

STUDENT WELL-BEING FROM OUR RESEARCH CENTER

What Would Motivate Teens to Work Harder in School? The Chance to Redo Assignments

By [Arianna Prothero](#) — February 23, 2023 ⌚ 2 min read

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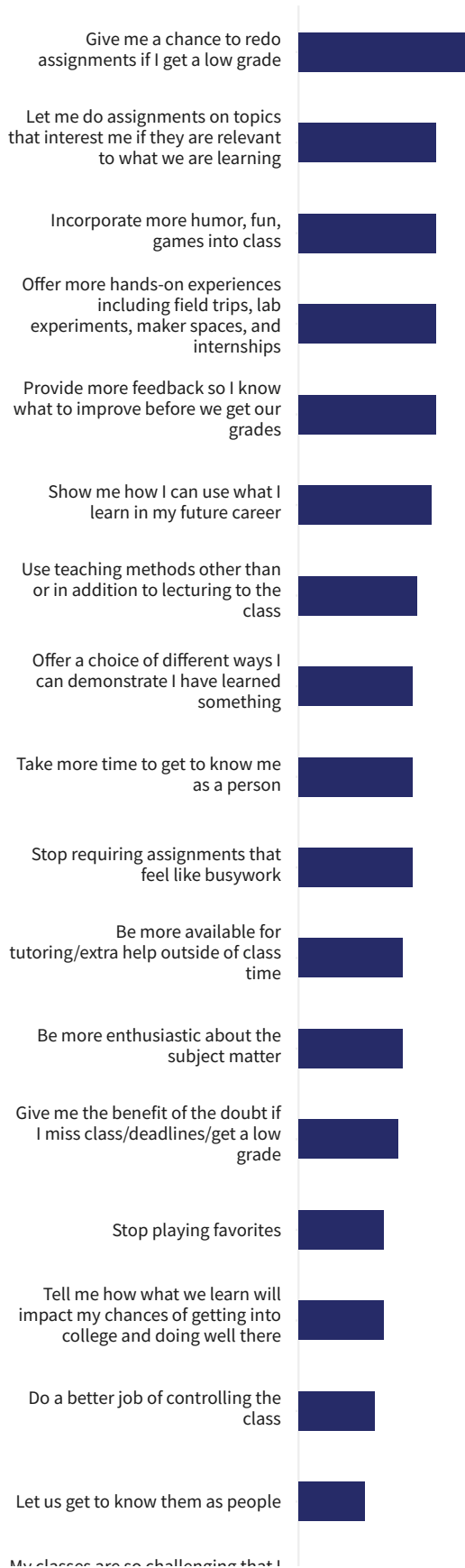
If you thought being enthusiastic and personable were the best ways to motivate teenagers to work hard in school, then think again. It turns out what many teens say will motivate them the most is the opportunity to redo assignments if they get a low grade.

It's not the most exciting solution, but there you have it.

Out of more than 20 options given to a nationally representative sample of 1,011 students, ages 13-19, the chance to redo assignments was the most selected, with 35 percent saying that is what would motivate them the most to do well in school. These are among the findings of surveys of teenagers and educators conducted [by the EdWeek Research Center on student motivation and engagement](#).

Incorporating more humor and fun into class, providing more feedback, offering more hands-on experiences, and assigning more schoolwork on topics that are relevant and interesting to students rounded out the top five answers.

Students: What, if anything, could your teachers do to help you do your best at school? Select all that apply.



But ask educators—teachers, principals, and district leaders—what they think they could do to better motivate students, and you’ll get very different answers than what you hear from students.

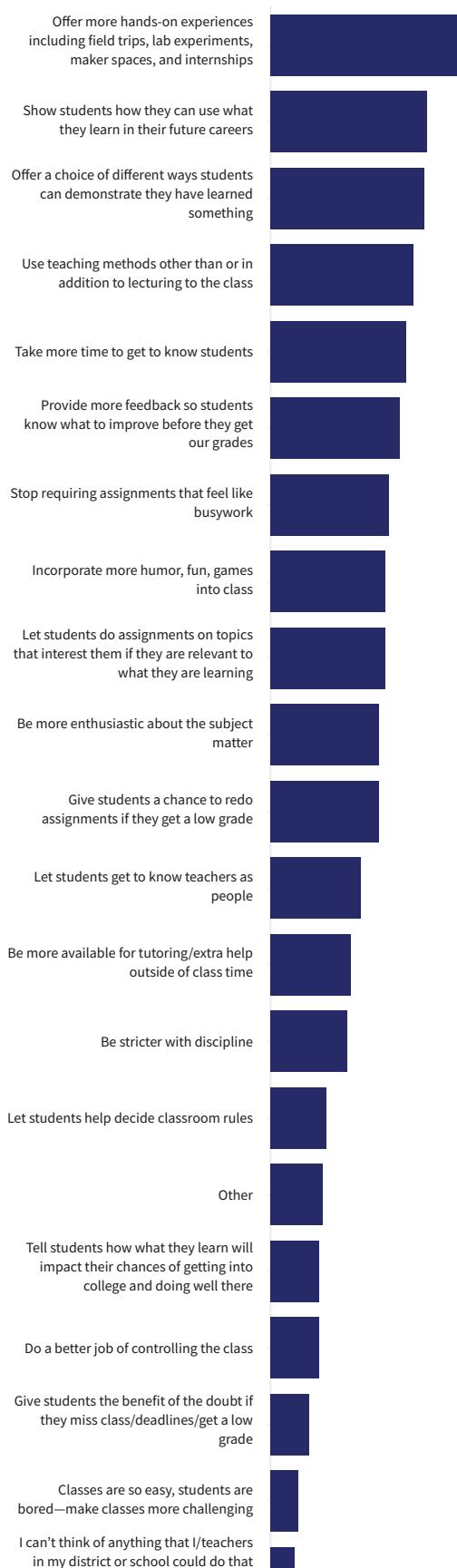
The most-cited solution among educators surveyed separately by the EdWeek Research Center in January and February to motivate students was offering more hands-on learning experiences. Fifty-four percent of educators said providing more field trips, lab experiments, maker spaces, and internships was what they or teachers in their district or school could do to help students feel more motivated to do their best.

The second-most selected response, from 45 percent of educators, was showing students how they can use what they learn in future careers. Rounding out the top three was “offer a choice of different ways students can demonstrate they have learned something,” which was selected by 44 percent of educators.

Schools should “build stronger positive school community—school garden, community outreach, public acknowledgement of accomplishments,” said one educator who participated in the survey, “relating content to real-world problems.”

Said another educator who participated in the survey: “Offer more career-readiness pathways and gear core subjects to that student’s goals. Give teachers more time to get to know students and make learning fun instead of more paperwork for teachers.”

What, if anything, could you [if you are a teacher] or the help students feel more motivated to do their best at school?



The EdWeek Research Center survey identified other discrepancies between educators and students. For instance, both groups rated students' motivation in school very differently.

Eighty-six percent of students said they feel motivated to do their best in school right now, but only 67 percent of educators said their students were motivated.

While only 38 percent of students said that as of 2023, the pandemic has made them less motivated to do their best in school, 80 percent of teachers, principals, and district leaders said that the pandemic has made students less motivated.

However, there was one area of agreement: when asked to rate educators' level of motivation, around 80 percent of both students and educators said that teachers in their school or district were motivated to do their best to teach students.



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