twitter.com/CoachBechler)

Facebook - [JamyBechlerLeadership](https://www.facebook.com/JamyBechlerLeadership)



“That was the best leadership workshop I have been to. We had great, open conversations that were beneficial to helping me take the right steps to become a better leader.”

Cheryl Doughty (Controller at Mt. Pisgah School in Atlanta, Ga) after a full-day staff workshop.

Jamy Bechler is a professional speaker, author, podcast host and John Maxwell certified leadership coach. He has worked with teams ranging from the NBA to major corporations. Before going into full-time leadership work, Jamy served for 20 years as a college basketball coach, professor, and administrator. His 2014 basketball team earned the national "Champions of Character" award and he left his previous school as the all-time winningest coach in program history. Upon leaving the college ranks, he served as a high school athletic director in Indiana where he oversaw a 7,500 seat arena, a boys basketball state championship, the formation of a student-athlete leadership development program, and a complete budget overhaul that resulted in the

largest surplus in more than a decade. Jamy is the author of “The Leadership Playbook: Become Your Team's Most Valuable Leader”. Three more books are scheduled for release in 2018 including “Building Champions: Success Principles from A-to-Z”, “The Captain, and “From the Locker



Room to the Board Room: Creating a Championship Culture in Any Organization”. Jamy is also the host of the "Success Is A Choice" podcast, in which he interviews successful people from a variety of industries. Guests have included Toronto Raptors head coach Dwane Casey, NFHS Executive Director Bob Gardner, Orlando Magic V.P. Pat Williams, and Original Shark from "Shark Tank" Kevin Harrington just to name a few. Jamy, his wife Tabitha and son Jaylen reside in the Cleveland/Akron area of Ohio.

