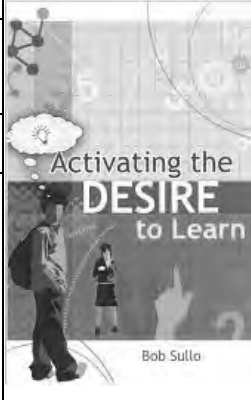


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Activating the Desire to Learn

Author:	Bob Sullo (2007)		
Publisher:	Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Alexandria, Virginia		
Pages	ISBN	Price	
164 pages	978-1-4166-0423-5	\$23.95 U.S.	

In *Activating the Desire to Learn*, Bob Sullo, a veteran K-12 U.S. public school teacher, shares his insight on student motivation in the classroom and how our internal needs driven our motivation to learn. These include, he argues the needs: to connect, be competent, make choices, have fun, and be safe. The better these needs are fulfilled, he argues, the better student behavior and achievement. In other words, he explains, “We are motivated from the inside out.” This Written as a series of conversations between Sullo and his past and present K-12 students, teachers, and colleagues, *Activating the Desire to Learn* is a grounded overview of the research on motivation, case studies of strategies, suggestions on assessing student performance, and concrete guidelines for incorporating motivation strategies into everyday classroom practice.

Activating the Desire to Learn is organized into four parts: Part I addresses the theory and research behind motivation and the evidence for it and the remainder of the book is an application of the research in each school level (Part II addresses Elementary School, Part III Middle School, and Part IV high school). The main focal points of the book that are addressed through its entirety include the nature of motivation and its relationship to leaders, productivity, and collaboration. A high school educator, I still found it helpful to read the other parts of the book on elementary and middle education, even though I was hesitant of its relative-ness and usefulness.

Defining the nature of motivation, Sullo first explains the idea of a “need-satisfying” classroom and how that relates to classroom behavior. Just like relationships, positive classrooms tend to resolve upsets and disruptions faster than a negative classroom. A positive

classroom setting is need-satisfying and the students feel a sense of belonging, power or competence, freedom, and have fun. There is a sense of mutual respect between the teacher and student. Sullo gives the advice that teachers should structure their classrooms that satisfy these basic needs by doing what the teacher wants and not another behavior, which minimizes disruptions and problems.

Activating the Desire to Learn reads as a compelling story (or series of stories) that is full of practical classroom advice, evidence, applications of the research, and strategies for implementing suggested ideas. It would be a valuable book for any educator, including language educators, to read as the information presented applies to a diversity of educators and people working in education (non-teachers) in a variety of grade levels. All teachers can benefit by reading Sullo's book because the desire to learn and motivation are issues every educator faces.

When I started reading this book, I found the research and the evidence interesting, but not very compelling until I reached Sullo's applications and strategies. I was sucked into intense discussions between educators that I could relate to—and it made me think about my own practice. Reading, I reflected as a teacher on the motivation of my students and tried to discern why certain students are not motivated to learn in my class and how I might restructure my classroom so that they might be.

Regardless of the grade level taught, the information presented is of general usefulness to all educators and non-educators alike. Even though I was personally inspired reading about empowering teachings taking on motivation in their classrooms, I sometimes wonder if the motivation is beyond the purview of a classroom teacher. There are specific changes I could make in my classroom—but the teachers, administrators, and other school staff need to be on board with the change in order for it to truly be effective. On a smaller scale, Sullo's strategies can be applied to one classroom at a time—and I guess that's a starting point even if an inadequate one.

Reviewed by

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