What can teachers do to support expectations and values to increase student motivation?

**Expectancy-Value Theory** is a theory of motivation that describes the relationship between a student’s expectancy for success at a task or the achievement of a goal in relation to the value of task completion or goal attainment.

**Expectancy** refers to a student’s expectation for success on a given task. Past success or failure can impact a student’s perception of the likelihood of success.

- “I didn’t study for my last history exam and failed. This time I studied, so I expect to do better on today’s exam.”
- “I went to every soccer practice this month. I expect to play well in tomorrow’s game.”

**Values** refer to reasons for doing the activity. Values are shaped by a student’s prior experiences, beliefs, and individual goals.

- **Four types of values:**
  - **Attainment value:** personal importance of doing well on the task
    - I want to do well in school because it is part of who I am
  - **Intrinsic value:** enjoyment that a student derives from performing the activity
    - “I chose to take French class because I love the language.”
    - “Because I enjoy basketball, I spend many hours a day practicing.”
  - **Utility value:** how well a task relates to current and future career goals
    - “Doing well in school will help me graduate from HS with a 4.0 gpa.”
  - **Cost:** time and opportunities the student gives up for the task
    - “I really want to study for this exam, but I also have other assignments that must be done.”

**Suggestions for Improved Practice**

- **Expectancy:**
  - Find out students’ prior knowledge and skills before starting the activity. If a teacher starts with incorrect assumptions about students’ skills, they may create a task that is overly difficult for the students leading to decreased levels of success and motivation.
  - Create opportunities for students to build success and self-efficacy. Scaffold students’ processes through realistic feedback.

- **Attainment Value:**
  - Remind them how the task is related to their identity. For example, this assignment/class project will help you become a teacher (any career) that you want in the future.

- **Intrinsic Value:**
  - Give students some choices in how they can complete class assignments.
  - Include activities you know students enjoy.

- **Utility Value:**
  - Increase students’ perceptions of task value by ensuring that the task has a ‘real world’ feel with a connection to things outside of class.

- **Cost:**
  - Explain with examples how we may have to go through challenges in life like giving up friends or spending time with them in order to gain certain things in life.

**Resources**

