

# Finding the Spark: Communication Tools to Motivate the Struggling Learner

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## ACADEMIC RTI

### **Tier 3: High-Risk Students: 5%**

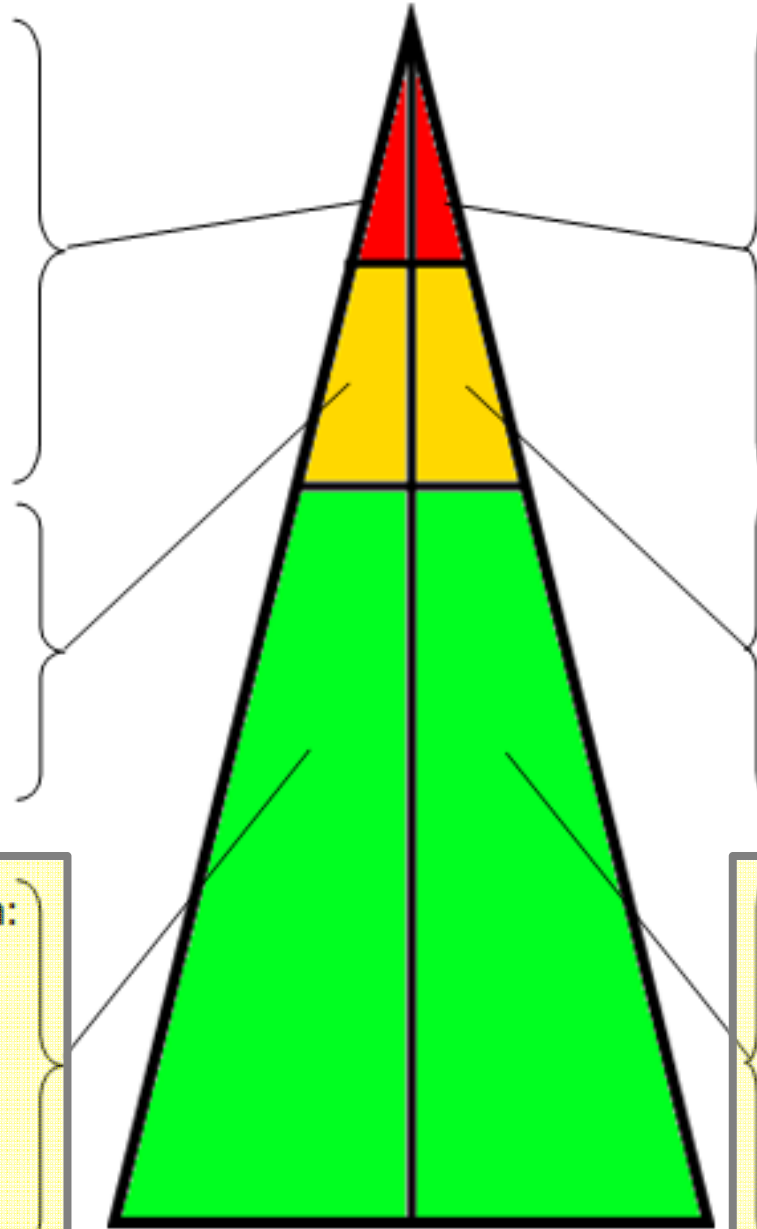
- Diagnostic assessment of academic problems
- RTI Team Meetings
- Customized/intensive academic intervention plan
- Daily progress-monitoring

### **Tier 2: At-Risk Students: 15%**

- Small-group interventions to address off-grade-level academic deficits
- Regular progress-monitoring

### **Tier 1: Universal: Core Instruction: 80%**

- Effective group instruction
- Universal academic screening
- Academic interventions for struggling students



## BEHAVIORAL RTI

### **Tier 3: High-Risk Students: 5%**

- Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBAs)
- Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs)
- Wrap-around RTI Team meetings
- Daily progress-monitoring

### **Tier 2: At-Risk Students: 15%**

- Small-group interventions for emerging behavioral problems
- Regular progress-monitoring

### **Tier 1: Universal: Classroom Management: 80%**

- Clear behavioral expectations
- Effective class-wide management strategies
- Universal behavior screening

Source: Grosche, M., & Volpe, R. J. (2013). Response-to-intervention (RTI) as a model to facilitate inclusion for students with learning and behaviour problems. *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 28*, 254-269. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2013.768452>

# Classroom Behavior Management: Essential Elements

In the general-education classroom, the teacher promotes effective learning and appropriate behavior through these elements:

1. Strong core instruction.
2. Effective group behavior management.
3. Use of individual management strategies with targeted students ("classroom intervention plan").

## Communication & Motivation: 4 Assumptions

- ✓ ***Assumption 1: Self-Communication.*** Student motivation increases when learners communicate to themselves the correct attributions (explanations) about their own academic performance and the intentions of those who teach them.
- ✓ ***Assumption 2: Teacher-to-Student Communication.*** Student motivation increases when teachers regularly communicate optimistic messages that link academic success to effort and playful process.
- ✓ ***Assumption 3: Student-to-Teacher Communication.*** Student motivation increases when the learner communicates questions, needs, and preferences to the teacher.
- ✓ ***Assumption 4: Task Communication.*** Student motivation increases when assigned academic tasks clearly communicate their requirements and performance standards.



- **Assumption 1: Self-Communication.**  
Student motivation increases when learners communicate to themselves the correct attributions (explanations) about their own academic performance and the intentions of those who teach them.

What are 'motivation' and 'self-regulation'?



“ *You can lead a horse to water,  
but you can't make it drink.* ”

-English Proverb (12<sup>th</sup> Century)



“ *Motivation is the art of getting people to do what you want them to do because they want to do it.* ”

-Dwight D. Eisenhower

## Response to Intervention

Unmotivated Students: What Works

Motivation can be thought of as having two dimensions:

1. the student's expectation  
of success on the task

.....10

**Multiplied by**

2. the value that the student places  
on achieving success on that  
learning task

.....X.....0

-----  
0

The relationship between the two factors is *multiplicative*. If EITHER of these factors (the student's expectation of success on the task OR the student's valuing of that success) is zero, then the 'motivation' product will also be zero.

**Source:** Sprick, R. S., Borgmeier, C., & Nolet, V. (2002). Prevention and management of behavior problems in secondary schools. In M. A. Shinn, H. M. Walker & G. Stoner (Eds.), *Interventions for academic and behavior problems II: Preventive and remedial approaches* (pp.373-401). Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

# Student Motivation & RTI: Reframing the Issue in Observable (and Fixable) Terms

- Step 1: Redefine 'motivation' as academic engagement: e.g., *The student chooses "to engage in active accurate academic responding"* (Skinner, Pappas, & Davis, 2005).
- Step 2: Build school-wide support for this mission statement: "When a student appears unmotivated, it is the school's job to figure out why the student is unmotivated and to find a way to get that student motivated."

*Source:* Skinner, C. H., Pappas, D. N., & Davis, K. A. (2005). Enhancing academic engagement: Providing opportunities for responding and influencing students to choose to respond. *Psychology in the Schools*, 42, 389-403.

## Self-Regulation: Motivation...With a Plan

*"Self-regulation of learning* involves learners setting goals, selecting appropriate learning strategies, maintaining motivation, engaging in self-monitoring, and evaluating their own academic progress." p. 451

What is 'learned helplessness'  
and how can this condition  
**undermine** student motivation?

## Attributions: Self-Explanations That Drive Future Actions

"The reasons one assigns for achieving success or failure are called *attributions*...Students' attributions affect their future expectations and actions."  
(Alderman, 1990; p. 27)

## Response to Intervention

# "Why I did not do well on my writing assignment": 3 Common Student Attributions

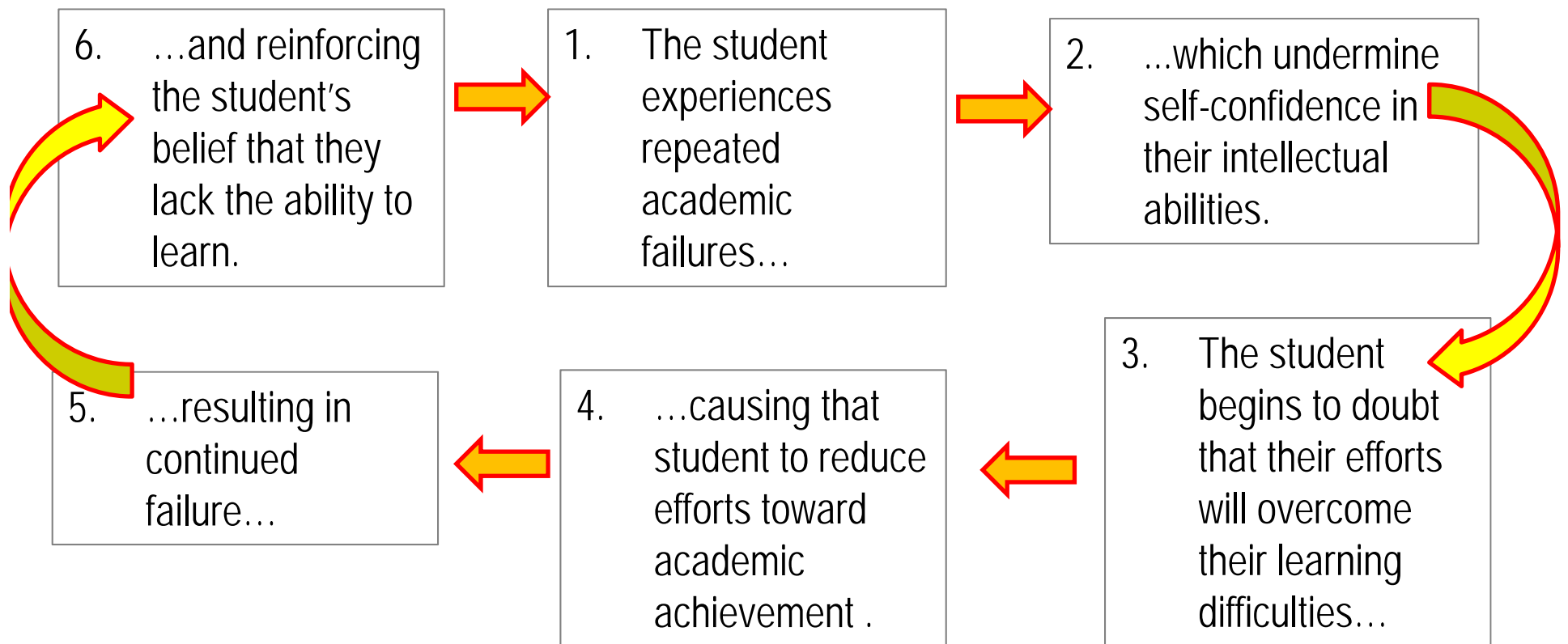
**1. Lack of Ability:**  
*"The fact is that I am not good at writing."*

**2. Adult Bias:** *"This teacher grades unfairly. She doesn't like me."*

**3. Lack of Effort:** *"I did not work hard enough-but could do better if I put in more effort."*

# Learned Helplessness: The Failure Cycle

Students with a history of school failure are at particular risk of falling into the learned helplessness cycle:





# Learned Helplessness: The Effects

Students who experience a sense of 'learned helplessness' feel powerless to improve their academic performance and standing. They can also experience these negative effects:

1. Reduced motivation to respond in the classroom
2. Lessened ability to associate responding with desirable outcomes
3. Symptoms of depression or anxiety

Source: Sutherland, K. S., & Singh, N. N. (2004). Learned helplessness and students with emotional or behavioral disorders: Deprivation in the classroom. *Behavioral Disorders*, 29(2), 169–181.



- **Assumption 2: Teacher Communication.**  
Student motivation increases when teachers regularly communicate optimistic messages that link academic success to effort and planful process.

*Growth Mindset:* Teachers can combat 'learned helplessness' by structuring classroom statements to encourage optimism and motivation.



# Mindsets: Determining Limits on Potential

Research in cognitive psychology (Dweck, 2006) demonstrates that individuals' performance as learners is profoundly influenced by

- their perceptions of their intelligence and/or abilities and
- their reinforcing these perceptions through an ongoing monologue as they encounter new challenges.

The habitual ways that people have of thinking about their abilities can be thought of as '**mindsets**'. Mindsets fall into two categories: **Fixed** vs. **growth**.

## Beliefs About Mindsets: Fixed vs. Growth

### - Fixed Mindset

Intelligence (general ability) is fixed. **Effort** plays a **minor role** in determining one's level of accomplishment.

Thus, **setbacks** are viewed as a **lack of ability** and result in the student "giving up or withdrawing effort" (Blackwell, et al., 2015).

### + Growth Mindset

Intelligence and other attributes are '**malleable**'--they can increase with effort.

This perspective views **struggle** as a **positive**-- "an opportunity for growth, not a sign that a student is incapable of learning." (Paunesku, et al., 2015).

## The 'Malleability' of Intelligence

“It is important to recognize that believing intelligence to be malleable does not imply that everyone has exactly the same potential in every domain, or will learn everything with equal ease.

Rather, it means that for any given individual, intellectual ability can always be further developed.”

# Contrasting Mindsets: Responses to Setbacks

## - Fixed Mindset: The student may:

- give up
- withdraw effort
- 'disidentify' with challenge  
subject: e.g., "*I don't like math much anyway.*"
- be at greater risk for cheating

## + Growth Mindset: The student will:

- view setback as an opportunity for learning
- increase effort
- figure out deficiencies in work or study processes and correct them

# Mindsets: Fixed vs. Growth

“[Fixed vs. growth] mindsets affect students' achievement by creating **different psychological worlds.**”

Dr. Carol Dweck



## Mindsets: Fixed vs. Growth

Does a student's type of mindset have a significant impact on school performance?

When students are not experiencing significant learning challenges, those with **fixed** and **growth** mindsets may do **equally well**.

However, during times of difficult academic work or dramatic changes in the learning environment (e.g., middle school), **growth-mindset** students tend to do **significantly better** than their fixed-mindset peers.

# Fixed-Mindset Statements: What NOT to Say

Fixed-mindset statements are those that reinforce the (untrue) idea that individuals have a fixed quantity of 'ability' that cannot expand much despite the learner's efforts. Here are statements to avoid, because they send a fixed-mindset message to students:

- *“Excellent essay. You are a **natural-born** writer!”*
- *“You need to work harder. I have seen your grades and know that you are **smart enough** to get an A in this course.”*
- *“It’s OK-not everyone **can be good** at math.”*

# To Promote a 'Growth Mindset'...Use Process-Oriented Statements



Teachers' growth-mindset statements are varied. However, they tend to include these elements:

- **Process.** Lays out a specific process for moving forward.
- **Challenge(s).** Recognizes difficulties or struggles to be faced and frames them as opportunities to learn.
- **Confidence.** Conveys optimism that the student can and will move toward success if the learner puts in sufficient effort, follows the recommended process, and makes appropriate use of any 'help' resources.

*Source: Dweck, C. S. (2007). The perils and promises of praise. Educational Leadership, 65(2), 34-39.*



# Integrate 'Pro-Growth-Mindset' Statements into Classroom Discourse

In day-to-day communication with students, instructors have many opportunities use growth-mindset principles to infuse their statements with optimism, including:

- praise
- work-prompts
- encouragement
- introduction of assignments

*Source: Dweck, C. S. (2007). The perils and promises of praise. Educational Leadership, 65(2), 34-39.*



### *Process Praise*

*"Your writing is improving a lot. The extra time you put in and your use of an outline has really paid off."*

# Growth Mindset: Teacher Examples

## *Process Praise*



Effective teacher praise has two elements: (1) a description of noteworthy student performance, and (2) a signal of teacher approval (Hawkins & Hellin, 2011). Because this 'process praise' ties performance directly to effort, it reinforces a growth mindset in students who receive it.

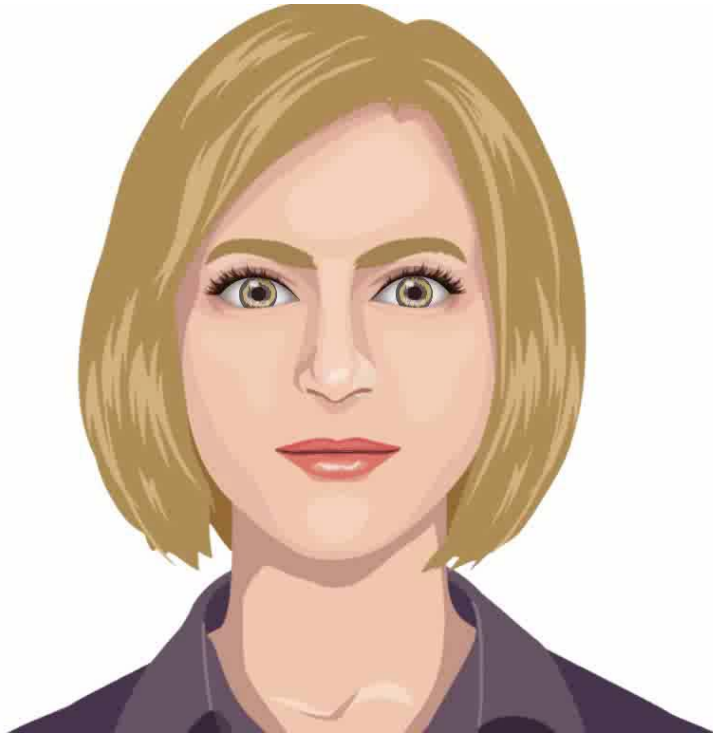
*EXAMPLE:*

Approval

Performance

*"Your writing is improving a lot."*

*The extra time you put in and your use of an outline has really paid off."*



### *Work Prompt*

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

*It's a challenging passage, so 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.*

*Use your strategies and you will be successful!"*



# Growth Mindset: Teacher Examples

## *Work Prompt*

When students stop working during an independent assignment, the teacher can structure the "get-back-to-work" prompt to follow a growth-mindset format.

*EXAMPLE:*

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

Prompt: Keep Working

*It's a challenging passage,*

Challenge

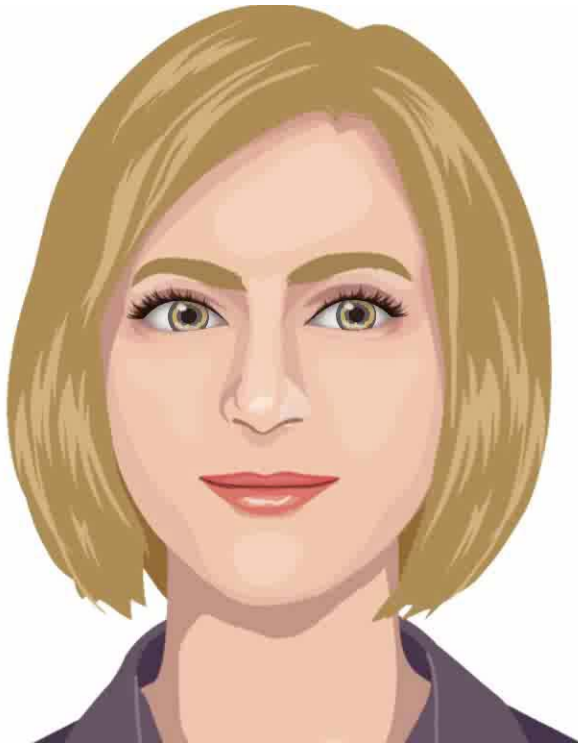
*so if you get stuck, be sure to use your reading fix-up skills. Remember, it's also OK to ask a neighbor or to come to me for help.*

Process: Fix-Up Skills & Help Options

*Use your strategies and you will be successful!"*

Confidence





### *Encouragement*

*"I can see that you didn't do as well on this math test as you had hoped, Luis.*

*Let's review ideas to help you prepare for the next exam.*

*If you are willing to put in the work, I know that you can raise your score."*



# Growth Mindset: Teacher Examples

## *Encouragement*

When students have academic setbacks, the teacher can respond with empathy: framing the situation as a learning opportunity, describing proactive steps to improve the situation, and expressing confidence in the learner.

### *EXAMPLE:*

*"I can see that you didn't do as well on this math test as you had hoped, Luis."*

Empathy

*Let's review ideas to help you to prepare for the next exam. If you are willing to put in the work,*

Process & Effort

*I know that you can raise your score."*

Confidence



### *Assignment*

*"You should plan spend at least 90 minutes on tonight's math homework."*

*When you start the assignment, some problems might look like they are too difficult to solve.*

*But if you give it your best and follow your problem-solving checklist, you should be able to answer them."*



# Growth Mindset: Teacher Examples *Assignment*

The teacher can give assignments a growth-mindset spin--describing challenge(s), appraising the effort required, reminding what strategies or steps to use, and stating confidently that following the process will lead to success.

## *EXAMPLE:*

*"You should plan to spend at least 90 minutes on tonight's math homework."*

Effort Needed

*"When you start the assignment, some problems might look like they are too difficult to solve."*

Challenge

*"But if you give it your best and follow your problem-solving checklist,*

Process & Effort

*you should be able to answer them."*

Confidence

# To Promote a 'Growth Mindset'...Use Process-Oriented Statements



Teachers' growth-mindset statements are as varied as the students and situations they address. However, they tend to include these elements:

- **Process.** Lays out a specific process for moving forward.
- **Challenge(s).** Recognizes difficulties or struggles to be faced and frames them as opportunities to learn.
- **Confidence.** Conveys optimism that the student can and will move toward success if the learner puts in sufficient effort, follows the recommended process, and makes appropriate use of any 'help' resources.

*Source: Dweck, C. S. (2007). The perils and promises of praise. Educational Leadership, 65(2), 34-39.*



## Growth Mindset: Scenario

### Brian: Work Prompt

"Brian, it's time to start your math deskwork. You see that there are 10 word problems, which may seem like a lot.

But remember to use your checklist. It will take you through the right steps to solve each problem.

Follow the checklist and you should be OK. If you need help, though, just raise your hand."

Growth-mindset statements address:

- **Process.** Lays out a specific process for moving forward.
- **Challenge(s).** Recognizes difficulties or struggles to be faced and frames them as opportunities to learn.
- **Confidence.** Conveys optimism that the student can and will move toward success with effort.

# Growth-Mindset Statement: A Motivational Push



Research studies have shown that even students with an ingrained 'fixed-mindset' view of academics can gain a brief motivation 'push' when the teacher reframes a past, present, or future learning activity in 'growth mindset' terms.

Each classroom, then, becomes its own motivational micro-climate.

And with the teacher's continued expression of an optimistic, growth-mindset view, students are more likely to apply more effort, attain greater success, and become self-directed learners.

### Mindsets Research: Effective Only If We Apply It...

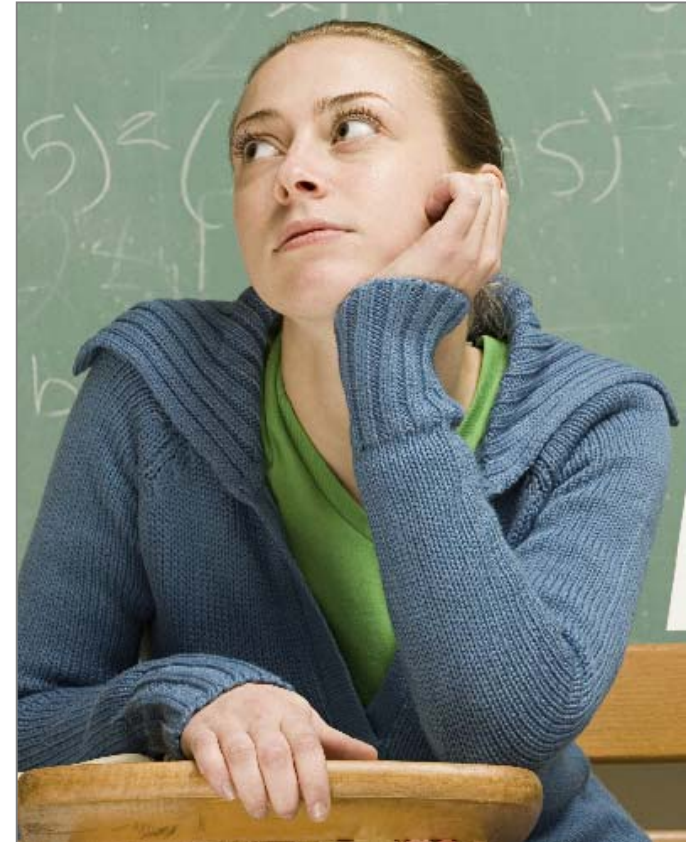
Proponents of growth-mindset statements should be concerned that the average frequency in which teachers use classroom praise is generally low in general- and special-education classrooms (Hawkins & Heflin, 2011).

Frequency of praise is a useful indicator of the rate at which teachers might use ANY growth-mindset statement.

It is of little help if teachers agree that growth-mindset is important to student motivation but fail to actually implement the strategy.



*'Wise' Feedback:* Teachers can increase student receptiveness to critical evaluation by using this feedback structure.



# Critical Feedback: The Problem...

The intention of teachers' instructional feedback is often ambiguous, leaving learners free to impose their own interpretations. A student, for example, might view a teacher's written or verbal feedback about an assignment as a sign either of caring and commitment or a curt dismissal of the student's abilities (Yeager et al., 2013).

Students already sensitive to being stereotyped (e.g., because of race, gender, or economic class) may construe teacher feedback in a negative light—as a sign of stereotyping or bias (Cohen, Steele, & Ross, 1999; Yeager et al., 2013). So the student 'tunes out' that adult feedback—resulting in the 'mentor's dilemma'.

*Sources:* Cohen, G. L., Steele, C. M., and Ross, L. D. (1999). The mentor's dilemma: Providing critical feedback across the racial divide. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 25(10), 1302-1318.

Yeager, D. S., Purdie-Vaughns, V., Garcia, J., Apfel, N., Brzustoski, P., Master, A., Hessert, W. T., & Williams, M. E. (2013). Breaking the cycle of mistrust: Wise interventions to provide critical feedback across the racial divide. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 143, 804-824.

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# 'Wise' Feedback: Formatting Critical Feedback to Promote Student Acceptance

'Wise feedback' prevents the student from taking criticism about their work personally. Written or verbal feedback about a student's academic performance is prefaced with:

- **an explicit statement of high standards,**
- [optional] a brief description of the feedback, and
- **assurance that the instructor fully believes the student capable of attaining those elevated standards.**

The actual feedback offered should also be sufficiently rigorous to reflect high standards.

# Wise Feedback Example: Paper

### Feedback Description

*"Your paper met the basic expectations of the assignment but needs work. Please look over my comments."*

### High Standards

*"You will see that I give detailed, critical feedback. This course sets the expectation that you will take your writing to a level suitable for college work."*

### Assurance of Student Ability

*"Your past assignments have shown me that you have the skills and motivation to use my feedback to revise and improve your paper."*



# Wise Feedback: PowerPoint

### Feedback Description

*"Review the attached rubric and my notes evaluating your recent science PowerPoint presentation."*

### High Standards

*"This PowerPoint is an adequate starting point, but can be made better. Remember the goal for this assignment is to create a presentation that showcases your communication skills to a potential employer."*

### Assurance of Student Ability

*"I know from examples in your work portfolio and contributions to class discussion that you will be able to implement my suggestions and increase the quality and persuasiveness of your PowerPoint."*

## Wise Feedback: Additional Suggestions...

- *Do not pair grades with wise feedback.* When possible, teachers should avoid attaching grades to any student work that contains wise feedback.

Students tend to view a summative number or letter grade as the 'real' evaluation of an assignment and are therefore likely to ignore comments that accompany them (Yeager et al., 2013). So grades can 'short-circuit' the positive impact of wise feedback.

One strategy to keep wise-feedback and grading separate on an assignment is to return the first draft of the assignment ungraded with wise feedback. The student is then directed to use the feedback to revise the assignment and submit for a grade.

## Wise Feedback: Additional Suggestions...

- *Make student feedback 'ambitious'.* In an attempt to bond with unmotivated students, the teacher may over-praise them for mediocre work or provide only easy suggestions for improving the assignment.

Either strategy sets a low bar for performance and can backfire. When students sense that instructors have limited expectations of them, they can feel patronized and stereotyped, lose motivation, and further withdraw effort from academic tasks (Yeager et al., 2013).

Instead, the teacher should praise work that truly deserves it and offer ambitious feedback appropriate to students' skill level **2**

## Wise Feedback: Additional Suggestions...

- *Use wise feedback with large groups.* Although wise feedback is an excellent tool to communicate teacher expectations to individual students, it is just as powerful (and much more efficient) when communicating with the entire class..



# Provide 'Wise' Feedback: Whole-Class Example

*"By grade 7, students are expected to have fully mastered all math concepts and operations taught in the earlier grades."*

Statement of high standards

*"When you look over this diagnostic math test that you took last week, you will see that I have written a number of comments highlighting where you made errors or failed to show or explain your work."*

Description of feedback

*"Judging by past work that I have seen from each of you, I can see that you all have the skills to be strong math students. My comments will point you to where you should put additional effort to ensure success in this course."*

Assurance of ability

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## Response to Intervention

# Growth Mindset & Wise Feedback: Implementation

- Consider the structures shared here for creating **growth-mindset** and **wise feedback** statements.
- Discuss ideas to help teachers to use these 2 communication tools *correctly, frequently* and *consistently* in their classrooms.

Growth-mindset statements include:

- **Process.** Lays out a specific process for moving forward.
- **Challenge(s).** Recognizes difficulties or struggles to be faced and frames them as opportunities to learn.
- **Confidence.** Conveys optimism that the student can and will move toward success with effort.

Wise feedback statements include:

- **Feedback description.** Describes the nature of the feedback being offered.
- **High standards.** Explains the high standards used to evaluate the student work and generate the instructional feedback.
- **Assurance of student ability.** States explicitly that the student has the skills necessary to successfully meet those standards.



- **Assumption 3: Student-to-Teacher Communication.** Student motivation increases when the learner communicates questions, needs, and preferences to the teacher.

*The Student-Centered Conference.* How can teachers use non-authoritarian communication techniques, setting of clear change goals, and other motivating strategies to motivate and engage students as problem-solvers?



### Student-Teacher Conferences: The Dream & the Reality

- Consider this scenario: The teacher invites a struggling student (and perhaps parents) to a conference. The intention of this meeting is to understand the cause(s) of the student's difficulties and to put together an action plan.
- What actually happens: The teacher opens the meetings with a stern warning about the student's poor performance and dire predictions of what negative outcomes will occur if that student does not improve.
- The student shuts down. Adults redouble their efforts to convince the learner to make positive changes. The meeting adjourns, with a sullen student who now feels coerced and is thus unlikely to participate in any action plan.

# How to Motivate (or Shut Down) a Student

“When the counselor opposes [client] resistance, attempting to refute or correct it, the usual client response is to further defend the status quo. Patterson and Forgatch (1985) demonstrated that counselors can drive client resistance up and down as a step function within the same session, by switching back and forth between empathic and authoritative styles. When counselors responded in a more authoritative manner, teaching and directing their clients, resistance increased dramatically. When they switched to a reflective and empathic style, client resistance dropped abruptly. Resistance, it appears, was under experimental control of the therapist. ” p. 301

# Conferencing with Students: Two Rules

When educators conference with students, the motivational interview literature (Miller & Rollnick, 2004) suggests 2 important strategies:

1. Do NOT engage the student in an argument or otherwise use authoritarian language.
2. DO pay differential attention to instances of 'change talk': those student statements that explore problem-solving or change.

# Communication Tools to Motivate and Engage

- 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.





*Communication Tools to Motivate and Engage.* What are 'non-directive' techniques that educators can use to motivate students toward positive change?

## Communication Tools to Motivate and Engage the Reluctant Student (available online)

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### 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 some 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."

## Non-Directive Communication Tools

1. Acknowledging Student Control
2. Active Listening
3. Reflection
4. Reframing
5. Positive Redirection
6. Exploratory Questions

These strategies can... reduce the student's defensiveness and steer the conversation toward positive, change-oriented outcomes.



# Tools: Acknowledging Student Control

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.

These statements:

- underscore personal responsibility and can thus discourage projecting blame on others.
- can reduce the likelihood of a power struggle by preemptively recognizing the student's control.

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# Tools: Acknowledging Student Control



### Examples:

- *"We can talk about a plan to help you to improve your grades in this course. What that plan includes is up to you."*
- *"One tool that students often find useful is a learning contract. Let me know if this is something you want to create."*



### Tools: Active Listening

You can use *active-listening* strategies to signal that you have truly heard and understood the student's concerns.

- You can employ *restatements* of what was said by the student strategically to highlight specific comments that you judge significant. 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.



## Tools: Active Listening

### Restatement Example:

- The student states, *"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."*

### Summary 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."*



### Tools: 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.





### Tools: Reflection

Example:

- The student says, *"I don't like asking for help in class."*
- The teacher conveys empathy by reflecting: *"I imagine that it would be uncomfortable to bring attention to yourself by asking for help."*

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### Tools: 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.



### Tools: Reframing

Example:

- The student says, *"I'm really frustrated because I put so much work into studying for the test and still got a low grade."*

The teacher puts 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."*



### Tools: 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.



### Tools: Positive Redirection

Example:

- The teacher says to the student: *"You just described obstacles that prevent you from completing your homework."*

*"What are some strategies that could help you to overcome these problems?"*



### Tools: 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 posing such a question, you restate what was said by the student and ask for clarification.



# Tools: Exploratory Questions

Example:

- The teacher says, *"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 student 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

6

05:00

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# Activity: Non-Directive Tools for Teacher-Student Communication

- The communication tools discussed here are used regularly in everyday conversation.
- A challenge, though, is that *teachers* may view them as 'counseling tools' and therefore be reluctant to use them in a conscious and strategic manner.
- Your mission: Discuss how you might introduce these communication techniques to staff in a manner that will promote their use in teacher-student conferences.

## Communication Tools:

1. Acknowledging Student Control
2. Active Listening (Restatement & Summaries)
3. Reflection
4. Reframing
5. Positive Redirection
6. Exploratory Questions





*Conferences with Positive Outcomes.* How can student-teacher conferences be structured to increase the odds that the student will commit to a change plan?

# Motivating Students toward Change Goals

Students are more likely to commit to change a goal when they:

- visualize the benefits of those goals
- think about the obstacles preventing movement from their current state to the change goal.
- brainstorm solutions to those obstacles.

## Student-Centered Problem-Solving Meeting: Steps

- *STEP 1: INTRODUCE THE PROBLEM-SOLVING PROCESS.*
- *STEP 2: IDENTIFY TARGET FOR CHANGE.*
- *STEP 3: ESTABLISH THE CHANGE GOAL.*
- *STEP 4: VISUALIZE THE CHANGE GOAL.*
- *STEP 5: IDENTIFY OBSTACLES TO THE CHANGE GOAL AND DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN.*

This meeting structure can...create optimism and motivation within the student while resulting in a more realistic change plan.

# Response to Intervention

## Student-Centered Problem-Solving Meeting: Recording Form

### Meeting Information

Student:	Meeting Participants:	Meeting Date:
----------	-----------------------	---------------

*Identify Your Target for Change.* Select the target problem that you want to be the focus of this change plan. (When possible, use data to describe the problem more clearly.)

**Target:** Write a description of your target problem:

*Establish Your Change Goal.* Come up with your change goal to resolve the target problem. State the change goal in clear, specific terms to allow an observer to verify whether it has been accomplished (yes) or not accomplished (no):

**Goal:** Write in the goal that you plan to work toward:

*Visualize Your Change Goal.* Imagine that you have accomplished your change goal. Write down what improvements or benefits would result:

**Visualize:** Write down benefits you can imagine experiencing if you meet your goal:

Student-Centered Problem-Solving Meeting:  
Recording Form  
(available online)

### Student-Centered Problem-Solving Meeting: Steps

- ***STEP 1: INTRODUCE THE PROBLEM-SOLVING PROCESS.*** The teacher opens with a brief set of talking points that:
  - state the purpose of the discussion
  - lay out the agenda
  - emphasize the student's role as full participant who retains control over the creation and content of a change-plan.

These talking points establish the outcome goal as the creation of a change-plan and encourage the student to take an active and participatory role

## Response to Intervention

### Student-Centered Problem-Solving Meeting: Steps

#### *STEP 1: INTRODUCE THE PROBLEM-SOLVING PROCESS(Cont.)*

##### Student-Centered Problem-Solving Meeting: Introductory Talking Points

*Welcome. We are meeting today to talk about how to [insert the reason for the problem-solving conference: e.g., "get your missing assignments turned in"; "improve your course grade"].*

*Our purpose is to come up with a plan that will help you to be successful.*

*If you agree to develop an action plan today and then are able to follow through with it, I am confident that you will achieve your goals and be successful in this class.*

**Statement of Purpose.** The opening segment states the meeting focus.

The concluding statement in this section is patterned as a 'growth mindset' statement (Dweck, 2006).

*In our meeting, we will:*

- *identify one or more challenges to work on, and*
- *set goal(s) to overcome those challenges.*

*If you agree, we will then:*

- *design an action plan for you to reach your goals.*

**Agenda.** The teacher briefly sketches out the 3 meeting stages: (1) problem identification; (2) goals for improvement; and (3) [optionally] creation of an individualized 'change plan'.

*I can help with this action plan.*

*But it's up to you to decide whether to create the plan and--if so--what will go into it.*

*Throughout the meeting, please be as honest as you can in telling me what is interfering with your success in the classroom, how I or others in our school can help you, and what other supports you might need.*

*Let's begin!*

**Rules of Engagement.** The student is encouraged to be a full participant in the problem-solving meeting.

Note that the script emphasizes the student's discretion in deciding whether to participate in a change plan.

### Student-Centered Problem-Solving Meeting: Steps

***STEP 2: IDENTIFY TARGET FOR CHANGE.*** In this step, teacher and student agree on a single current problem to target for discussion and a change plan. Examples: limited homework completion; low test, quiz, or course grades; and poor class attendance.

- The teacher can take the lead in identifying the problem, if necessary.
- When possible, the teacher and/or student should quantify and record the magnitude of the target problem, e.g., "I have not turned in 30% of my homework assignments; "I have a class grade average of 50").

## Response to Intervention

### Student-Centered Problem-Solving Meeting: Steps

#### *STEP 2: IDENTIFY TARGET FOR CHANGE (Cont.)*

**Identify Your Target for Change.** Select the target problem that you want to be the focus of this change plan.  
(When possible, use data to describe the problem more clearly.)

**Target:** Write a description of your target problem:

I have missed 10 of 24 class sessions.



### Student-Centered Problem-Solving Meeting: Steps

***STEP 3: ESTABLISH THE CHANGE GOAL.*** Next, teacher and student set the change goal: the goal that the student wishes to accomplish.

- The change goal is usually obvious: the solution to the target problem chosen in the previous step.
- The change goal should be stated in clear and specific terms that allow a yes/no response.

## Response to Intervention

### Student-Centered Problem-Solving Meeting: Steps

#### *STEP 3: ESTABLISH THE CHANGE GOAL (Cont.)*

**Establish Your Change Goal.** Come up with your change goal to resolve the target problem. State the change goal in clear, specific terms to allow an observer to verify whether it has been accomplished ('yes') or not accomplished ('no'):

Goal: Write in the goal that you plan to work toward:

I will miss no more than one class session in the next 5 weeks of school.

This goal leaves no doubt at the end of 5 weeks whether the student's attendance goal has been successfully met.

### Student-Centered Problem-Solving Meeting: Steps

***STEP 4: VISUALIZE THE CHANGE GOAL.*** Once a change goal has been set, the teacher directs the student to take a moment to (1) imagine that the student has attained the change goal ; and (2) describe and write down how his or her situation would improve as a result.

The student Rick, for example, may envision benefits of improving his attendance as, "I will get better grades; kids won't tease me about skipping; I won't have to keep meeting with my teacher and the counselor; my mom won't get so many phone calls; I can pass the course and graduate on time."

### Student-Centered Problem-Solving Meeting: Steps

#### ***STEP 4: VISUALIZE THE CHANGE GOAL (Cont.)***

Visualization example for Change Goal:

**“I will miss no more than one class session in the next 5 weeks of school.”**

**Visualize Your Change Goal.** Imagine that you have accomplished your change goal. Write down what improvements or benefits would result:

**Visualize:** Write down benefits you can imagine experiencing if you meet your goal:

I will get better grades.

Kids won't tease me about skipping.

I won't have to keep meeting with my teacher and the counselor.

My mom won't get so many phone calls.

I can pass the course and graduate on time

### Student-Centered Problem-Solving Meeting: Steps

***STEP 5:*** IDENTIFY OBSTACLES TO THE CHANGE GOAL AND DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN. The gap that the student must close to reach his or her change goal can be considerable, and numerous obstacles can interfere with success.

The odds for success increase considerably when the student has also anticipated and brainstormed solutions for difficulties that will inevitably arise along the way (Oettingen & Gollwitzer, 2010).

### Student-Centered Problem-Solving Meeting: Steps

#### **STEP 5: IDENTIFY OBSTACLES TO THE CHANGE GOAL AND DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN (Cont.).**

With the student primed by envisioning a successful change goal, the teacher directs that student to contrast the desired goal with his or her current situation.

Next, the student lists obstacles that might prevent movement from the current situation to the change goal.

Then the student comes up with and records one or more ideas to overcome each obstacle. When completed, the list of obstacles and corresponding solutions serves as the student's *action plan* for attaining the change goal.

## Response to Intervention

### Student-Centered Problem-Solving Meeting: Steps

## **STEP 5: IDENTIFY OBSTACLES TO THE CHANGE GOAL AND DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN (Cont.)**

**Develop Your Action Plan.** Imagine likely obstacles that might interfere with your success in reaching your goal. Then plan for how to overcome each obstacle: |

**Action Plan:** In the left column, write down obstacles that you think might prevent you from achieving your change-goal. In the right column, write down solutions for overcoming each obstacle:

<b>Obstacles</b>	<b>Solutions</b>
I sometimes oversleep	I will go to bed earlier.. I will set my alarm.
I skip class when I haven't done my homework.	I will schedule a regular time each night for doing homework. I will first do nightly homework for this course to be sure it gets done.

02:00

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# Activity: Student-Centered Problem-Solving Meeting: Steps

- The advantage of a 'student-centered' meeting process is that it is both motivating and highly adaptable .
- Discuss how you might encourage teachers to use a process like this in student or student-parent conferences.

### *Student Conference: Meeting Steps*

- ***STEP 1: INTRODUCE THE PROBLEM-SOLVING PROCESS.***
- ***STEP 2: IDENTIFY TARGET FOR CHANGE.***
- ***STEP 3: ESTABLISH THE CHANGE GOAL.***
- ***STEP 4: VISUALIZE THE CHANGE GOAL.***
- ***STEP 5: IDENTIFY OBSTACLES TO THE CHANGE GOAL AND DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN.***





- **Assumption 4: Task Communication.**  
Student motivation increases when assigned academic tasks clearly communicate their requirements and performance standards.

# Designing Tasks That Communicate Purpose

Complex academic tasks can be made more motivating when broken down into clearly articulated steps. This 'task analysis' transforms a seemingly monolithic task into a manageable checklist—yielding these benefits:

- The apparent 'response effort' to complete the work is reduced, as it is chunked into smaller segments.
- Translating the task into sub-components gives the student a clearer idea of work expectations.
- As the student completes steps in the larger task, he or she repeatedly experiences small but important successes that strengthen the link between planful effort and positive outcomes.

# How To...Promote Academic Self- Management: Work Planning Skills

# TUTORIAL: How To...Help the Student Develop Work-Planning Skills: Plan, Evaluate, Adjust



The student is trained to follow a plan>work>self-evaluate>adjust sequence in work-planning:

- **Plan.** The student creates a work plan: inventorying a collection of related tasks to be done, setting specific outcome goals that signify success on each task, allocating time sufficient to carry out each task.
- **Work.** The student completes the work.
- **Self-Evaluate.** The student compares actual work performance to the outcome goals to evaluate success.
- **Adjust.** The student determines what to do differently in the future to improve performance and outcomes.

*Source:* Martin, J. E., Mithaug, D. E., Cox, P., Peterson, L. Y., Van Dycke, J. L., & Cash, M.E. (2003). Increasing self-determination: Teaching students to plan, work, evaluate, and adjust. *Exceptional Children*, 69, 431-447.

# Independent Work: Student Planner

Student: Russell Smith Teacher/Staff Member: Mrs. Lampe Date: 11 /04/15

		Planning	Planning	Planning	Self-Evaluation	Self-Evaluation
	Date: _/_/___	Task: Describe the assignment or task to be completed.	Time Allocated: E.g., "20 minutes"; "11:20 to 11:40"	Performance Goal: Your goal for the amount, accuracy, and/or quality of work to be completed.	Actual Performance: Amount, accuracy, and/or quality of the work actually completed.	Goal Met?: Did you achieve the goal within the time allocated?
1	_/_/___	Select Topic				<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
2	<u>11/10/15</u>	Locate Sources	2 hours	Find at least 3 reputable sources	Found 3 sources	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO
3	_/_/___	Create Notes from Sources				<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
4	_/_/___	Organize Notes into Paper Outline				<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> 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: 2 Schedule at least 3 hours to find source material on next assignment

Number of Goal Not Met & Action Plan to Fix: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Goal Not Met & Action Plan to Fix: \_\_\_\_\_

Source: Martin, J. E., Mithaug, D. E., Cox, P., Peterson, L. Y., Van Dycke, J. L., & Cash, M.E. (2003). Increasing self-determination: Teaching students to plan, work, evaluate, and adjust. *Exceptional Children*, 69, 431-447.

# Reducing Complexity in the Classroom...Checklists

### Antecedents: Strategies That ENCOURAGE Goal Behaviors

**Checklist for Academic Skills: Make the Complicated Simple** (Alter, Wyrick, Brown, & Lingo, 2008). When the student must apply several steps to complete a complex academic task, the teacher can give the student a checklist detailing each step and instructions for completing it.

Before the activity, the student is prompted to preview the checklist; after the activity, the student uses the checklist to review the work.

ADHD

ODD

GAD

# Behavioral Checklist: Academic Example: Cognitive Strategy



<i>Math Word Problem: Problem-Solving Checklist</i>
WHEN COMPLETING A MATH WORD PROBLEM, THE STUDENT FOLLOWS THESE STEPS:
1. <b>READING THE PROBLEM.</b> The student reads the problem carefully, noting and attempting to clear up any areas of uncertainty or confusion (e.g., unknown vocabulary terms).
2. <b>PARAPHRASING THE PROBLEM.</b> The student restates the problem in his or her own words.
3. <b>DRAWING THE PROBLEM.</b> The student creates a drawing of the problem, creating a visual representation of the word problem.
4. <b>CREATING A PLAN.</b> The student decides on the best way to solve the problem and develops a plan to do so.
5. <b>PREDICTING THE ANSWER.</b> The student estimates or predicts what the answer to the problem will be. The student may compute a quick approximation of the answer, using rounding or other shortcuts.
6. <b>COMPUTING THE ANSWER.</b> The student follows the plan developed earlier to compute the answer to the problem.
7. <b>CHECKING THE ANSWER.</b> The student methodically checks the calculations for each step of the problem. The student also compares the actual answer to the estimated answer calculated in a previous step to ensure that there is general agreement between the two values.

SOURCE: Montague, M. (1992). The effects of cognitive and metacognitive strategy instruction on the mathematical problem solving of middle school students with learning disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 25, 230-248.



### Antecedents: Strategies That ENCOURAGE Goal Behaviors

**Checklist for Challenging Situations: Script Transition Times** (McCoy, Mathur, & Czoka, 2010). Students often struggle with the complexity of managing multi-step routines such as transitioning between classroom activities or moving to different locations within the school.

Teachers can assist by making up step-by-step checklists that 'walk' the student incrementally through the routine. Instructors can use these checklists as guides to teach and measure student success in navigating transitions. Just as important, the student can use the checklist as a prompt and guide to follow the expected steps.

ADHD

ODD

GAD

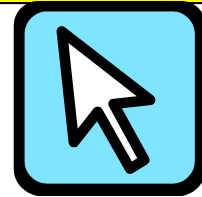
# Behavioral Checklist: General Behavior

## Example: Routine/Transition



### *Start-of-Class Checklist*

- AT THE START OF CLASS, THE STUDENT:
- has a sharpened pencil.
- has paper for taking notes.
- has homework ready to turn in.
- has put her cell phone away in her backpack.
- has cleared her desk of unneeded materials.
- is sitting quietly.
- is working on the assigned start-of-class activity.



**Self-Check Behavior Checklist Maker.** This online tool allows teachers to define student behavior during classroom routines and transitions – a great way to clearly define behavioral expectations.

## Self-Check Behavior Checklist Maker

[View](#) [Edit](#) [Outline](#) [Track](#) [Configure Tool](#)

**Self-Check Behavior Checklist Maker**  Create customized checklists for students to monitor their own classroom behaviors

*If you have any suggestions or comments about this tool, please mail me.*

### Untitled Document

[Save](#) [Save as...](#) [Start New Checklist](#)

#### Self-Check Behavior Checklist Maker

Students who track their own behaviors gain greater control over those behaviors. Self-Check Behavior Checklist Maker is a free application that allows teachers to quickly create checklists that students can use to monitor their behavior in the classroom. Behavior checklists can be used to help both general-education and special-needs students to manage their behaviors in academically demanding and least-restrictive settings. (For suggestions on how to use behavior checklists, download [How To: Improve Classroom Behaviors Using Self-Monitoring Checklists.](#))

#### Directions

Click [HERE](#) to download the full [Self-Check Behavior Checklist Maker manual](#).

- To browse student self-monitoring items, select any of the categories from the 'Select Checklist' drop-down

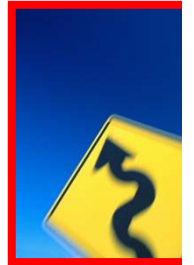
## Communication & Motivation: Q & A

- ✓ ***Assumption 1: Self-Communication.*** Student motivation increases when learners communicate to themselves the correct attributions (explanations) about their own academic performance and the intentions of those who teach them.
- ✓ ***Assumption 2: Teacher-to-Student Communication.*** Student motivation increases when teachers regularly communicate optimistic messages that link academic success to effort and playful process.
- ✓ ***Assumption 3: Student-to-Teacher Communication.*** Student motivation increases when the learner communicates questions, needs, and preferences to the teacher.
- ✓ ***Assumption 4: Task Communication.*** Student motivation increases when assigned academic tasks clearly communicate their requirements and performance standards.



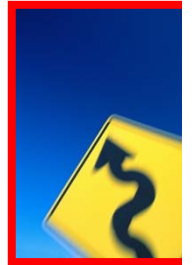
- **Assumption : Communicating Community.** Student motivation increases when the learner feels known and valued in the classroom.

- **Greeting Students at the Classroom Door.** A personalized greeting at the start of a class period can boost class levels of academic engagement (Allday & Pakurar, 2007).

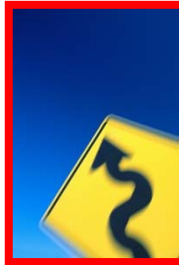


The teacher spends a few seconds greeting each student by name at the classroom door at the beginning of class.

- **Emphasizing the Positive in Teacher Requests (Braithwaite, 2001).** The teacher avoids using negative phrasing (e.g., "If you don't return to your seat, I can't help you with your assignment") when making a request of a student. Instead, the teacher request is stated in positive terms (e.g., "I will be over to help you on the assignment just as soon as you return to your seat"). When a request has a positive 'spin', that teacher is less likely to trigger a power struggle and more likely to gain student compliance.



- **Maintaining a High Rate of Positive Interactions.** Teachers promote a positive relationship with any student by maintaining a ratio of at least **three** positive teacher-student interactions (e.g., greeting, positive conversation, high-five) for every negative (disciplinary) interaction (e.g., reprimand) (Sprick, Borgmeier, & Nolet, 2002).





- **Providing Attention With the 'Two by Ten'.** The teacher makes a commitment to have a 2-minute conversation with the student across 10 consecutive school days (20 minutes of cumulative positive contact) (Mendler, 2000). This strategy ('non-contingent attention') can be helpful with students who lack a positive connection with the instructor.

