

# LEARNING MOTIVATION GUIDELINES



## Preamble:

The motivation to learn is of prime importance in the learning process. Motivation is “the forces acting on or within a person to explain the initiation, direction, intensity and persistence of behaviour”. Each learner is a person made to relate with a personal God; a whole person who knows, feels, decides and acts; a young person with deep longings for recognition, love, help, interest, direction, freedom and hope. As we maintain our Christ-centred, Cross-focused, Creation-grounded passion and compassion, it is beholden upon teachers in our school to provide their students with an effective motivational framework that:

1. encourages each student to love God and his neighbour.
2. guides children to deal with people on the basis of grace, to serve others out of gratitude to God for one’s own forgiveness and to avoid a spirit of working for reward.
3. proclaims the Gospel of grace enacted at the Cross.
4. honours Jesus Christ and the wholeness of humans made in his image.
5. promotes a creative, vibrant, positive and thankful view of life’s learning experiences.
6. enhances cooperative learning.
7. provides students with a purposeful and meaningful outlook on life – its joys, challenges and disappointments.
8. avoids mechanistic, artificial and extrinsic strategies that can pander to unhelpful pride, promote selfishness or a spirit of competition and trivialize what is being learned.
9. prepares students to respond with humility and wisdom when in the situation of receiving an artificial, extrinsic reward.
10. prefers love rather than duty, and prefers informed co-operation rather than mindless compliance.
11. engenders self-direction as well as solidarity of purpose with fellow learners.
12. is effective, efficient and realistic.

**In short, living Christ’s story at NCS inspires learning motivation that is relational, contextual and playful.**

Relevant scripture references are: Ephesians 2:1-10; 1 John 4:10; Matthew 6:1-5; Luke 7:40-47; Luke 14:12-14; Corinthians 10:30;

# RELATIONAL MOTIVATION

## We believe:

human life in its entirety should be life unfolding itself in terms of:

- response to God's grace as manifested in Jesus Christ – His life, death and resurrection
- obedient service of Him
- love for Him

## therefore our school will be a place where

children are immersed in the grace of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and are free to respond personally to Him in all areas of their learning lives. This will be reflected in the relationships each student maintains within the learning community.

## and learning motivation strategies will be founded upon:

1. **Firm, loving relationships between teachers and students.**  
Where mutual trust, forgiveness and unconditional love provide a solid basis for adventure, risk taking and struggling in learning. Love is the teacher's most powerful teaching strategy.
2. **The teacher's own model of motivation to learn.**
3. **The student's expectation of success.**  
This will be one outworking of a teacher's compassion. The setting of clear, achievable goals with deadlines will be characteristic of a teacher's approach. The teacher will also seek to accommodate the students' various learning styles: visual, auditory, kinaesthetic.
4. **The student's confidence in spite of failure.**  
This same compassion will mean that each student's failure will be viewed as the opportunity for feedback and learning.
5. **The unconditional nature of the teacher's acceptance.**  
At no stage will the teacher-student relationship be in jeopardy. Showing love and approval will not be dependent upon a student's performance.
6. **The expectations of the teacher.**  
Resolve and resilience will characterize a teacher's expectations of a student. The students' fickleness, laziness, mischief or fear will not be surprising. These will be realistically accommodated by a teacher who has great expectations for his students.
7. **Expressions of affirmation.**  
These will be abundant as teachers seek to recognize and encourage helpful attitudes and performances. Other than by way of formal feedback, expressions of affirmation may take the form of:
  - spontaneous, natural comments, praise, pats on the back, recognition in front of peers, letters of thanks etc.
  - extra responsibilities based on whatever is being affirmed (teaching peers, being group leader, special jobs)
  - parents could be informed in person, by phone or by letter.
8. **The dignity of the children.**  
To assume that the children need to have "carrots dangled" before them to make them work is only to assume the worst about them. It assumes that the children have no relationship with Jesus and no willingness, albeit immature, to serve him. It assumes that they have no intrinsic interest in aspects of God's world, or no desire to trust their teachers, or no wish to please others, or no sense of challenge. The dignity of the student will be declared, not with naivety, but with wisdom.

# CONTEXTUAL MOTIVATION

## **We believe:**

Jesus Christ was God's son in human form. He forsook the glory of heaven to participate fully in the daily life of Palestinian Jews under Roman rule and to bring them physical, emotional and spiritual healing. He calls on his people to follow in his steps.

### ***therefore our school will be a place where***

students are afforded every opportunity for meaningful learning in real contexts. Where final success is gauged not by compliance with unreal or trivial rules or exercises, but by harmony of knowledge, skills and commitment in real contexts. i.e. responsible discipleship of Jesus Christ.

### ***and learning motivation strategies will be founded upon:***

1. ***A myriad of real, purposeful learning contexts***  
These provide each student with the opportunity to put knowledge, skills and commitment "into practice". Teachers should create opportunities for children to have an impact on their world.
2. ***Activities that ensure exploration, excitement, surprise and curiosity.***
3. ***Activities that provoke each child to flee from hypocrisy and embrace wholeness.***  
It is our desire to enable, not to disable. Jesus' criticism of shallow knowledge was vehement. A teacher will not be satisfied if a child speaks eloquently, but monopolises discussion without regard for others; spells well, but does not choose to write; knows the meaning of prejudice, but is mean to the dark-skinned person in his class.
4. ***The value of what is being learned will be implicit and explicit.***  
Teachers will explain the purpose of the learning and seek to place it in its context. The "big picture, little picture, big picture" process will be employed.
5. ***Thorough and specific feedback.***  
Forbearing comparisons with other students, teachers will stress the individual's progress towards mastery and fulfilment.
6. ***The discovery, development and deployment of children's talents.***  
The celebration of these talents can take many forms as children engage in purposeful activities. The accompanying joy, service and humility can be exhilarating.
6. ***The appropriate level of challenge or difficulty.***  
Familiarity with something can lead to disdain. Or conversely, the remoteness of something can lead to frustration. Flexibility in task setting and group work should be evident.
7. ***The reward being in the task.***  
The use of extrinsic rewards tends to demean the learning activity by painting them as boring, unpleasant or aversive. Children should be led to see that learning activities are rewarding and valuable within themselves and for what they achieve. To experience joy in learning is the reward. The satisfaction of a job well done is a powerful motivator. The struggle to conquer difficulties is rewarding.

When children already have their rewards within their tasks, stars, stickers, stamps or certificates become superfluous. Graduations and the like will not involve the presentation of awards that might indicate that we value some, more than others. We will seek to focus on the Giver, not just the recipient and the gifts. Each and every Year 12 student will be recognised at their Graduation with words of affirmation from a significant teacher in their lives.

# PLAYFUL MOTIVATION

## We believe

God is sovereign creator. His creating and sustaining power work from second to second bringing life, surprise, variety and beauty. The heavens declare his majestic handiwork. Jesus brought joy and delight to those whose lives he touched.

## therefore our school will be a place where

Teacher and student creativity, artistry and craftsmanship are viewed as real reflections of a creating God and as vibrant expressions of humanness.

## and learning motivation strategies will be founded upon:

1. ***The skill and grace of competent teachers who so orchestrate their classroom activities that they bring deep satisfaction to their learners.***  
The flow, balance and variety of daily activities stimulate enthusiasm.
2. ***The composure and creativity of teachers***  
...as they respond to the immediacy, informality and unpredictability of the classroom community.
3. ***The teacher's sense of humour.***  
Playful seriousness and serious playfulness contribute significantly to the rapport between teacher and student.
4. ***The teacher's humility.***  
Being unafraid to readily admit shortcomings builds up teacher/learner solidarity.
5. ***The interest, drama, pathos, romance and fun of lessons.***
6. ***A pleasant classroom ambience,***  
...clarity of task setting, co-operative learning, effective displays and child-orientated classroom decoration are major contributors to this.
7. ***Intellectual, physical and social puzzles***  
that provide a thrill when the pieces finally drop into place. The art of discovery, be it individual or corporate, is a powerful motivator.
8. ***A healthy appreciation of the complexity and inexact nature of the learner.***  
Teachers will strongly discourage students from pursuing success for the sake of grades which convey a false sense of precision. Rather, students will be encouraged to pursue excellence for the thrill, adventure, competence and opportunity for service which the process itself brings.

# BACKGROUND ON LEARNING MOTIVATION

The area of motivation is a major aspect of the learning process. It deals with the **desire to learn**. Traditionally in Australia rewards have been an integral part of motivation in the classroom. Rewards have ranged from stickers, stars and stamps to speech night presentations. Generally the rewards themselves were totally unrelated to the activity they were encouraging (They were extrinsic.) The rewards were also contrived or made up by teachers (They were artificial.)

Nepean does **not** employ a system of extrinsic, artificial rewards to motivate its students. A system of rewards falls far short of promoting unconditional love, dignity and relationships. Rewards promote a spirit of competition and selfishness among the students.

Motivation at Nepean is based on these principles:

## 1. UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

That God's love in unconditional goes without saying at Nepean! It is not contingent upon good works. His love is not a reward, but rather **grace upon grace**. The motivating force in a Christian's life is grace. The more we understand grace, the more we respond in loving obedience. Luke 7:40-47. Grace and the relationships that it involves are powerful motivating forces. By necessity, teaching must declare this. It must not deny it, nor must it instill in young minds a contradicting principle.

Children can actually be motivated by the security and confidence that they have in their relationships with Jesus, their parents and teachers. There is trust and submission. 1 John 4:10. These things are not earned, but are graciously given.

Notwithstanding the above, it seems that God also rewards His people. But it would seem that this **reward is relationship** with Him by virtue of His Son's work on their behalf. The rewards have to do with enjoying Christ, being like him and one day being with him. Likewise the reward of other relationships resides within the relationship...its joys, its comforts and its challenges. Thus, the reward that a child might experience in seeking to know Jesus is actually the seeking and the finding! But in a various curious way, it seems that God is actually rewarding His own work in the life of the child.

God's rewards are not extrinsic, nor are they artificial. They are far greater!. They have more to do with love, security, hope, peace and faith. It is not satisfactory to say "If I love, then I will receive a reward." For the reward is in the loving itself. **The reward is in the task.**

But Jesus makes it very clear that a spirit of working for reward is contrary to his desire. Matt 6:1-5. Luke 14:12-14. Indeed if it is Jesus' reward that we shall get, not our own, then our motivation stems from learning about him, submitting to him and pleasing him. The book of Job heralds this perspective. God brings Job to the point where he serves him for nought. God dealt with Job as He wished. Though Job sought to make God's actions contingent upon his own (be this reward or punishment), God answers him with a grand display of His majesty. Job's reward, if it can be called this, was to serve God for no reward!

## 2. DIGNITY

It is essential that we maintain the dignity of our students. To immediately assume that they need carrots dangled before them to make them work is only to assume the worst about them (not to say what it assumes about their parents!)

It assumes that children have no relationship with Jesus and a willingness, albeit immature, to serve Him. It assumes that they have no intrinsic interest in aspects of God's world. It assumes that they have no desire to trust their teachers. It assumes that they have no desire to please or help others. It assumes that they have no sense of challenge to overcome a difficulty. It assumes that they have no desire to pursue excellence. In short, rewards assume selfishness and, indeed, perpetuate selfishness. Rewards diminish intrinsic motivation.

Artificial, extrinsic rewards seem superfluous. To give a young child a star, sticker, stamp or certificate is only to confuse the issue.

To experience joy in learning is the reward.

The satisfaction of a job well done is a powerful motivator.

The struggle to conquer difficulties is the reward.

When children already have their rewards within their tasks, it seems odd to distribute stars, stickers, stamps or certificates as rewards. One can understand children's response of derision in such situations.

At Nepean we seek to minister, rather than manipulate. Inspiring the desire in students to learn is paramount. This must be done by asserting their dignity, not by robbing them of it. Though they do many wrong things, they are persons made in God's image, not animals to be conditioned by appealing to their selfish ways.

### 3. EXPECTATIONS

We deal with young persons who are at times fickle, afraid, mischievous and lazy. We must have a true sense of how to motivate them....of what works. We need to have expectations of them that are real, achievable and firm.

"Expectations of those to whom learners are bonded are powerful coercers of behaviour. We achieve what we expect to achieve; we fail when we expect to fail. We are more likely to engage with demonstrations of those whom we regard as significant and who hold high expectations of us." *Brian Cambourne, Wollongong Uni.*

Students are motivated by a teacher who has realistically high expectations of them.

### 4. FEEDBACK

The power of feedback is substantial. When clear achievable goals are set and feedback given on these, children have a very high level of motivation. They do not need to receive a reward for their success. The feedback of affirmation is motivating.

Affirmation can take many forms:

- It should be **natural**, stemming from the relationship between student and teacher (praise, pats on the back, wise recognition in front of peers, letter of thanks)
- It could involve being given **extra responsibility** based on whatever is being affirmed (teaching peers, being group leader, special jobs)
- **Parents** could be informed in person, by phone or by letter.
- Students could be given the **opportunity** to make use of what they have done or **share** it with the class or section.

### 5. INTEREST AND MEANING

It is essential that activities are interesting and meaningful for the students. It is very important that students learn in context. This means that learning phonics must be placed in the context of reading a book. It means that literary skills must be placed in the context of writing for an audience. **Opportunities to have an impact on their world** will be created for Nepean students. **It is our desire to enable, not disable.**

## 5. RESEARCH

Extrinsic motivation diminishes intrinsic motivation.

Other than for the most basic of tasks, when rewards are offered, students perform worse on tasks.

Rewards can produce a mercenary spirit of competition.

**In summary, Nepean has a distinctive approach to motivation, especially the area of rewards. Its policy is based upon declaring unconditional love, upholding the dignity of the individual, maintaining warm relationships, ensuring that learning is interesting and meaningful, providing thorough feedback, affirming each student, and enacting research.**