

A Confrontational Strategy

Mandel and Marcus (1988)

Taken from: Brophy, J. E. (2010). *Motivating Students to Learn* (3rd Ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

Mandel and Marcus designed a strategy designed to pressure committed underachievers to stop making excuses and instead begin to take responsibility for applying themselves. The authors' strategy is divided into eight steps:

1. Ask underachievers whether they want to get better grades. This helps structure the relationship so that the student has the responsibility to set goals and it is the teacher's role to help the student achieve these goals.
2. Take stock of progress and problems in each subject and discuss with the child any plans the student may have for addressing the problems. Do not make any recommendations or interpretations at this point; you are just obtaining information.
3. Focus on specific problems and isolate the student's excuses for them. Question for specifics when the student offers vague generalizations and challenge claims you may find questionable.
4. Link each excuse to its natural consequence by eliciting or describing what will happen if the student does not address this problem effectively.
5. Ask the student to suggest solutions for each identified hindrance to success and discuss these suggestions to clarify their practicality, anticipate snags, and refine plans. Make sure not to tell the student what to do, but rather to help the student "own" the goal.
6. Implement a call for action: ask the student what they are going to do and then question for specifics
7. Follow-up to assess whether the student has implemented the plan.
8. If necessary, repeat steps 3-7 with a different excuse each time. Eventually the student will run out of excuses and be forced to accept responsibility.