The REACH Process: A Strategy for Strengthening Students’ Motivation to Learn

A Crisis of Academic Motivation
A Continual Decline

“Research reveals that children’s interest, enthusiasm, and intrinsic motivation for learning in school deteriorate continuously from their entry into kindergarten until they complete high school (or drop out), with striking losses during the transitions to middle school and high school. The erosion of motivation is especially severe for boys and for students from low socioeconomic, minority, and immigrant backgrounds.”


Motivation and Reform

“No major reform has prioritized students’ psychological experience in school or motivation to succeed, despite the fact that it is ultimately students themselves who must capitalize on learning opportunities.”

The Good News

“Recent randomized experiments have found that seemingly ‘small’ social-psychological interventions in education—that is, brief exercises that target students’ thoughts, feelings, and beliefs in and about school—can lead to large gains in student achievement and sharply reduce achievement gaps even months and years later.”


The REACH Framework

RELATIONSHIPS
EFFORT
ASPIRATIONS
COGNITION
HEART
How should we use research?

Scripted Curriculum  Balance  Professional Learning

Resources for Implementing The REACH Process

1. Concise and clear summaries of research written for busy practitioners
2. Anchor Activities to crystalize key ideas for both students and educators
3. REACH Techniques that educators integrate into curriculum, instruction, and relationships
4. The REACH Survey to measure the REACH Framework and other factors that influence student motivation

All of the above delivered through 6 interactive workshops, facilitated progress check sessions, and the 200 page REACH Strategies Guidebook
The REACH Process 2016-17

- Austin: 2 schools
- Twin Cities: 5 schools
- Region 5: 6 schools

Relationships
Relationships

1. Identifying Assets Anchor Activity
   - *REACH Technique:* Focus on students’ strengths at least as much as their weaknesses

2. Identifying Relationships Anchor Activity
   - *REACH Technique:* Build developmental relationships with and among students

3. The Power of Relationships Anchor Activity
   - *REACH Technique:* Help students take relationships seriously

4. Mapping Relationships Anchor Activity
   - *REACH Technique:* Encourage students to connect with people who can help them grow

5. Expressing Gratitude Anchor Activity
   - *REACH Technique:* Help students think positively about the relationships in their lives

Effort
Effort

1. The Brain is Like a Muscle Anchor Activity
   - *REACH Technique*: Remind students that working harder can make them smarter

2. Learning from Failure and Mistakes Anchor Activity
   - *REACH Technique*: Describe failures and mistakes as opportunities to grow

3. Selecting Struggle Strategies Anchor Activity
   - *REACH Technique*: Teach students to use effective struggle strategies

4. Developing a Growth Mindset Anchor Activity
   - *REACH Technique*: Incentivize effort and the use of good learning strategies

Aspirations
Aspirations

• The Importance of Education Anchor Activity
  – *REACH Technique:* Highlight the long-term benefits of success in school

• Envisioning Possible Self Anchor Activity
  – *REACH Technique:* Ask about—and remember—students’ aspirations

• Roadmap to the Future Anchor Activity
  – *REACH Technique:* Help students think forward and act now

• Purpose for Learning Anchor Activity
  – *REACH Technique:* Help students find their own reasons for working hard in school

Cognition
Cognition

- **Fast Thinking and Slow Thinking Anchor Activity**
  - *REACH Technique:* Help students pause and reflect before talking and acting
- **Reframing Negative Experiences Anchor Activity**
  - *REACH Technique:* Help students reframe tasks they don’t want to do
- **Setting Good Goals (WOOP 1) Anchor Activity**
  - *REACH Technique:* Help students develop goals that are optimistic and realistic
- **If-Then Plans (WOOP 2) Anchor Activity**
  - *REACH Technique:* Teach students to use If-Then Plans to stay on track
Heart

- **Identifying Sparks Anchor Activity**
  - *REACH Technique:* Get to know students’ sparks
- **Sharing Sparks Anchor Activity**
  - *REACH Technique:* Tap students’ sparks to ignite learning
- **Core Values Anchor Activity**
  - *REACH Technique:* Recognize and reinforce students’ best sense of themselves

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**Let’s Take a Poll**

Which category of the REACH Framework would you be most eager to work on with your students?

1. Relationships
2. Effort
3. Aspirations
4. Cognition
5. Heart
Questions?

What is rolling around in your head?

The REACH Resources

1. The REACH Survey
2. The REACH Strategies Guidebook
   - Summary of Research
   - Reflection Questions
   - Anchor Activities
   - REACH Techniques
3. REACH Workshops
4. The REACH Process
   - 13 schools in 2016-2017
Why give a student survey?

“We almost never measure students’ attitudes, interests, and values, when, in truth, those powerful and influential affective variables can be inexpensively assessed for groups of students—not individual students—then used to guide instruction.” (and build relationships!)

-- Assessment Expert W. James Popham
The REACH Survey

REACH Survey Pilot test with 602 students in one Midwestern high school

![Bar chart showing survey results](image)

Table 20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connecting Sparks to Learning</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Mostly</th>
<th>Very much</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How well do each of the following describe your teachers?</td>
<td>15% 28% 32% 21% 4%</td>
<td>24% 26% 29% 18% 3%</td>
<td>26% 27% 27% 17% 3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*My teachers try to find out what I am interested in</td>
<td>15% 28% 32% 21% 4%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>My teachers try to connect what we’re learning in class to my interests and talents</td>
<td></td>
<td>24% 26% 29% 18% 3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teachers help me see how my class work relates to my spark(s)</td>
<td></td>
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REACH Survey Pilot test with 602 students in one Midwestern high school
Other Factors That Influence Motivation

REACH Survey Pilot test with 602 students in one Midwestern high school

REACH Workshop Series - October 4-6, 2016

- **Time:** 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- **Location:** University of Minnesota Continuing Education and Conference Center, St. Paul, MN
- **The workshops are:**
  - **Day 1:** REACH: Introduction to Academic Motivation Workshop and Building Developmental Relationships Workshop
  - **Day 2:** Increasing Effort Workshop and Raising Aspirations Workshop
  - **Day 3:** Strengthening Cognition Workshop and Leveraging Heart Workshop

  Go to [www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org) to register
A Final Point:
What doesn’t work

Reframing
Reframing and Mindsets

Source: Project for Education Reform that Scales
Stanford University

An Example

7th graders wrote essays on their personal heroes

Source: "Breaking the Cycle of Mistrust: Wise Interventions to Provide Critical Feedback Across the Racial Divide," David Scott Yeager, PhD, University of Texas at Austin; Geoffrey L. Cohen, PhD, Stanford University; Valerie Purdie-Vaughns, PhD, and Patti Brzustoski, Columbia University; Julio Garcia, PhD, University of Colorado at Boulder; Nancy Apfel, Yale University; Allison Master, PhD, University of Washington; William T. Hessert, Jr., University of Chicago; and Matthew E. Williams, MEd.
Randomly Assigned Messages on Post-It Notes

**Neutral Expectations Message**

“I’m giving you these comments so that you’ll have feedback on your paper.”

**High Expectations Message**

“I’m giving you these comments because I have very high expectations and I know you can reach them.”
Results

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Neutral Expectations Message</th>
<th>High Expectations Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White Students</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American Students</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Poll #2

How important do you think strengthening the academic motivation of all students should be for your school or organization?

1. Our single highest priority
2. One of our highest priorities
3. Should receive attention but not our highest priority
4. Addressed but in a limited and targeted way
5. Not a goal for us at this time
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   - 13 schools in 2016-2017

For more information on any of these resources, contact Mary Shrader at marys@search-institute.org or call 800-888-7828, Ext. 526

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