

Case Study:

Teddy sat down in his freshmen College Algebra class with a sense of composure, setting his notebook down and getting out a pencil and his phone. He looked around the room at his fellow freshmen and noted how uneasy they seemed to be. "I'm not nervous. I get math, and I don't need to worry about this class," he thought to himself.

After a couple of weeks, Teddy, after skipping assignments and short-changing study time, got his first test back—an F. Panic gripped him as he realized the harsh reality of his overconfidence in his knowledge and abilities. He knew he would have to humble himself to get some help and put in extra effort if he was to get credit for this class. He was in for a battle to overcome this lousy grade.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results."

Winston Churchill

Bringing the**Overconfident Student Back to Reality...Gently**

Overconfidence Bias is a common way of thinking that influences decision-making and assessing personal learning gaps. Students with this bias also underestimate the time required to write an essay or study what they need to perform well on a test, setting themselves up for failure. We have all seen students come to college over-estimating their knowledge and skills and underestimating the demands of college. Unfortunately, students with Overconfidence Bias, like Teddy (left) find it difficult to rise above this faulty way of thinking.

How do you gently bring students like this back to reality without discouraging them and without making college seem a daunting, impossible achievement? Yes, college is difficult, and incoming students have not all had to meet academic challenges like the ones in college, yet continuing to operate with this faulty bias will eventually result in underachievement or even failure. The following ideas can help bring your students to develop a more realistic sense about learning, so they can adequately meet the demands of college.

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Improve Time Estimates:

1. Use time limits for short quizzes so students begin thinking more realistically about the time required to complete problems.
2. Express your view of how long regular assignments should take to complete.

Improve Ability Estimates:

1. Have students work problems in class. Overconfident students often erroneously believe they can work out a problem themselves because they understand when someone else works out a similar problem.
2. Give your students practice tests. This does not have to be during class time.

Reflect on Study Behaviors:

1. Urge your students to consider the time, effort, and help-seeking they engaged in when working Independently.
2. Was class time used for active and engaged learning or just for attendance purposes?
3. Inspire them to use their reflections to change learning and study habits in ways that improve achievement.

Pay attention to feedback:

1. Support your students' questioning about how others such as classmates, family, and friends study, use their time, learn, and perform. Start a discussion thread on your LMS for students to share ideas.
2. Use comments on tests and quizzes to provide feedback for your students.
3. Think of mistakes as learning experiences. They are usually a result of either ignorance or carelessness. Both can be corrected. Take time to analyze them. They can help inform students about study decisions they might have made.

The Power of a Shared Vision

What is more powerful than working together towards one goal? Education is one area in which professors and students should be working in concert for the mutual goal of student achievement.

Are your students aware of your desire for their success in your class? Many students perceive their professors as overly demanding, presenting material that pushes them past what they believe they can handle. This perception often feels like punishment, with poor grades interpreted as personal criticism. As a result, students may emotionally distance themselves, creating barriers between themselves and their instructors. While holding your students accountable for high standards, be sure to communicate your shared goal of your students' success and your willingness to help them through the process.

COME VISIT WITH US IN SACRAMENTO!

We will be attending **MathFest**
August 6 – 9

Mention this newsletter for a special offer from Way to Succeed!

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 their learning skills and strategies in a personal way while freeing you to focus on your math or other STEM content. The online program works concurrently with your class, providing students with 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. Students can quickly make changes to become better learners and improve their academic achievement.

Like a Deer Crossing! Read the Freshmen Warning Signs

Chances are, you want your students to avoid the poor choices and actions that will hinder development of knowledge and skills and adopt ones that improve their learning. How do we figure out what will make a positive difference for our students, and how do we influence their choices to be more effective learners? If you have been teaching at the college level for more than a semester or two, you are no doubt aware of the ways students can make poor decisions that lead to underachievement and failure. Somehow, your students also need to become aware of these poor choices and the damage they can do. They also need to have the motivation and will to make the changes as soon as possible.

This reminds me of a radio call-in show that received a call from a lady, Donna, who had experienced three separate accidents by hitting deer with her car. She noticed that these accidents occurred right after passing deer crossing signs. She was calling in to complain about why her state "...would allow deer crossing signs in such high traffic areas." She went on to say that she had even seen these signs on the interstate, and thought it was so irresponsible of the highway department to be encouraging deer to cross in these locations.

Although the woman who called in did not quite understand the purpose behind the signs, which were more of an alert for drivers, not for deer, she did get me thinking about the way freshmen in college are sometimes in significant danger when crossing through their first few classes. Students, like the deer, do not pay attention to the dangers of poor decisions, and are not aware of ways to avoid failing their classes. Left to their own, many students will be "hit"



by the demands of your class they don't know how to overcome.

Schools and professors know the warning signs of academic failure. Can we do something so that our novice learners can avoid becoming a casualty? We should be doing all we can do to inform them about how to successfully proceed across the semester without getting struck by disaster along the way.

Programs, such as Way to Succeed, educate freshmen students on how to avoid academic failure. To strengthen this process, best-practice ideas are most effective when shared with students who are taking the toughest course most students face: their first college math class.

Two More Common Learning Disabilities

and Strategies for Student Success (Part 2 of 3)



In the last issue of Learning Insights, we discovered that learning disabilities can make learning math difficult because disabilities change your students' *perception, memorization, and expression* of your math content. Disabilities interfere with understanding, learning, and testing of your students' knowledge. In the last issue, we examined dyslexia and dysgraphia, learning disabilities that can often become barriers to achievement and success.

This issue describes two more common learning disabilities that affect math students; dyscalculia and organizational disabilities. To the right are some easy strategies to help these students become better math learners. By coaching students with these disabilities how to process your course material better, you are benefitting all your students.

Dyscalculia.

Dyscalculia is a common math-related disability and includes difficulties in recognizing patterns, applying known strategies to solving problems, and making generalizations. While people with dyscalculia can remember details, they have trouble seeing the big picture.

Strategies:

- Utilize diagrams and organizational tools for representing concepts,
- State generalizations to improve understanding
- Feature pattern recognition
- Point out similarities and differences in new material
- Make connections to previous knowledge
- Draw conclusions, especially when wrapping up a topic
- Talk through strategies as you work through problems
- Give opportunities for guided practice in class

Organizational Difficulties.

Students with disabilities often have trouble keeping track of their papers and course material. This executive functioning weakness leads to frustration, panic, and a perceived loss

of control over learning. Students with this disability often complain of not being able to find anything and commonly miss due dates and appointments.

Strategies:

- Coach your students to have one notebook per course. File papers for that course only in that notebook every time.
- Start the term with communicating a plan for students to manage their notebooks and keep them organized.
- Color code handouts, tests, and prepared notes so they are easier for your students to find later.
- Hole punch anything you hand out to your students.
- Let your students know they can ask for help with organizational tasks. Highly organized students are often willing to lend a hand to students with executive function weaknesses.
- Implore to your students keep up with a quality calendar that they can fill out easily and won't lose. Pencil and paper calendars are easy to fill out in pencil and the student can see an entire month at one time. Phone calendars are harder to lose, but are more difficult to enter the exact assignments on each date. Find something that works for the individual student.

Q&A About Way to Succeed

Q: My students lack motivation to do something like this. They don't think they need it.

A: **We understand.** Many students arrive in college overestimating skills and knowledge, as the article on page 1 suggests. Learning how to learn, however is the student's best advantage for success in college. When students know this program helps them to become more successful through learning



how to learn in their math or other STEM class, they want to know more about that and will be more motivated to try things to help themselves.

Way to Succeed is a great resource for them. The WTS program contains short, simple lessons with practical applications your students can use right away. Their personal learning profile provides actions tailored specifically for them.





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, and how to order.

You can be ready for Fall Semester 2025 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 your students with a personalized, stand-alone success program designed for mathematics and other STEM courses. [Way to Succeed](#) helps 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.
- Our focus is on improving self-regulation, time-management skills, metacognition in your students, and how to access extra help resources.
- Nothing to grade. Nothing to plan. No essays for your students.
- Personalized learning diagnostics and recommendations for each student.
- Companion eBook for better student accountability.
- Research-based process establishes significant improvement in grades.
- Low department and per-student costs.
- Compatible with any STEM course or curriculum, online or face-to-face.
- Easy-to-access instructor reports.
- **Quick and easy set-up for your school, by department, course, or class.**

Upcoming Articles in the next issue of *Learning Insights*

1. Passive vs. Deliberate Learning
2. Another Two Learning Disabilities and Effective Strategies that helpand more!

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Learning Insights Issue 22 August 2025



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