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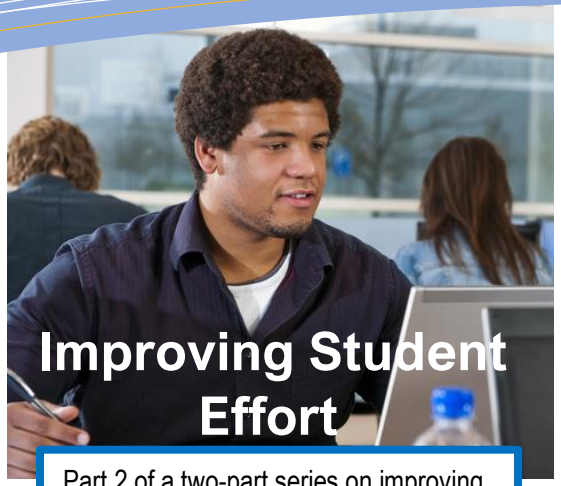
WAY TO SUCCEED:
MINDFUL INSIGHTS
FOR LEARNING

Learning Insights

How to encourage your students to increase effort

1. Reiterate that effort has a profound effect on academic achievement regardless of background, intelligence, or math ability
2. Remind your students that typically, students should spend about two hours of independent study (i.e., completing homework, practice, and reviewing) for every hour of class time. Extra time may be required of those who are missing background knowledge, test below requisite scores on placement tests, or are slower in acquiring math concepts.
3. They, as students, control their learning, not you as their instructor, although you are here to create experiences for learning. It's up to them to look for ways that make sense for them to learn what is required in each course. These learning helps could include attending class, reading the text, looking for outside resources for help, and filling learning gaps on their own or with assistance from campus resources.
4. Some students avoid their math and other STEM work because it's difficult. The opposite tact must take place if these students are to be successful. They must make the extra effort (continued below…..)



Improving Student Effort

Part 2 of a two-part series on improving student effort in your classes.

In the economy of personal reality, achievements come with a price. If you want to write a book, you must spend the time and thought to put the words down and go back to edit when you're done. Those who want to lose weight must forgo some of their favorite foods to achieve their dreams of a healthier self. To improve physical fitness, one must either get out of bed earlier or carve out some extra time in the day to log in the hours and exertion it takes to exercise. For students, achieving success in their math class is no different. However, students who understand increasing effort in college do not often realize that math requires a different *kind* of effort and learning than other college subjects. Learning college-level anything takes significantly more effort than most first-year students are used to in high school. Some are surprised at the personal reality of that idea.

> "Effort for learning at the college level must come from within the student. An awareness of effort required and the decision to apply that effort are two important parts of transitioning to college.

Many high school policies have the effect of undermining student initiative and effort for learning. While allegedly preparing students academically, secondary education administrations appear to wrest back the responsibility for student achievement and standardized tests scores and place that responsibility directly on the teachers. Teachers in many districts are now being evaluated and paid based on student performance, motivating teachers to take control of the time and activities students need to experience during the learning process. This leaves students oblivious to many of the factors that contribute to academic success. Student effort in high school, for example, is not always necessary when teachers assume the responsibility for guiding students through lengthy review sessions for tests or end the practice of assigning independent homework.

Effort for learning at the college level must come from within the student. An awareness of effort required, and the decision to apply that effort are two important parts of transitioning to college. In a previous article from Learning Insights, two conclusions were reached that sum up the difficulty students have when adjusting their effort to college-level demands.

1. Students do not understand how much effort to apply toward studying, and
2. If a student wants to improve effort, what do they do?

The previous Learning Insights article provided a list of how instructors can modify class structure to encourage greater effort from students. Regardless, students may need more specific guidance before they understand and can make changes in their applied effort. To the left are discussion topics instructors can talk to their students about to encourage improved effort.

In this issue:

to stay current with the class content, and spend the additional time getting help as needed, as well as working independently to make sure they master the course content.

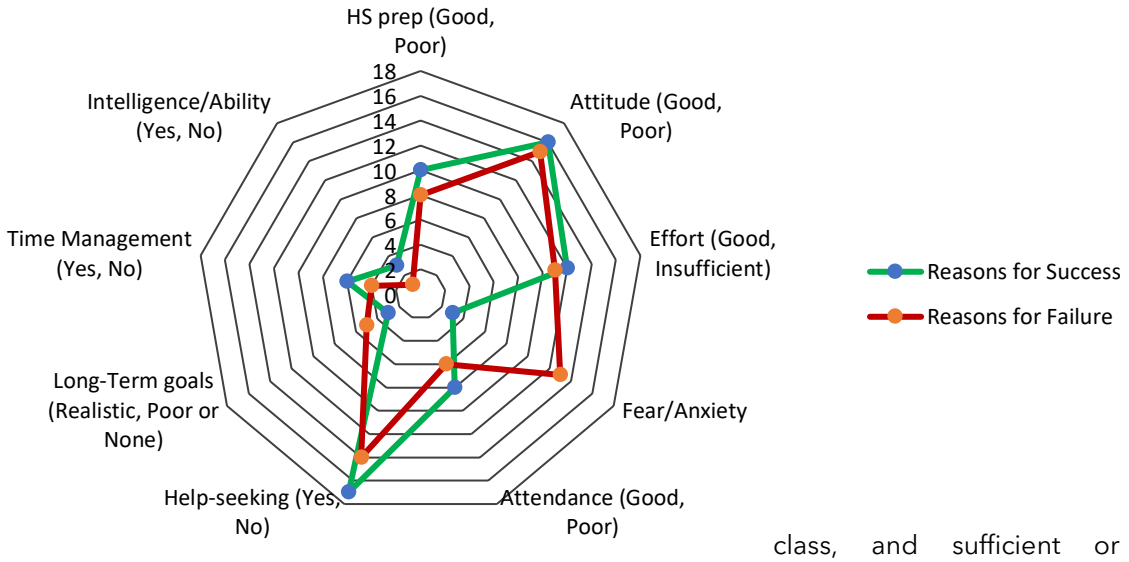
5. Time spent working on assignments is strongly related to effort. Have your students schedule a specific time and amount of time between classes to complete assignments and review past lessons. Instruct them that some lessons may need more time than others, and more time should be applied to that lesson.
6. Effort looks different for different people. Students must employ a level of effort that works for them even if they have to work harder than their class-mates.
7. Persistence through difficulties is a necessary part of putting forth their best effort. When stuck, they should try different strategies, learning environments, searching through their notes and textbook, and seeking help from the math help center on campus, from peers, or from online sources such as Khan Academy, personal tutors and online tutoring programs like PhotoStudy, or YouTube videos.

Student Factors for Success

...By the Numbers

Attendees at the 2023 Joint Mathematics Meetings in Boston and at the 2023 First Year Experience in Los Angeles were asked for their opinions about math student success and failure. Survey takers were asked to rate the top three reasons students are successful in their college math classes and the top three reasons students were not successful. "Votes" for each factor were tallied.

Below is a radar graph of the results. To interpret this type of graph, note the items that are farthest from the center. These are the more important factors in student success/failure according to respondents. The items closest to the center were deemed as less important by respondents for student success/failure.



Each axis or radius on the radar graph shows a dichotomous characteristic factor of student success/failure, and displays both the positive and negative aspect of that characteristic. For example, the characteristic "Attitude" shows both the positive factors that help make a student successful, such as confidence and a positive mindset about the class and learning. On the same axis, the negative side of attitude describes a contributing factor to a student's lack of success, such as a lack of confidence and a negative attitude about math.

Attitude appears far from the center, so we can interpret attitude as an important factor, both as a positive attitude for successful students, and as a negative attitude affecting unsuccessful students. Other dichotomous and strong factors shown in the graph above include whether or not students seek help outside of class, and sufficient or insufficient effort applied to study.

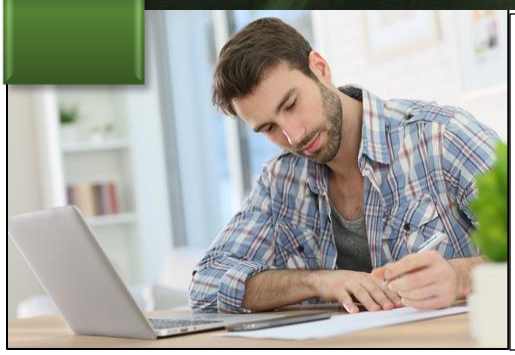
The results are interesting and not entirely surprising. First, most of the greatest differences are student-controlled. Intelligence and ability do not appear to be considered as important a factor in success as attitude, effort, and help-seeking.

The one factor that did not correspond between the factors for success and factors affecting failure was Fear/Anxiety. Most research corroborates the connection between Math Anxiety and lack of success in math. Fear of failure does not seem to be an important factor for successful students.

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 that highlight the skills, attitudes, cognitions, and learning strategies in which successful students engage so they can quickly make changes to become better learners.

Pandemic Trends: How to Help Your Students



The recent pandemic response has had profound effects on college students, No doubt, the online formats used to disseminate classroom content were necessary to make the attempt to not disrupt learning for millions of students. However, the abrupt change to zoom classes, online learning, and student isolation did have consequences. While many effects exist, the top five are listed below.

1, Standards and accountability. Students arriving in your classes have experienced varying levels of academic expectations, typically consisting of lowered standards and decreased accountability. High school and college faculty were scrambling for a smooth transition to online learning, but not all were able to sustain the standards and accountability that existed in their classes before the lockdowns.

What to do: Communication and awareness are key. If students aren't aware of the expectations and how they will be held accountable, it is up to you as their instructor to let them know and hold them to that standard. Don't expect your students to "just know" what is upcoming. They don't have much experience with that. Take class time to inform and suggest specific actions to prepare for tests, quizzes, and group project expectations.

2. Academic Background. Your students now have more varied ranges of skills and knowledge than was typically did before the pandemic. While some students came through their high school and early college years with a great education, this is not typical. Missing content must be addressed if students are to build a solid foundation for learning, especially in math or STEM classes.

What to do: Personalize. If possible, inventory your students in terms of prerequisite skills and create some short mini-lessons to address weak areas present for most students. Recommend Resources. On campus and online tutoring, Khan Academy, and peers can be a great help to those who are needing to catch up academically.

Invite them. Don't wait to encourage students, especially those identified as "at risk" to come see you personally for extra help. Think of some good ways to take the stigma out of an office visit, such as extra points.

3. Missing "Habits of Mind" for Learning. Contrary to what you may have expected, independent learning has not taken shape with many of today's learners. Thinking flexibly, persisting, metacognition, and using prior knowledge are some of the habits of mind that successful students use. These are critical for success.

What to do: Use the language of habits of mind. Check out the Habits of Mind Institute for some great resources for you and your students.

4. Loneliness and Isolation. Developing strong relationships online is much more difficult than developing them face to face. Some of your students may not have moved past the depression and isolation of the lockdown or have not learned to cultivate relationships as they once did. Confidence and experience advance the process.

What to do: Force the issue. Help your students make connections by pairing them for short in-class exercises. Group projects can also foster associations with others. For ideas about effective ways of grouping college students, see this article on the website thescholarlyteacher.com.

5. Learned Helplessness. Closely related to apathy, learned helplessness is when students believe they are powerless to change circumstances that negatively affect a person, even when they have the ability to do so. Your students exhibiting this tendency appear to be unmotivated, have low self-esteem, and lack persistence. They believe there is no use in working hard and putting forth effort to learn, because they believe they are incapable of being successful. These behaviors are very typical in students who have experienced some sort of trauma or abuse. The pandemic experience is considered a trauma by many of your students.

What to do: Prepare learning experiences for your students to replace negative thoughts with positive ones. Think of small ways your students can experience success, and then push them to apply that feeling of success towards a more challenging task.

Encourage structure. Help your students see the importance of structure when learning. Students who adhere to a schedule place less emphasis on negative feelings.

Suggest seeking counseling. In extreme cases, this might be a student's best option.

Q&A About Way to Succeed

Q: Would Way to Succeed work for our school's Summer Bridge program?

A: Yes! Summer Bridge programs help students transition to college learning while strengthening math and English skills. Typically, Bridge courses take place over the summer in a shorter 6-week term, with supports in place to help students become more successful in college. This aligns well with the goals of Way to Succeed. We focus on learning how to learn math and other STEM course content.

Our mini-course, *Find Your Way to Succeed*, was designed to use in a 10 – 15 week term, but it can be condensed into six weeks easily. The ten independently completed lessons are short (10 – 15 minutes per lesson) and can be easily doubled up. The personalized diagnostic Learning Assessments must be taken at least two weeks apart to allow students to try out some new learning practices. By scheduling the Learning Assessments during weeks 1, 3, and 5, students can still get the benefits of the entire program in the typical Bridge program's six-week term.

QUOTE OF THE QUARTER

"Form will get you through times of no energy better than energy will get you through times of no form."

— Anonymous

Visit our Website

We offer a unique research-supported approach to help 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 Summer Bridge and Fall Semester 2023 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 benefits all students with a personalized, stand-alone success program that works well with any mathematics or other STEM course. Way to Succeed helps your students 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 with short quizzes for better student accountability
- Focus on improving self-regulation, time-management skills, metacognition, preparing for exams, 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. Self-Regulation of Learning
2. How to Mitigate a Lack of College Preparedness
3. Grouping Students Effectively: What's Best for Learning?

….and more!

Way to Succeed
Mindful Insights for Learning

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www.waytosucceed.com