

## **Activities that Motivate**

### Ideas from teachers at Nash Central High School

#### **The Raffle**

When 11<sup>th</sup>-grade English teacher Brock Grubb wants to reward positive behavior, he will hand one, or possibly a few blank tickets to a student who has improved a test score, made an important contribution to a discussion, or helped another student in need. Students put their names on the tickets then place them in a large glass jar that sits at the front of the class where everyone can see it. Mr. Grubb makes sure that all the students know when and why a student is receiving tickets and makes a small show of placing them in the jar. Each Friday, he shows them the items in his Prize Box and “talks up” the contents, exciting the students about the drawing to come. To keep his Prize Box stocked, he finds, purchases, or accepts donations of pencils, sport watches, notebooks, folders, kid’s meal toys, and other items. Then he selects a student to draw a few tickets; those students get to choose a prize from the box. Even high school age students are thrilled with the recognition they receive and the small prize, which is physical proof of not only their positive actions in the classroom, but also of their luck, as well. Either purchase a roll of tickets, or manufacture some out of construction paper to start your own raffle.

#### **The Competition**

A history teacher puts the students into six groups of four students each. They start with 50 points and play for a period of two weeks. During that time, they can either lose or gain points; the team with the highest score at the end of the period wins prizes such as homework passes, dropping a low test grade, or perhaps a few pieces of candy. The ways teams score points is limited only by your imagination. Here are some examples of ways teams can win and lose points:

- After taking a quiz or test, reward the group with the highest test average of the four group members with 3 points. The group with the second highest average receives 2 points; the third highest receives 1; fourth place stays even; the fifth place group loses a point, while the lowest group loses two points.
- Have a Quiz of the Day, where the whole group takes quizzes separately, then you total the raw scores for each group. For a quiz with four questions, the highest raw score a group could achieve would be 16. Highest group raw score wins three points.
- During group work, the group that best performs a specified behavior, such as keeping a low volume level, maintaining good focus, or cleaning up properly might receive a 3 point award.
- Just for fun: these activities do not directly address content. However they create a climate of stimulation and belonging that improves student motivation:  
**Shirt and Tie Day:** award four points to the group that has the most members attired in dress shirts and ties – girls included.

**Please and Thank You Day:** award three points to the group that demonstrates the best courtesy and manners that day.

**Physical Challenges:** award four points to the group that has the best foul shot percentage as they toss a bean bag into a bucket at the end of class (they must answer a question from the teacher before they shoot), or to any group that produces a member who can perform 40 pushups (increase the number of pushups week by week).

At the end of two weeks, highest score wins. Keep the scores posted in a visible place in your room. You can amend the duration of the competition, the rules, or rewards as you see fit.

## Graphics Searches

To call attention to paintings, maps, pictures, timelines, graphs, and cartoons in the text, one teacher prepares a cooperative group work quiz that asks specific questions using only those parts of the textbook. When a student reads a question such as “How many more miles of railroad track were there in 1870 compared to 1850?” they must scan the appropriate chapter looking for the appropriate graphic. They may have decided at the beginning of their search that information about miles of railroad track might well be in a bar or line graph, or they may have to figure that out as they go. Let’s say the student finds a bar graph that might provide the information they need. They then must read the title to decide if it is appropriate or not. If it is, they have to determine how to read the graph, then perform a mathematical equation to find the difference of the two figures. If it is not the right graph, they have to keep searching. Here are some examples of other questions. The type of graphic where the answer would be found is in parentheses. You would probably not give the parenthetical information to students.

- In what year was the Boxer Rebellion? (timeline)
- In what year did the number of Native Hawaiians equal the number of Caucasian residents in that state? (line graph featuring two data sets)
- Does cartoonist Louis Dalrymple agree or disagree with Teddy Roosevelt’s new world diplomacy? How can you tell? (interpret a cartoon)
- What topics did Jose Orozco deal with? How did he make his views known? (view a painting, read the accompanying caption)

## Scrambled Notes

To make note-taking more interesting to students, try this hands-on cooperative learning strategy. Create an outline of notes you wish to present to students. Make a copy for each group, so that you have six or seven copies for groups of four or five. Before class, cut each of the copies into strips of paper that only have a few lines of information. Each strip might contain one topic heading, or sub-topic heading, or perhaps a detail on a subtopic. Students must categorize the information then arrange it in a logical order before copying the notes into their own notebooks. By the time they have wrestled the bits of data into groups and order, they have a much better understanding of the content than if the teacher had simply put the notes on an overhead projector. The teacher, at that point, may wish to place the notes where everyone can see them and speak briefly on them to make sure of every student’s understanding.