

Zest in the Classroom

Zest is the degree of enthusiasm and energy with which a student approaches work.

In response to the statement, “Since yesterday, I have felt Energetic?” students responded:
Not at all true: 24% A little true: 28% Pretty much true: 27% Very much true: 21%

Humor in Tests

Tests can cause a great deal of anxiety for students. This anxiety can be reduced through the inclusion of humorous or “joke” items on tests. Humor and laughing have been shown to have positive psychological effects and to produce a sense of well-being that allows people to deal with stressors more effectively. The humorous question should not be confusing, difficult, or include humor above the level of understanding of the students. A simple, silly question on a test that provokes laughter can improve student performance.

Funny Introductions

Humor is especially effective in increasing enthusiasm and motivation when used during the introduction of a new topic. Before beginning a new lesson, begin by telling a humorous related anecdote. Students also benefit from humorous visual stimulation, so, if possible, include a funny picture that relates to the topic. Humor is most effective when used with students who are not already engaged or motivated, so using it at the beginning of a new lesson allows you to reap the greatest benefits.

Student Participation

Involve students in creating an open, comfortable classroom climate by encouraging them to be humorous as well. Ask students to find funny quotes relating to the topic at hand and share them with the class. You can post these quotes on the whiteboard, or make them into more permanent classroom decorations. You can also challenge students to invent their own puns relating to the topic.



Zest is closely linked to happiness.

Studies have identified zest as one of three strengths of character most closely related to happiness in youth. The other two strengths identified are love and hope. While other character strengths, such as gratitude, are robustly linked to happiness in adults, zest has been shown to have these effects even in young children.

Zest prevents negative outcomes.

Beyond promoting positive effects such as happiness, zest has also been shown to mediate the association between avoidance and life satisfaction. The development of zest in anxious or avoidant individuals may promote increased happiness. Additionally, zest prevents other negative outcomes such as boredom and anxiety.

Resources

Using Humor in the Classroom
Best Teaching Practices: Humor in the Classroom
Humor in the Classroom: Stu’s 7 Simple Steps

For more information about the Social Emotional Health Survey, see: www.project-covitality.info