

How to Encourage Better Help-Seeking Behaviors

Once we know why students avoid help, we can address the problems. Here are some ideas to try with your students.

1. Counter perceived threat by fostering peer relationships in your class. Students who aren't confident in their own abilities are more likely to seek out help from fellow students anyway when they do seek help. You can capitalize on this tendency by promoting peer relationships in your class. The student gains trust and can learn new ideas from the more successful student, not only with content, but with other self-regulating ideas and practices.

2. Improve your image of concern for your students. Make the time to get to know your students, especially those who are having difficulty in your class. If you can reach out to those students early, you can overcome some of the trepidation they may feel about approaching you for help.

3. Help students recognize when studying independently isn't working. Independent study has value, but not always for the struggling student. Open up a class discussion about what to do to resolve getting stuck on a concept or problem. Sometimes students just need to know that other students struggle with assignments too. They also need tools to correct deficiencies for themselves, improving self-regulation of learning. Way to Succeed has great suggestions for getting help if this is an issue.



Help-Seeking Behaviors:

Why do students avoid seeking help?

Most first-year students are surprised and caught off guard by the faster pace and independent learning required of college courses, and can easily find themselves behind the pace of the class. Other students may lack the academic background, learning strategies, or perceived aptitude to earn a passing grade. Students with these struggles, no matter the cause, require some sort of assistance to bring themselves up to speed not only with new material, but with knowledge gaps and early course matter which was most likely not learned well. In other words, **your students need help**. As a function of self-regulation of learning, help-seeking behaviors can have profound repercussions in academic success.

Students do not always seek out the help they need. This seems to be especially true of those students who seem to need the help the most—those who are underperforming, or consistently earning below-average grades on tests. Research bears this out. A 1988 study (Karabenick & Knapp)¹ showed an inverted parabolic relationship between grades and help-seeking behaviors. Students expecting a D or F for a math course and those expecting an A showed minimal help-seeking behavior, whereas students expecting to earn a B or C sought help more frequently. Typically, high-achieving students do not often need help, which explains why they

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Part 1 of a two-part series on the help-seeking behaviors of students

do not seek help, but why did low-achieving students avoid the assistance they needed?

Qayyum (2018)² sought to determine what encouraged or prevented students from seeking assistance. Three of the six factors listed below were significant influencers of help-seeking behaviors.

1. **Perceived threat.** This factor was the most significant influence on help-seeking behaviors in this study. Students did not want to appear “stupid” asking questions of either instructors or peers.

2. **Perception of instructor support.** Students who believed the instructor showed concern or caring sought out help more often than those who perceived the instructor was distant or didn't care.

3. **A Student's preference to work independently.** This factor may indicate the student is doing well and is not interested in spending extra time working with others. On the other hand, low-achieving students may be embarrassed to show a lack of ability or ask for help from peers.

Research therefore supports what most of us have observed: those students who are least confident in their abilities are the least likely to seek out assistance, especially in math. Whether this phenomenon is due to embarrassment, a pessimistic attitude about ability, fear, or well-established patterns of behavior, these tendencies need to change if students are to become more successful. Take a look at some ideas in the box on the left that directly address the three most predominant reasons why students fail to seek help when they should.

References

¹Karabenick, S. A., & Knapp, J. R. (1988). Help-seeking and the need for academic assistance. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 80*, 406–408.

²Qayyum, A. (2018). Student help-seeking attitudes and behaviors in a digital era. *Int J Educ Technol High Educ 15*, 17 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-018-0100-7>

³Buch, G. R., & Warren, C. B. (2017). The flipped classroom: Implementing technology to aid in college mathematics Student's success. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research (Online), 10*(2), 109-116. <http://dx.doi.org/10.19030/cier.v10i2.9921>

⁴Carter, C. L., Carter, R. L., & Foss, A. H. (2018). The flipped classroom in a terminal college mathematics course for liberal arts students. *AERA Open, 4*(1)<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/2332858418759266>



A recent pedagogical change to college-level classrooms is the “Flipped” classroom where students are exposed to classroom material before class. Exposure may involve viewing online lectures, completing certain activities which contain new ideas and vocabulary, or carrying out short investigations which use upcoming content. Class time is then used for guided practice.

The purpose of this classroom model is to increase student engagement, as the assignments before class require the student to intentionally interact with and use new material to complete preliminary assignments. An additional benefit of some flipped classrooms is that students can use flexible time schedules for due dates, self-pacing, and opportunities for self-reflection. This method theoretically moves students to a more mature, independent, and less stressful learning mode. Students are “forced” to

become more independent learners.

But is “flipped” learning really effective? Buch and Warren (2017)³ did not show improvement in test grades over those students enrolled in the traditional lecture model classroom. In fact, one of the tests results showed a lower average test score for the flipped model students. About the same percent of students in both groups received a C or better to pass the class. However, the final exam grade showed a large improvement over the traditional classes on the final exam score, 49% to 37% for the traditional model classes.

Carter, Carter, & Foss (2018)⁴ showed a 5.1 percentage point improvement in flipped classrooms than those students in traditional formats. This seems to be a great improvement over the traditional model classroom. Carter, et al noted a few demographics in which the flipped model had a little to no effect on grades. These were 1) older, non-traditional students (22 years and up), 2) students classified as learning disabled, and 3) white students. While the final results in these studies are promising, more research needs to be done to determine what components of the flipped model lead to grade improvement.

The Flipped Classroom

What does the Research Say?

The Flipped Classroom

PROS:

- By completing pre-assignments, students invest in their own education. They become responsible for independently processing the lesson prior to class increasing self-efficacy.
- Students interact with content before and during class, more frequently than in traditional classrooms, which improves learning
- Students have time to catch up on missed content before attending class.
- This classroom model increases student engagement
- Most students like the model.
- Students find they gain ideas of how to learn effectively using the independent activities prior to class.

CONS:

- The unmotivated student can have difficulty putting effort into new learning.
- Insecure students and ones who begin with a deficit of background knowledge are often intimidated by the thought of independent activities using unfamiliar material and skills.
- Video lectures can be impersonal, however, they can be non-threatening, as they can be stopped, backed up, and replayed without consequence.
- As with most learning, it is up to the student to put in the necessary effort to be successful. One student commented, “It works very well when it’s done consistently.”³

Way to Succeed Can Help!

We designed Way to Succeed to accompany first-year math and other STEM classes. Our goal is to help your students become aware of and develop academic skills and strategies in a personal way while freeing you to focus on your math or other STEM content. The online program works outside of class, providing personal learning profiles and targeted actions for improvement, short, thought-provoking readings, videos, and short quizzes that highlight the skills, attitudes, cognitions, and learning strategies in which successful students engage so they can quickly make changes to become better learners.

Praxis as a Practice for You and your Students

Praxis can be defined as the application or practice of something learned in theory. For example, an introductory teacher's test in some states is called 'The Praxis,' because it asks newly graduated teachers to use what they have learned in undergraduate teacher preparatory programs to answer questions relating to practical classroom situations.

Regardless of academic specialty, professors and other instructors develop praxes or practices which can enhance student learning. Analyses of these practices establish the professionalism of excellence and competence in both our academic focus, and for fostering learning in our students.

For the latter, this idea of praxis is self-reflection and honest evaluation of outcomes used to improve a pre-determined facet of our work or activity as educators. Theoretically, we continually evaluate our instruction, grading practices, student experiences, and testing for the best student learning, and make changes accordingly to improve student outcomes.



Praxis, therefore, would be an ideal pursuit for your students as well. Regardless of which class in which they find themselves, self-reflection and honest evaluation of their own personal outcomes can lead to higher learning and achievement. Students can then apply theory to their learning tasks, and discover practical actions that result in improved success.

If students do not know learning theory, you have the opportunity to provide them with ideas for improving learning in your particular subject area, or encourage them to research learning theories on their own or with other students. Your ideas can be very informal and still be effective. Make suggestions to your students about how you learn best, and ask them to reflect on their practices for learning your content.

How to encourage students to use praxis more in your class.

Talk about it! Students do not typically know what praxis is, and can benefit from the idea that professionals and mature learners engage in the honest self-evaluation and application of theories about learning at the college level.

Problem-solving opportunities.

Invite students to name some difficulties they are having with learning. Then open up a discussion board thread to brainstorm ideas for strategies and methods of learning that work for the students in your classes.

Pay attention to the struggling student.

Students who are having trouble with content are not always correct when attributing actions they have taken for working through your class material to their failure (or even success, for that matter).

Help students evaluate themselves as learners.

Encourage students to self-reflect on top soft-skill reasons for poor performance, such as effort, organization, time management, task completion, and class attendance. Perhaps your students can find at least one area to focus on to improve their chance of success.

WATCH

Current Industry Trends: Focus on Soft Skills Training for Students

The very skills that make for a successful employee also make for a successful student. Community colleges, colleges and universities are discovering the benefits of training students in soft skills to improve not only student success, but success beyond graduation. What are some soft skills?

- Planning
- Communication
- Organizing
- Decision-making
- Teamwork
- Accountability

Way to Succeed encourages students to improve in these areas. Check out what we have to offer at waytosucceed.com.



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough; we must do.”

— Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Q&A About Way to Succeed

Q: I want my students to use Way to Succeed, but I am apprehensive about the amount of time they will spend participating in the program. How much time should students expect to invest in Way to Succeed?

A: This is a legitimate concern. Way to Succeed was not designed to be a full-blown class, but was created to be a small weekly component of your class. Each chapter has a short reading and a 5- or 10-question multiple choice quiz that can be answered in just a few minutes. The readings are short, from 1 minute 30 seconds, to 10 minutes



3 seconds. The average reading time for each of the ten chapters is 4 minutes 15 seconds, based estimates from <https://thereadtime.com/>.

The Learning Assessments in Chapters 2, 5, and 8 each take about 15 minutes to complete and there is no “quiz” for these chapters. Students evaluate their results immediately after taking their assessments, and select areas of learning and metacognition on which they need to improve. To see what we measure, check out our website waytosucceed.com.





Visit our Website

We offer a unique research-supported approach to helping students become more independent and successful in your classes.

Visit [Way to Succeed](#) for more information about our product, pricing calculator, and how to order.

Be ready for Fall Semester 2022 classes!

First-year, at-risk, and probationary students typically need more support than most other returning students, especially when these students enroll in online classes. [Way to Succeed](#) can help you to assist these students with a personalized, stand-alone success program that works well with mathematics and other STEM courses. [Way to Succeed](#) helps them develop their own self-regulating and metacognitive skills so they can become more independent and effective learners.

- Students learn how to learn, especially in their math or STEM class
- No grading required
- Personalized for each student
- Companion eBook for better student accountability
- Focus on improving self-regulation, time-management skills, metacognition, and accessing extra help resources
- Research-based process showing improvement in grades
- Low, department and per-student costs
- Compatible with any STEM text or curriculum, online or face-to-face
- Easy-to-access instructor reports
- Quick student set-up for your school or by class

Upcoming Articles in the next issue of *Learning Insights*

1. Helping Your Students Know When to Seek Help
2. The Importance of Setting Goals
3. Is Taking Notes a Thing of the Past?

....and more!

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