

## Achievement Motivation

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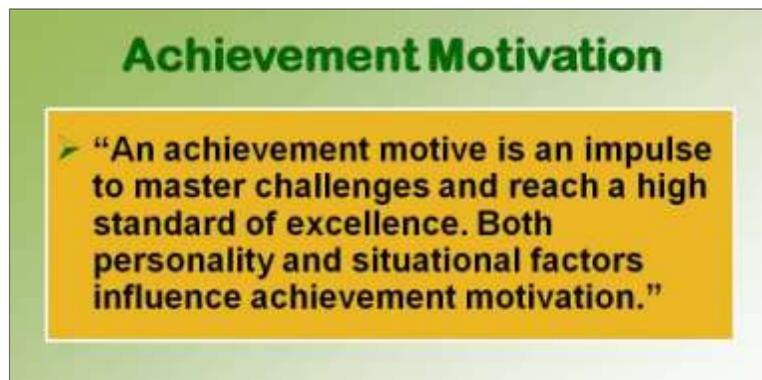
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### Definition of Achievement Motivation

The following definition of achievement motivation was retrieved from: “Spark Notes Editors. (2005). SparkNote on Motivation. Retrieved from <http://www.sparknotes.com/psychology/psych101/motivation/>).



We are all motivated to achieve. One of the primary challenges for school counselors and other adults in the school community is how to instill in students a love of learning, becoming excited about the adventure of exploration and discovery that leads to achieving one’s goals and a sense of fulfillment. Students need to understand the importance of being motivated to achieve, the relationship of achievement to success in school, and the consequences of failing to find the motivation to accomplish something meaningful and significant in their lives.

There are many reasons for why some students have low motivation to achieve and many strategies that can be employed to try and get them to change the way they set goals and approach tasks. It is the responsibility of educators to assess the factors which influence

individual student's lives and select strategies that have the potential of helping these students to become more motivated to achieve.

### **Achievement Motivation is Fundamental to a CBA**

Achievement is a fundamental human need and essential to the learning process. It is appropriate therefore to incorporate achievement motivation as a fundamental aspect of a CBA. School counselors and school counseling programs need to be focused on helping students learn the importance of setting goals and achieving them. School counselors can be significant contributors in helping students embrace and complete challenging learning tasks with a sense of confidence and self-efficacy.

First, it is important for counselors to understand that we all have an impulse to achieve, but that some students struggle with following that impulse to its fullest expression. Students' achievement motivation can be located on a spectrum that ranges from low-achievement motivation to high-achievement motivation. Students on the "low" end of the spectrum can use the help of school counselors to increase their motivation to achieve, resulting in them becoming more highly motivated and proficient learners. Interventions can be planned to target specific areas in students' thinking and behavior that need to be addressed for the students to improve their learning outcomes.

As we move toward the "high" end of the spectrum, students are more motivated to achieve and demonstrate greater responsibility for and success in achieving positive results of which they can be proud. Regardless of where students are on the spectrum, it is critical for school counselors to recognize them for the positive results that they are achieving and to encourage them to continue their efforts to excel. Increasing achievement motivation can improve student learning, performance and outcomes and enhance their self-image and feelings of self-efficacy.

Academic achievement is sometimes viewed as the amount of content learned by students. Achievement is measured by intelligence (e.g., IQ) and standardized tests in core subject areas (e.g., ELA, math, science). This is an important focus for school counselors in that part of the role of school counselors is academic support, providing students with help in learning how to learn. It is, however, not the only focus for school counselors when dealing with achievement motivation. Just as content area educators focus on motivating students to learn and apply content knowledge in order to achieve, school counselors also have a set of achievement-related areas upon which they focus.

School counselors have as their primary focus the metacognitive and social-emotional dimensions of student learning and development. The constructs and sub-constructs that are fundamental to a CBA are at the heart of this counselor-oriented focus. So in addition to helping students become more proficient learners by supporting the develop of their cognitive skills, counselors are even more importantly responsible for helping students develop and improve their ability to learn, plan for their future success and cope with the many challenges of growing up and being prepared to benefit from postsecondary educational and career opportunities once they graduate from high school.

Achievement motivation has a lot to do with self-motivation. We want students to be self-motivated to achieve. Achievement means to accomplish or complete something. The school counselors' role is to help students to achieve, in part by helping them become highly motivated.

The graphic below identifies aspects of student-counselor interactions, all of which have associated goals we want students to be motivated to achieve. Let's take a look at some of the achievement-related areas that are primarily within the purview of school counselors and school counseling programs.

<b>Student-Counselor Interaction Achievement Goals</b>			
Self-Reflection	Self-Direction	Meaningful Relationships	Metacognition Management
Goal Setting	Self-Efficacy	Task Completion	Possible Selves
Planning	Regulation of Emotions	Goal Achievement	Teamwork
Coping	Individual Effort	Well-Being	Leadership
Self-Motivation	Social Interactions	Executive Functions	Career Exploration

You can pick any one of these areas in which students and counselors interact and identify what we want students to be motivated to achieve. And it is possible to measure the outcomes to determine the extent to which the goals have been achieved. Students can be asked to reflect on their level of motivation in pursuing any of these goals, whether they felt they were highly-motivated or not and why, and what they can do to increase their level of motivation in the future. School counselors can suggest strategies that students can use to improve their motivation to achieve. This allows for students' awareness of their own motivational processes which is a first step in helping them identify strengths and areas needing to be improved.

While we are thinking about achievement motivation, what do we as school counselors want our students to achieve and how motivated are we to help them achieve those goals? What do we want to achieve in terms of our personal growth as school counselors and the continuous improvement of our school counseling programs? How motivated are we to ensure we achieve our personal and programmatic goals? Are the goals we want to achieve clearly defined and do we have well-constructed plans to achieve them? What motivates us to want to achieve these results?

### **Additional Resources Related to Achievement Motivation**

The Internet is a wonderful tool for accessing information on just about any topic. It has been invaluable in helping us to identify what research has demonstrated to be strongly related to students' academic achievement and well-being, and evidence-based practices that provide

concrete examples of how to translate the research findings into meaningful learning opportunities that support student development.



Staying informed about what works and does not work to help students achieve and succeed is one of the defining characteristics of a professional school counselor. Internet search engines can be used to develop a deeper understanding of the topics discussed on the CBA Website. To get you started, here are some additional resources you may find helpful. These resources, however, only scratch the surface of what is available on the Internet or in published books and articles. We encourage you to use search engines to find more resources that will increase your understanding and build your capacity to apply these ideas in your work as school counselors.

### Videos

This video is a Ted Talk on “The Psychology of Self-Motivation” by Scott Gellar. In it he discusses competence, consequences, choice, and community, and their role in empowerment and self-motivation. Excellent talk.

<https://youtu.be/1113LeHvAw>.

### Websites

This webpage contains some brief descriptions of terms associated with achievement motivation such as personality factors, self-fulfilling prophecies, situational factors and the power of goals.

<http://www.sparknotes.com/psychology/psych101/motivation/section4.rhtml>.

This Wikipedia webpage discusses the need for achievement, “an individual's desire for significant accomplishment, mastering of skills, control, or high standards.”

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Need\\_for\\_achievement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Need_for_achievement)