
Introduction

Take the Motivational Stunt Challenge

As a dedicated educator, review the following school-improvement wish list and dare to dream. Are you:

- Searching for a sure-fire method of motivating students to great academic heights and sky-high standardized test scores? *It's up on the school roof.*
- Trying to create a closer-knit educational community? *Dress (up) for success.*
- Looking to leapfrog past your fundraising goals? *The answer's staring you right in the kisser.*
- Hoping to make a positive splash with local reporters? *It's only a wading-pool dive away.*
- Itching to weave together cross-curricular units with style? *Challenge students to give you a hair-razing experience.*
- Feeling pressured to do all of the above—without devouring your budget? *There's a tasty solution waiting inside a whipped-cream pie.*

Whether you're an administrator, teacher, counselor, or school librarian, performing a motivational stunt can help you meet every one of the goals above in a fun and creative way that students—and their parents—will remember fondly for years. All it takes is a smidgen of creativity, a dollop of elbow grease, and the willingness to poke a bit of good-natured fun at yourself.

PLAYING THE “GOTCHA” GAME

“For kids, getting the teacher or, ultimately, the principal is the best thing you can do,” contends Alan Cook, a California grade school principal who inspires his students to meet impressive reading goals with a new stunt challenge every year.

Among his many daring feats, Cook has eaten bugs, sprawled on a mound of rotten eggs, and spent the day atop a 60-foot construction cherry picker to reward the academic achievements of his students.

“School is serious, but that doesn’t mean they’re not kids and they don’t enjoy having a good time while they’re here,” Cook says. “We make the stunt the theme for the whole year. When I lay down on eggs, one of our fifth-grade classes figured out how many eggs it would take to fill a certain size container. When I promised to eat bugs if they met a reading goal, the kids from first grade on were writing bug recipes, we had entomologists in to talk about different bugs and their habitats, and so on. We use stunts as a learning tool.”

HOW FAR WILL YOU GO TO HELP STUDENTS GO FAR?

One of the great things about performing a motivational stunt is that you can tailor it to your own personality and comfort level. If you’re not quite up for swimming in a pool full of pudding, for instance, you might be willing to read the morning announcements over a bullhorn from the school roof. Or if a meal of mealworms proves too repulsive, dyeing your hair green for a day may prove a more palatable alternative.

Whichever stunt feels right for you, if you couple it with a creative educational challenge and incorporate the theme throughout the curriculum, your students will be laughing all the way to the knowledge bank by the time you take the stage.

Ready to set up a winning motivational stunt of your own? The following chapters will take you through the entire process step by step, from finding a fun idea and enlisting the support of the community to setting a challenging goal and getting positive press for creatively boosting the academic achievement of your students.

Use the wealth of stunt suggestions, cross-curricular project tie-in tips, and case studies of master motivators to become the newest member of the motivational stunt hall of fame. And whatever else you do, have fun with the process. After all, this is one endeavor in which playing the fool can generate serious rewards for your students and school community.