

Strategy: Identifying Student Motivations

Faculty looking for opportunities to engage students can benefit from having students identify their motivations early in the semester. This activity not only helps students provide this information to faculty but also helps students build a classroom community.

Origin

Barkley, E. (2010). *Student engagement techniques: A handbook for college faculty*. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass.

Application

This activity is a classroom icebreaker that helps students identify their motivations and discuss these with one another.

Steps:

- Using the prompts below, design a worksheet for students.
- Have students complete the worksheet on their own.
- After students have completed the worksheet, begin the mixer.
- As you call out different colors, have students mix and share their responses to the corresponding question with other students.
- Have students initial each other's worksheets as they share their answers.
- Continue to rotate through colors, encouraging students to find students who have not already initialed their worksheet.
- Collect the worksheets and perform a content analysis.
- Distribute a follow-up questionnaire to gather more data on the most common student responses.

Prompts for Rainbow Mixer:

Color	Initials	Meaning	Question	Your Response
Red		Stop	What is one thing that you wish instructors would stop doing?	
Orange		Motivation	What motivates you to do your best in a course?	
Yellow		Commitment	Describe a learning experience to which you gave your all.	
Green		Money	What do you plan to do for your career?	
Blue		Possibilities	The sky's the limit—what are your dreams and hopes for the future?	
Purple		Royalty	If you were the ruler of the universe (or this class) what is the first thing you would do?	

Based on these responses, you may want to distribute follow up questions to gather more information on responses such as:

What makes you...?

- want to go to class?
- want to learn?
- enjoy class?
- enjoy the material?
- think the material is interesting?
- feel like the topic relates to you (give specific examples of topics that relate to you)?
- feel like you're preparing for the "real world"? (what specific skills and knowledge do you need?)
- feel like the instructor values students?
- feel like the instructor knows that this is not the only class you're taking?
- feel like working in groups is okay?
- feel like the grading is fair?

Reflection

- How does this compare to what you are already doing?
- How could you use this information in your course?
- What other prompts would you include in this activity?
- What other activities build community in your course?