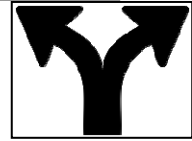*RTI Toolkit: A Practical Guide for Schools*

Finding the Spark: Motivating Reluctant MS/HS Students

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The Struggling Student in a General-Education Setting: Pivot Points

Directions. The student competencies in the table below represent 'pivot points'—opportunities for educators to support the at-risk student to 'pivot' them toward school success. \Number in descending order the **5** competencies that you believe pose the greatest challenge for students in your classroom or school to attain.

Ranking	Student Competency
	A. **Basic Academic Skills.** The student has sufficient mastery of basic academic skills (e.g., reading fluency) to complete classwork.
	B. **Academic Survival Skills.** The student possesses the academic survival skills (e.g., homework skills, time management, organization) necessary to manage their learning.
	C. **Work Completion.** The student independently completes in-class work and homework.
	D. **Transitions.** The student flexibly adapts to changing academic routines and behavioral expectations across activities and settings (e.g., content-area classes; specials).
	E. **Attentional Focus.** The student has a grade- or age-appropriate ability to focus attention in large and small groups and when working independently.
	F. **Emotional Control.** The student manages emotions across settings, responding appropriately to setbacks and frustrations.
	G. **Peer Interactions.** The student collaborates productively and has positive social interactions with peers.
	H. **Self-Efficacy.** The student possesses a positive view of their academic abilities, believing that increased effort paired with effective work practices will result in improved outcomes ('growth mindset').
	I. **Self-Understanding.** The student can articulate their relative patterns of strength and weakness in academic skills, general conduct, and social-emotional functioning.
	J. **Self-Advocacy.** The student advocates for their needs and negotiates effectively with adults.

Communication Tools to Motivate and Engage the Reluctant Student

When talking with a student who appears reluctant, avoidant, or even oppositional, you can use communication techniques to reduce that learner's defensiveness and steer the conversation toward positive, change-oriented outcomes. While these tools are diverse, they all allow you to avoid pointless argument or confrontation while promoting in the student an increased sense of empowerment and hope.

1	Acknowledging Student Control.

It is a simple fact that the student alone has the power to commit to--or refuse to participate in--a change plan. So teacher statements that frankly *emphasize student control* can have positive effects. First, such statements underscore personal responsibility and can thus discourage the learner from projecting blame onto others for their own actions; second, they can reduce the likelihood of a student-teacher power struggle by preemptively recognizing the student's control of the situation. Here are sample statements that highlight student control:

"We can talk about a plan to help you to improve your grades in this course. What that plan includes is up to you."

"I've offered you several ideas for getting your homework in. Which of my ideas or strategies of your own do you want to include in a learning contract?"

"One tool that students often find useful is a learning contract. Let me know if this is something you want to create."

2	Active Listening.

You can use *active-listening* strategies to signal that you have truly heard and understood the student's concerns. The two elements that make up active listening are *restatement* and *summary*.

- During the flow of conversation, you use *restatements* of what was said by the student strategically to highlight specific comments that you judge significant. For example, a student may state, "I don't like asking for help in class". The teacher judges this to be an important point and restates it: "So you really would like to not have to ask others for help." When used judiciously, restatement conveys that you are paying close attention. Restatements also selectively bring to the student's attention statements that the teacher finds noteworthy.

- *Summaries* are brief statements in which you 'sum up' a related series of student utterances. For example, a teacher may summarize a student's comments about difficulties in getting homework turned in: "So, you find that the homework is difficult to do and takes a lot of time. Plus you said that it can be hard to find a quiet place at home to do your homework."

3	Reflection.

Reflection statements give you a means of inserting your interpretation or reaction when restating student statements. Often, reflection serves to express understanding, or empathy, for the student's situation. If a learner states, for example, "I don't like asking for help in class", the teacher might convey empathy by reflecting: "I imagine that it would be uncomfortable to bring attention to yourself by asking for help."

4	Reframing.

When you want the student to consider a different way of looking at a fact, event, or situation, you can employ a *reframing* statement. If a student says, for example, "I'm really frustrated because I put so much work into studying for the test and still got a low grade.", the teacher might put a different 'spin' on that statement by reframing it: "Give yourself a little credit here-- at least you are willing to put in the effort to study-and that's a good start."

5	Positive Redirection.

In any problem-solving conversation, the student can sometimes need a nudge to move from describing the problem to generating solutions. In *positive redirection*, you can use a student statement as a starting point and then redirect-- or 'pivot'-- the student toward a solution-focused action. Here is an example of a teacher's use of positive redirection: "You just described obstacles that prevent you from completing your homework. What are some strategies that could help you to overcome these problems?"

6	Exploratory Questions.

At times, you will want to probe a student's statement further or press him or her (gently) for details. *Exploratory questions* work well for this purpose. When posting such a question, you restate what was said by the student and ask for clarification. Here is an sample: "You say I always pick on you. Can you give examples when it seems like I've picked on you?" NOTE: Exploratory questions can be particularly helpful when a student makes a statement that seems exaggerated. When a learner says "You always pick on me", for example, a follow-up question seeking specific examples can prod the student to acknowledge that these incidents may not in fact be as pervasive as first indicated.

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7	Apology.

During a student conference, we may find that the learner is unhappy because he or she felt belittled or otherwise mistreated at our hands. And occasionally, that student is--right. As educators, we are human: we can unintentionally offend students through an overbearing tone of voice, singling out individuals in ways that embarrass them in front of peers, or other violations of social protocol. In these (hopefully rare) instances, we must be ready to acknowledge our fault and apologize to the student. Apologies should be delivered only when justified and genuine. Appropriately used, however, they can be of great power in reestablishing positive connections with challenging learners. Here is an example of a teacher apology: "I didn't realize until we talked that my jokes in class about your cluttered desk bothered you. I'm sorry--I didn't mean to embarrass you. Between us, let's come up with a better way to handle this issue."

Teacher Communication Tools to Motivate

Teachers communication is a powerful means to boost academic performance. Instructor comments have the ability to boost confidence, focus attention, and engage reluctant learners. Four prime tools in the teacher communication toolbox are change talk, praise, growth-mindset statements, and wise feedback.

Change Talk. Change talk (Miller & Rollnick, 2004) is any statement (or partial statement) that expresses hope, interest in making positive changes, a willingness to try new strategies, or other positive attitudes. When people focus on their own 'change talk', they are more likely to develop and successfully carry out plans to make positive changes in their lives.

Elements of student change talk are often intermixed with expressions of uncertainty, frustration, and doubt. Teachers who are effective listeners listen for 'change talk' (Miller & Rollnick, 2004). In a low-key manner, the educator can then draw attention to that positive change talk, reinforce it, have the student elaborate on it, and thus increase that learner's optimism and confidence (Miller & Rollnick, 2004).

For example, in a teacher conference, the student may say, "**I want to do better in this course** but the work is so hard!" The student's statement includes both positive change talk (the goal of performing better in the course) and a limiting factor (the work is difficult). In conversation, the instructor can strategically draw attention to the student's change talk ("I want to do better in this course") through restatement: e.g., "I am hearing that doing better in the course is important to you" or "So if you could find a way, you would like to do better in the course, right?" This encourages the student to focus on a plan for change rather than on roadblocks preventing change.

Praise. Praise is a type of positive coaching comment. It pinpoints for the student the specific academic or general behavior that is noteworthy and also conveys teacher approval of that behavior (Burnett, 2001). Praise can be thought of as a kind of verbal highlighter, prompting (and reinforcing) the student to engage in *more* of the praised behavior. Praise statements are most effective when they target effort and accomplishment, not general ability. Effective praise consists of two elements:

- DESCRIPTION. The teacher describes in specific terms the noteworthy student academic performance or general behavior to be praised.

- APPROVAL. The teacher signals approval of the student's performance.

Here is a sample praise statement:

- DESCRIPTION. "*Russell, today in class, you wrote non-stop through the entire writing period.*"

- APPROVAL. "*I really appreciate your hard work!*"

Growth Mindset Statements. Research shows that there is one crucial factor that greatly impacts motivation and academic engagement: whether a student possesses a 'fixed' or 'open' mindset (Dweck, 2006). Students with a *fixed mindset* view intelligence, or general ability, as having a fixed upward limit. Viewed from this perspective, effort plays only a minor role in intellectual accomplishment. In contrast, students with a *growth mindset* see intelligence as 'malleable': they have faith that increased effort will result in more effective learning and accomplishment. When fixed-mindset students are challenged by academic tasks, they can easily give up, while, growth-mindset learners interpret academic struggles as "an opportunity for growth, not a sign that a student is incapable of learning" (Paunesku et al., 2015; p. 785).

In their day-to-day communication with students, instructors have many opportunities to craft encouraging statements about schoolwork that can help fixed-mindset learners adopt a more positive, growth-mindset view. These statements contain 3 elements:

- CHALLENGE. The teacher acknowledges that the learning task is difficult—but frames that challenge as an opportunity to learn.

- PROCESS. The teacher identifies the specific process that the student should follow to accomplish the academic task.

- CONFIDENCE. The teacher provides assurance that the student can be successful if the learner puts in sufficient effort and follows the recommended process.

Here is an example of a growth-mindset statement that an instructor uses to encourage a student to continue on an independent reading assignment:

"Sarah, please keep reading. You still have 10 minutes to work on the assignment."

- CHALLENGE. *"Your reading assignment has a lot of advanced vocabulary."*

- PROCESS. *"If you get stuck, be sure to use your reading fix-up skills. Remember, it's also OK to ask a neighbor or to come to me for help. "*

- CONFIDENCE. *"Use your strategies, and you should get through the reading just fine."*

Wise Feedback. Some students—particularly those with a history of academic underperformance or failure—may misinterpret critical instructional feedback as a sign that the teacher lacks confidence in and is negatively biased toward the learner.

An effective way for teachers to reduce the tendency of at-risk students to discount evaluative statements as biased is to format those statements as 'wise' feedback (Yeager et al., 2013). The teacher structures written or verbal feedback to include these 3 elements:

- FEEDBACK DESCRIPTION. The teacher describes the nature of the feedback being offered.
- HIGH STANDARDS. The teacher emphasizes and explains the high standards used to evaluate the student work.
- ASSURANCE OF ABILITY. The teacher states explicitly his or her confidence that the student has the skills necessary to successfully meet those standards.

Here is an example of wise feedback that a teacher wrote on a student writing assignment:

- FEEDBACK DESCRIPTION. *"Your paper met the basic requirements of the assignment but needs work. Please look over my comments. You will see that I give detailed feedback."*

- HIGH STANDARDS. *"The expectation in this class is that you will take your writing to a level suitable for college or business communication."*

- ASSURANCE OF ABILITY. *"Your past writing assignments have shown me that you have the skills and motivation to use my feedback to revise and improve this paper. "*

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Classroom Accommodations for Academics: A Teacher Toolkit

An accommodation ("instructional adjustment") is intended to help the student to fully access and participate in the general-education curriculum without changing the instructional content and without reducing the student's rate of learning (Skinner, Pappas & Davis, 2005). An accommodation is intended to remove barriers to learning while still expecting that students will master the same instructional content as their typical peers.

Here is a list of possible accommodations that teachers can consider using for specific students or with the entire class.

1.	ALLOW PHYSICAL MOVEMENT. To accommodate the fidgety student, negotiate appropriate outlets for movement (e.g., allowing the student to pace at the back of the classroom during a lesson).	Attention/Impulsivity
2.	CHUNK CLASSWORK SESSIONS AND INCLUDE BREAKS. Break up lectures or student work sessions into smaller segments and include brief breaks to sustain student attention.	
3.	CREATE LOW-DISTRACTION WORK AREA. Set up a study carrel in the corner of the room or other low-distraction work area. Direct or allow distractible students to use this area when needed.	
4.	USE PREFERENTIAL SEATING. Seat the student in a classroom location that minimizes distractions and maximizes the ability to focus on the teacher's instruction.	
5.	USE SILENT CUES. Meet with the student and agree on one or more silent teacher cues to redirect or focus the student (e.g., placing a paperclip on the student's desk) during class instruction. Use the cue as needed.	
6.	USE 'VISUAL BLOCKERS'. Encourage the student to reduce distractions on assignments by using a blank sheet of paper or similar aid to cover sections of the page that the student is not currently working on.	

7.	REPEAT/REPHRASE COMMENTS. Repeat or rephrase student questions or comments to the class or group before responding.	Communication
8.	DIRECTIONS: ASSIGN A BUDDY. Assign a study buddy who is willing and able to repeat and explain directions to the student.	
9.	DIRECTIONS: SIMPLIFY. Simplify written directions on assignments to promote student understanding.	
10.	PROVIDE SCHEDULES/AGENDAS. Provide the student with an academic agenda or schedule for the class period or school day, to include: instructional activities, independent assignments, other tasks to be covered during the period, as well as their approximate duration. Preview with students to prepare them for upcoming activities.	

11.	ALLOW EXTRA WORK TIME. Allow the student additional time to complete an in-class activity or assignment. (For longer assignments, the instructor can announce to students at the start the amount of extra time available for those that need it.)
12.	ASSIGN A 'FALL-BACK' PEER. Choose a peer whom the student can check in with to get details about missing or lost homework assignments.
13.	DEVELOP A STUDENT SELF-CHECK ERROR CHECKLIST. Meet with the student to generate a short list of their most common errors made on course assignments (e.g., 'In writing assignments, some words are illegible', 'Not all words at sentence beginning are capitalized'.) Format that list as a customized error-correction checklist for the student to use before turning in the work.
14.	GIVE AN ASSIGNMENT HEAD-START. Allow students who require extra time to complete a lengthy or involved assignment to start it early.
15.	HIGHLIGHT ESSENTIAL MATERIAL. Have the student use a highlighter to identify key ideas and vocabulary in text. (Provide training in this skill if needed.)
16.	OFFER CHOICE: MODES OF TASK COMPLETION. Allow the student two or more choices for completing a given academic task: e.g., keyboarding vs. handwriting an essay; oral vs. written responding to math-fact worksheet.
17.	OFFER CHOICE: ASSIGNMENT SUBSTITUTION. Present the student with two or more alternative activities to choose from with equivalent academic requirements: e.g., to review a textbook chapter, student can answer a series of questions independently or discuss those questions in a structured cooperative learning activity.
18.	OFFER CHOICE: TASK SEQUENCE. When the student has several tasks to complete during independent work time, allow the student to select the order in which she or he will complete those tasks.
19.	PROVIDE A WORK PLAN. For a multi-step assignment, give the student an outline of a work plan that breaks the task into appropriate sub-steps (e.g., 'find five research articles for the paper', 'summarize key information from research articles into notes', etc.). For each sub-step, (1) estimate the minimum amount of 'seat time' required to complete and (2) set a calendar-date deadline for completion.
20.	PROVIDE TEXTS WITH EASIER READABILITY. Locate alternative texts for course readings with the same vocabulary and concepts as the standard text(s) but written at a lower reading level. Allow students to select the easier texts as substitute or supplemental course readings.
21.	PROVIDE WORK SAMPLES / EXEMPLARS. Provide samples of successfully completed academic items (e.g., math computation or word problems) or exemplars (e.g., samples of well-written paragraphs or essays) for the student to refer to when working independently.
22.	RESPONSE EFFORT: CHUNK INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENTS. To reduce the required response effort, break a larger in-class or homework assignment into smaller, more manageable 'chunks'.

Independent Work

23.	RESPONSE EFFORT: START ASSIGNED HOMEWORK IN CLASS. Have students begin assigned homework in class. For reading assignments, have a skilled reader read the first several paragraphs aloud while students follow along silently. For academic homework, have students pair off to complete the first several items. Students are then expected to finish the work on their own.
24.	STRUCTURE ASSIGNMENTS FOR INITIAL SUCCESS. Promote student motivation on worksheets and independent assignments by presenting easier items first and more challenging items later.
25.	TEACH FIX-UP STRATEGIES. Teach the student steps to follow when stuck during independent work: e.g., "If I don't understand what I am reading, (1) slow my reading; (2) focus full attention on the reading; (3) underline unfamiliar words and try to figure them out from context."

26.	CREATE STUDENT ORGANZATION FOLDER. Help the student to create work folder(s) to organizer materials for a course or content area. Each folder can include dividers and color-coding to organize materials by subject or topic.	Organization
27.	CLASS NOTES: CREATE GUIDED NOTES. Prepare a copy of notes summarizing content from a class lecture or assigned reading—with blanks inserted in the notes where key facts or concepts should appear. During instruction, prompt the student to write missing content into the blanks.	
28.	CLASS NOTES: PROVIDE A STUDENT COPY. Provide a copy of class notes to allow the student to focus more fully on the lecture and class discussion. This strategy can be strengthened by requiring that the student highlight key vocabulary terms appearing in the prepared notes as they are brought up in the lecture or discussion.	
29.	CLASS NOTES: PROVIDE LECTURE OUTLINE. Make up an outline of the lecture to share with students. Encourage students to use the elements of the outline to help to structure their class notes and to ensure that their notes do not omit important information.	
30.	LECTURE: TIE INFORMATION TO COURSE READINGS. When presenting important course concepts during lecture, explicitly link that content to page references in the course text or other assigned readings that also cover that information. Prompt students to write these page references into their notes.	
31.	PROVIDE CLASSROOM STORAGE SPACE. Provide the student with shelf space or container in the classroom to store work materials required for class.	
32.	PROVIDE MISSING WORK MATERIALS. Provide essential work materials (e.g., paper, writing utensil) for students who forget to bring them to class.	

33.	CUE IMPORTANT INFORMATION. In instruction and on handouts, identify academic content to be evaluated on upcoming tests and quizzes.	Test-Taking
34.	TEST: ALLOW EXTRA TIME. For tests that evaluate student knowledge or skills but do not formally assess speed/fluency with fixed time limits, allow the student a reasonable amount of additional time if needed.	
35.	TEST: HIGHLIGHT KEY WORDS IN DIRECTIONS. When preparing test directions, highlight key words or phrases (e.g., bold; underlined) to focus student attention.	
36.	TEST: PRACTICE UNDER TEST CONDITIONS. Create practice tests that mimic the actual test in format and environmental conditions (e.g., with time limits). Have the student complete practice tests to build endurance, reduce test anxiety.	

Teaching Positive Behaviors: The Power of Checklists

Educators frequently need to define positive student behaviors so that they can teach the student to perform them; take data on them; communicate with others about them; and/or encourage the student to monitor them.

Making Behavior Checklists. One useful way to define a goal behavior is to break it down into a series of steps in checklist format. The process of breaking down a larger behavior goal ('task') into individual steps is called a 'task analysis'.

Creating a behavior checklist is straight-forward. Often, you can just analyze the larger task and use common sense to break it down into smaller steps. Sometimes it is also helpful to get the advice of an expert as you prepare your behavior checklist. For example, if you want to create a checklist that a student will follow to solve a math word problem, you might ask the math teacher for guidance in constructing the steps. Or, if you are developing a checklist to train a student to wash her hands, you might consult the school nurse for expert advice on the sequence of steps to include.

The sample tasks analysis below shows how the behavior goal ("The student is ready to learn at the start of class") can be converted into more specific steps that can be taught, observed, and measured.

Behavior Checklist Example: The student is ready to learn at the start of class.

At the start of class, the student:
❑ has a sharpened pencil.
❑ has paper for taking notes.
❑ has cleared his/her desk of unneeded materials.
❑ has homework ready to turn in.
❑ has put his/her cellphone in backpack.
❑ is sitting quietly.
❑ is working on the start-of-class assignment.

Teaching Positive Behaviors Using Checklists. Positive behaviors must be taught. This direct-instruction sequence can help your students to both correctly master and actually engage in expected behaviors. This framework includes four major stages:

1. **Show Them.** Using your behavior checklist as a guide, you explain and explicitly model expected ("target") behaviors.

2. **Watch and Praise Them.** Students practice target behaviors under your supervision--and you give frequent corrective feedback and praise.

3. **Practice, Practice, Practice.** Students engage in behaviors independently with your encouragement and reinforcement.

4. **Prompt Behaviors Across Settings.** With your prompting and feedback, students are able to display target behaviors appropriately across a variety of settings or situations ("generalization").

Making Behavior Checklists. You can use a free web-based app, the Self-Check Behavior Checklist Maker, to create customized behavior checklists. This app is available at:

http://www.interventioncentral.org/tools/self-check-behavior-checklist-maker

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Task Analysis Example: Math Word Problem: 7-Step Self-Check

Checklist Item
1. **Reading the problem.** I read the problem carefully. When I do not understand part of the problem (such as a vocabulary word), I try to figure it out before going forward.
2. **Paraphrasing the problem.** I put the math problem into my own words--and keep at this step until I feel that I am describing the problem correctly.
3. **Drawing the problem.** I make a drawing that presents the problem as one or more pictures.
4. **Creating a plan to solve the problem.** Now that I understand what the problem is asking me to do, I make a plan to solve it.
5. **Predicting/Estimating the answer.** Using my estimating skills, I come up with my best guess for what the answer will be.
6. **Computing the answer.** I solve the problem, showing all of my work so that I can remember the steps that I followed.
7. **Checking the answer.** I check my work for each step of the problem to make sure that it is correct. I also compare my actual answer to make sure that it is close to my estimate.

Activity: Create a Behavior Checklist

Directions. Select a goal student behavior. Break that behavior down into separate steps to create a checklist.

Here are some examples of larger behaviors that can be task-analyzed and turned into checklists: "Completes in-class writing assignments", "complies with teacher requests", "gets organized at the start of class/the day", "attends to instruction", "interacts appropriately with peers during group work".

Goal Student Behavior: _____

_____

Behavior Steps:

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☐ _____

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How To: Improve Student Self-Management Through Work-Planning Skills: Plan, Work, Evaluate, Adjust

It is no surprise to teachers that, when students have poor work-planning skills, their academic performance often suffers. Work-planning is the student's ability to inventory a collection of related sub-tasks to be done, set specific outcome goals that signify success on each sub-task, allocate time sufficient to carry out each sub-task, evaluate actual work performance, and make necessary adjustments in future work-planning as needed (Martin, Mithaug, Cox, Peterson, Van Dycke & Cash, 2003).. When students are deficient as work planners, the negative impact can be seen on in-class and homework assignments as well as on longer-term projects such as research papers. Teachers can develop students' work-planning skills by training them in a simple but effective sequence: to plan upcoming work, complete the work, evaluate their work performance, and adjust their future work plans based on experience (Martin et al., 2003).

The vehicle for teachers to train students to develop strong work-planning skills is through conferencing: the teacher and student meet for a pre-work *planning* conference and then meet again after the work is completed at a *self-evaluation* conference. NOTE: The *Student Independent Work: Planning Tool* that appears later in this document is a graphic organizer that can be used to structure and record these 2-part teacher-student conferences.

Phase 1: Work-Planning Conference

Before the student begins the assigned academic work, the teacher meets with the student to develop the work plan. (While the teacher often initially assumes a guiding role in the work-planning conference, the instructor gradually transfers responsibility for developing the plan to the student as that student's capacity for planning grows.)

There are 3 sections in the work-planning conference: (1) inventory the sub-tasks to be done, (2) assign an estimated time for completion, and (3) set a performance goal for each item on the task list:

1. *Inventory the sub-tasks to be done.* The student describes each academic task in clear and specific terms (e.g., "Complete first 10 problems on page 48 of math book", "write an outline from notes for history essay"). For this part of the work plan, the teacher may need to model for the student how to divide larger global assignments into component tasks.

2. *Assign an estimated time for completion.* The student decides how much time should be reserved to complete each task (e.g., For a math workbook assignment: "20 minutes" or "11:20 to 11:40"). Because students with limited planning skills can make unrealistic time projections for task completion, the teacher may need to provide additional guidance and modeling in time estimation during the first few planning sessions.

3. *Set a performance goal.* The student sets a performance goal to be achieved for each sub-task. Performance goals are dependent on the student and may reference the amount, accuracy, and/or qualitative ratings of the work: (e.g., for a reading assignment: "To read at least 5 pages from assigned text, and to take notes of the content"; for a math assignment: "At least 80% of problems correct"; for a writing assignment: "Rating of 4 or higher on class writing rubric"). The teacher can assist the student to set specific, achievable goals based on that student's current abilities and classroom curriculum expectations.

Phase 2: Self-Evaluation Conference

When the work has been completed, the teacher and student meet again to evaluate the student's performance. There are 2 sections to this conference: (1) Compare the student's actual performance to the original student goal; and (2) adjust future expectations and performance in light of the experience gained from the recently completed work.

1. *Compare the student's actual performance to the original student goal.* For each sub-task on the plan, the student compares his or her actual work performance to the original performance goal and notes whether the goal was achieved. In addition to noting whether the performance goal was attained, the student evaluates whether the sub-task was completed within the time allocated.

2. *Adjust future expectations and performance.* For each sub-task that the student failed to reach the performance goal within the time allocated, the student reflects on the experience and decides what adjustments to make on future assignments. For example, a student reviewing a homework work-plan who discovers that she reserved insufficient time to complete math word problems may state that, in future, she should allocate at least 30 minutes for similar sub-tasks. Or a student who exceeds his performance goal of no more than 4 misspellings in a writing assignment may decide in future to keep a dictionary handy to check the spelling of questionable words before turning in writing assignments.

References

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Student Independent Work: Planning Tool

Student: _____ Teacher/Staff Member: _____ Date: ___/___/___

	Date:	Planning **Sub-Task:** Describe each assignment sub-task to be completed.	Planning **Time Allocated:** Estimate the time required for this task. E.g., "20 mins"; "11:20-11:40"	Planning **Performance Goal:** Write your goal for the amount, accuracy, and/or quality of work to be completed.	Self-Evaluation **Actual Performance:** After the assignment, record the amount, accuracy, and/or quality of the work *actually completed*.	Self-Evaluation **Goal Met?:** Did you achieve the goal within the time allocated?
1	__/__/__					☐ YES ☐ NO
2	__/__/__					☐ YES ☐ NO
3	__/__/__					☐ YES ☐ NO
4	__/__/__					☐ YES ☐ NO

Adjustment: Find any 'NO' responses in the **Goal Met?** column. In the space below, write the number of that goal and your plan to improve on that goal next time.

Number of Goal Not Met & Action Plan to Fix: _____ _____

Number of Goal Not Met & Action Plan to Fix: _____ _____

Number of Goal Not Met & Action Plan to Fix: _____ _____

How to: Increase Motivation: Learning Contracts

Description. A learning contract is a voluntary, student-completed document that outlines actions the learner promises to take in a course to achieve academic success. This contract is signed by the student, the instructor, and (optionally) the parent. Benefits of all such contracts, however, are that they provide academic structure and support, motivate struggling learners by having them pledge publicly to engage in specific, positive study and learning behaviors, and serve as a vehicle to bring teachers and students to agreement on what course goals are important and how to achieve them (Frank & Scharff, 2013). NOTE: See the learning contract appearing later in this document as an example of how these contracts can be formatted.

Procedure: The learning contract is typically completed in a meeting between the student and instructor. (In middle and high schools, the parent may also be a participant.) While there are many possible variations on the learning contract, they often contain these components (Frank & Scharff, 2013; Greenwood & McCabe, 2008):

- *Statement of Purpose*. The contract opens with a statement presenting a rationale for why the contract is being implemented. A sample statement might be: *I am taking part in this learning contract because I want to improve my grades and pass this course*.

- *Student Actions*. The contract lists any actions that the student is pledging to complete to ensure success in the course. Suitable targets for learning contract items might include attendance, class participation, completion of classwork or homework, seeking of instructor help, etc. See Figure 1 for a listing of sample actions that might be written into a learning contract.

Figure 1: Sample Student Learning Contract Items
• **Attendance**. *I will attend at least 80 percent of class sessions.*   • **Course Participation**. *I will contribute at least one comment to every in-class discussion.*   • **Readings**. *I will complete all assigned readings.*   • **Study/Assignments**. *I will spend a minimum of 1 hour per day reviewing notes and working on assignments.*   • **Course Help**. *I will attend instructor office hours at least once per week.*   • **Group Project**. *I will communicate at least weekly with peers in my work group (face-to-face or electronically) about our shared course project.*

- *Teacher Actions.* The learning contract can be strengthened by adding a section detailing those actions that the instructor agrees to undertake to support the student. For example, the contract might state that the instructor will respond within 24 hours to course questions emailed by the student or will check weekly and alert the student to any missing course work. Listing teacher responsibilities on the contract emphasizes that success in the course is a shared endeavor and can prod the student to take advantage of instructor supports that might otherwise be overlooked.

- *Sign-Off.* Both student and teacher sign the learning contract. If the parent is participating in the development of the contract, he or she also signs the contract. Because this document is a kind of 'promissory contract' (Rousseau & Parks, 1993), the student signature in particular indicates a voluntary acceptance of the learning contract and a public pledge to follow through on its terms.

Tips for Use. Here are additional ideas for using learning contracts:

- *Contracts and Whole-Group instruction.* If a number of students in a class would benefit from learning contracts as a motivational tool, teachers can incorporate them into whole-group instruction. For example, an instructor may write a series of learning-contract goals on the board (similar to the list appearing in Figure 1) and direct each student to select 3 or 4 to include in his or her own contract. The teacher would collect copies of all learning contracts and hold every student accountable for their use.

- *Contracts & Enrichment.* Learning contracts can also be a convenient way to document individualized plans for enriched instructional activities. Advanced students can fill out contracts detailing their ambitious, self-directed learning goals; these contracts can also describe extra credit or other forms of recognition that students will earn for these enrichment activities.

References

Frank, T., & Scharff, L. F. V. (2013). Learning contracts in undergraduate courses: Impacts on student behaviors and academic performance. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 13*(4), 36-53.

Greenwood, S. C., & McCabe, P. P. (2008). How learning contracts motivate students. *Middle School Journal, 39*(5), 13-22.

Rousseau, D. M., & Parks, J. M. (1993). The contracts of individuals and organizations. *Research in Organizational Behavior, 15,* 1-43.

Name: Troy Blue   **Teacher:** Mr. Smith   **Class/Course:** Algebra I   **Date:** 16 November 2015

Troy Blue's Learning Contract

I am taking part in this learning contract because the strategies listed here will help me to learn the material and perform well in this course.

Student Responsibilities---

I have chosen to complete the following actions:

1 | I will be on-time for class.

2 | I will turn in at least 80% of assigned homework, with all work completed.

3 | I will spend a minimum of 1 hour per day reviewing notes and working on assignments.

4 | I will check in with the instructor during his free period at least once per week and bring any questions from current work.

Teacher Responsibilities--

My teacher will help me to achieve success in this course through these actions/supports:

1. Answer questions and offer help during weekly free-period check-ins.
2. Remind Troy weekly about any missing assignments.
3. Supply review copy of class notes each period.

Length of Contract--

The terms of this contract will continue until:

My Algebra course grade rises to 75 or higher.

Sign-Offs---

Mr. Frank Smith   *Troy Blue*   *Diane Blue*

_____   _____   _____

Mr. Smith   Troy Blue   Diane Blue

Teacher   Student   Parent

Reading Comprehension: Retain Text Information With Paraphrasing (RAP)

Students who fail to retain important details from their reading can be taught a self-directed paraphrasing strategy.

The student is trained to use a 3-step cognitive strategy when reading each paragraph of an information- text passage:

1.   READ the paragraph;

2.   ASK oneself what the main idea of the paragraph is and what two key details support that main idea;

3.   PARAPHRASE the main idea and two supporting details into one's own words.

This 3-step strategy is easily memorized using the acronym RAP (read-ask-paraphrase).

OPTIONAL BUT RECOMMENDED: Create an organizer sheet with spaces for the student to record the main idea and supporting details of multiple paragraphs to be used with the RAP strategy. RAP organizer forms can provide structure to the student and yield work products that the teacher can collect to verify that the student is using the strategy.

Read-Ask-Paraphrase (RAP) Sheet

Name: Date: Title/Pages of Reading:

Student Directions: For *each paragraph* from your assigned reading, (1) READ the paragraph; (2) ASK yourself what the main idea of the paragraph is and what two key details support that main idea; (3) PARAPHRASE the main idea and two supporting details in your own words and write them in the blank provided.

Paragraph 1

Paragraph 2

Paragraph 3

Paragraph 4

Paragraph 5

Paragraph 6

Paragraph 7

Paragraph 8

Paragraph 9

Paragraph 10

Comprehension: Self-Management:

Reading Comprehension: Reading Actively (Gleason, Archer, & Colvin, 2002).

By reading, recalling, and reviewing the contents of every paragraph, the student improves comprehension of the longer passage. The instructor teaches students to first read through the paragraph, paying particular attention to the topic and important details and facts. The instructor then directs students to cover the paragraph and state (or silently recall) the key details of the passage from memory. Finally, the instructor prompts students to uncover the passage and read it again to see how much of the information in the paragraph the student had been able to accurately recall. This process is repeated with all paragraphs in the passage.

Gleason, M. M., Archer, A. L., & Colvin, G. (2002). Interventions for improving study skills. In M. A. Shinn, H. M. Walker & G. Stoner (Eds.), Interventions for academic and behavior problems II: Preventive and remedial approaches (pp.651-680). Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

Comprehension: Self-Management:

Reading-Reflection Pause: When reading, the student takes brief breaks periodically to consolidate understanding.

INTERVENTION: During independent reading, the student is taught to follow these steps:

STEP 1: The student chooses a reading interval to follow (e.g., every four sentences; every 3 minutes; at the end of each paragraph).

STEP 2: At the end of each interval, the student pauses briefly to recall the main points of the reading just completed. If the student has questions or is uncertain about the content, the student rereads part or all of the section just read. Then the student resumes reading until the next interval is completed and repeats the reflection-pause.

Hedin, L.R., & Conderman, G. (2010). Teaching students to comprehend informational text through rereading. The Reading Teacher, 63(7), 556-565.

Comprehension: Annotation:

Link Pronouns to Referents reinforces understanding of an informational passage by replacing pronouns with their referent nouns during independent reading.

PREPARATION: Before each session:

Select an informational passage at the student's instructional level suitable for independent reading.

INTERVENTION: During independent reading, the student is taught to follow these steps:

STEP 1: While reading, the student circles each pronoun appearing within the text, locates that pronoun's referent (i.e., the noun that it refers to), and writes next to the pronoun the name of its referent. For example, the student may add the referent to the pronoun "it" in this sentence from a biology text: "The Cambrian Period is the first geological age that has large numbers of multi-celled organisms associated with it [Cambrian Period]".

STEP 2: The student reads the text at least once more. In this rereading, whenever the student encounters a circled pronoun, they consciously substitute that pronoun's referent.

Comprehension: Annotation:

Mark It/Jot It prompts the student to interact with informational passages by marking up and annotating text. During independent reading assignments, the student reads each paragraph closely and follows these 2 steps:

STEP 1: MARK IT. The student uses this simple annotation system to mark up elements of the paragraph that they find meaningful:

! = This is an important point.

? = I have a question or confusion about this point.

Circled word(s) = I do not know the meaning of this term.

Underlined word(s) = This information is important.

Highlighted words = This information is important.

STEP 2: JOT IT. The student writes notes in the margin of the text as appropriate to accompany the annotations, to include:

Question: e.g., "I have a question about…"

Clarify: e.g., "What does [term] mean?"

Connect: e.g., "This section made me think about…"

Comment: e.g., "I think that…"

Mariage, T.V., Englert, C. S., & Mariage, M. F. (2020). Comprehension instruction for Tier 2 early learners: A scaffolded apprenticeship for close reading of informational text. Learning Disability Quarterly, 43(1), 29-42.

Comprehension: Annotation:

Double-Entry Reading Journal prompts students to select relevant quotes from their reading and then write reflective comments.

PREPARATION: Before the intervention:

Format a double-entry journal log sheet. At the top of the sheet, include labels and spaces to record "Student Name", "Date" and "Name of Reading Assignment". Divide the sheet into 2 columns with a dividing line down the middle. At the top of the left column, insert "Passage from My Reading". At the top of the right column, insert "My Thoughts about This Passage".

Create a lookup sheet with a short list of reflective sentence-starters like these examples: This reminds me of _____./This makes me think of _____./This is important because _____./I think this means _____./The reason I picked this is _____./What confuses me about this is _____./This is interesting, because _____./Somebody who reads this might believe that _____.

Before each intervention session, select an informational passage within students' instructional level for use with this strategy.

INTERVENTION: During the intervention session:

STEP 1: Students receive a copy of the double-entry journal log and the assigned reading.

STEP 2: Students complete the reading, recording their selected quotations under column 1 "Passage from My Reading".

STEP 3: For each quotation, students write commentary notes. They are encouraged to consult their list of reflective sentence-starters if needed.

TIP: To motivate, you can conference with students prior to their reading and prompt them to set a goal for the minimum number of quotations from the text that they plan to select. You can then briefly check in at the end of the reading to view double-entry journal entries and verify that the students achieved their goals.

Poch, A.L., & Lembke, E.S. (2018). Promoting content knowledge of secondary students with learning disabilities through comprehension strategies. Intervention in School and Clinic, 54(2), 75-82.

Double-Entry Reading Journal

Student: _____ Date: _____

Reading Assignment: _____

Passage from My Reading	My Thoughts About This Passage

Sentence Starters: This reminds me of _____.
This makes me think of _____.
This is important because _____.
I think this means _____.

The reason I picked this is _____.
What confuses me about this is _____.
This is interesting, because _____.
Somebody who reads this might believe that _____.