

Drive home the benefits of practice.

Tell your students...

ONE: Working problems helps you become more fluent with new algorithms.

TWO: Understanding simple problems helps you apply big ideas to more complex problems.

THREE: Abstract mathematical principles become more tangible and familiar if used consistently.

FOUR: When working on assignments, you should begin to see connections to previous concepts and processes.

FIVE: Don't avoid the thinking required to do homework by using problem-solver programs, copying, incomplete work, and so on. Thinking results in learning.

SIX: Recognizing a well-worked problem is not the same as doing the problem yourself. You must be able to work problems independently.

SEVEN: Pay attention in class. Write the notes that will help you later when you are working on your own.

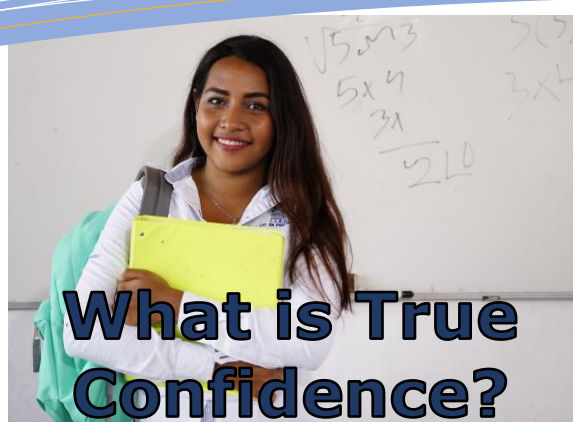
EIGHT: Read your textbook. The author wrote out directions and explanations to teach you.

NINE: Get help (online, a friend, math help centers, your professor) as soon as you see you don't understand.

TEN: Persist until you do.

ELEVEN: Assignments are designed to help you learn something new, not only to be checked off a list of "to do's." Complete for understanding.

TWELVE: Practice previous problems until you are comfortable with the process.



What is True Confidence?

Rewiring Fear through Practice

"Confidence doesn't come from believing in yourself. It comes from having done the uncomfortable thing enough times that your nervous system stops flagging it as an emergency. Because nothing is actually hard, it's just unfamiliar."

E. B. Foa and M. J. Kozak

Wise words for first-year math students.

Many students suffer from math anxiety. According to *Education Weekly*, somewhere between 20% and 30% of students have significant impairment from math anxiety. It is likely that all your students enter college with some anxiety related to your math class, but not enough to impair performance substantially. In the quote above, fear is resulting from a response to a novel stimulus and creating an emergency to panic over, which can describe those with severe math anxiety and those who are just walking in to their first college math class and are a little nervous. Those with significant math anxiety freeze up, can't think clearly, and perform poorly on exams. According to the *Education Weekly* article, most educators believe math anxiety to be a significant problem for some students. How do students overcome this fear to be

Way to Succeed

Mindful Insights for Learning



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do students overcome this fear to be successful?

Reprogramming brains. From a psychological perspective, fear is simply a survival reaction to anything seen as novel and perhaps damaging to the individual. One can see that many students avoid such experiences, and when forced to participate in math classes in which novelty and quality performance is required, anxiety follows. Failure viewed as eminent. Embarrassment ensues. Frustration, fear, and procrastination only make the matter worse.

The answer is to **eliminate the novelty**. Help your students understand that practice is their best weapon of choice to extinguish panic and fear. Once the novel idea is not novel any more, the familiarity of any mathematical situation takes over, and confidence will follow.

Overconfidence is false confidence. We have all seen overconfident students enter our classrooms and not be successful. How does this relate to the idea of fear and novelty? Perhaps our overconfident students are denying the reality of their fear, putting on a show of bravado for others to see. Overconfident students may have been highly successful in their high school math classes and are not aware of the level of scholarship necessary at the college level. Eventually, overconfident students will discover the new and novel reality of college level math, and will need the antidote of practice to rediscover confidence at a new level.

“Coaching is unlocking a person’s potential to maximize their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them.”

Timothy Gallwey

References

From P. 1

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From P. 3

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Why should you coach your students to be successful in your STEM classes? Shouldn't they figure things out for themselves? After all, most of us figured out how to study, learn, and what it took to be a successful student when we were first in college. Why should our students be any different?

What is the reality? The 21st century students are different. Most of your students have not experienced a demanding high school education that requires them to be proactive and responsible to complete homework assignments and study for tests like students did 30 or 40 years ago. They have experienced the bizarre years of Covid and their schools' various policies that didn't always translate to quality learning. These same school policies have transformed academics into promoting lower standards so that everybody passes and no child is left behind. Evidence for these changes are appearing in

classrooms; passivity, ignorance about how to learn, a relinquishing of responsibilities, and even a diminished hunger for knowledge.

According to the International Coaching Federation, five major components of coaching align well with what professors and quality teachers already do.

1. Coaching Improves Communication Skills: Success hinges on clear communication. Coach students to express ideas coherently so they can explain STEM processes, ask thoughtful questions, and use correct subject vocabulary. Teach listening skills too — they strengthen relationships and improve classroom and group-work interactions.

2. Coaching Enhances Confidence and Self-Regulation: Students need guidance on how to be effective learners. Class discussions of actions and habits that successful students exhibit encourage those students who don't know how to self-regulate.

3. Coaching Supports Goal-Setting and Time Management Practices: Many students feel overwhelmed when trying to adjust to the many changes college brings. A good coach can help students break down required processes into timelines and practical steps to be more efficient and effective in their college demands.

The Case for Coaching Students

4. Coaching Influences a Work-Life Balance: Related to the above, students must manage life skills, relationships, work, and college success. As a coach, help them balance responsibilities to reduce stress and thrive. Encourage consistent sleep—it supports memory, focus, and learning.

5. Coaching Increases Productivity: All of the previous items contribute to your students' increased productivity, both in your class and outside of class. Multitasking is a myth and not productive. Instant gratification is not practical or realistic in the long game of a college degree. Steady, purposeful, and mindful actions, well coached, can make all the difference for your students.

In today's world, many students need someone to tell them how to be students. Without this understanding, students will continue to underperform and fail. While you are teaching content, coaching students how to absorb the content ideas you are teaching can be a natural combination. After all, you are the expert in the classroom. Helping students figure out how to learn is not coddling them, but giving them the tools they need for success to learn your content and beyond.

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 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. Student can quickly make changes to become better learners and improve their academic achievement.

Re-Testing for Mastery (and Hope!)

Elise looked at her College Algebra test grade with a heavy heart. A 50 was difficult to overcome to pass the course and obviously she knew she didn't study the right things or for long enough to really learn the material thoroughly. The concepts she barely understood were to become the building blocks for material covered in the rest of the class. She knew once a failing grade was in the gradebook, she had limited opportunities for passing the class. Elise's early defeat in her first college math class drained her motivation even though it was only the beginning of the semester. Should she drop the course?

We don't want to see students give up after a first test or quiz when we know most students are capable of learning the material in our courses, yet this is a common occurrence. The number one reason students drop their math course is because of a poor performance on the first test or quiz (Nunnery & Mathies, 2026). Students believe they will not be able to recover from a low grade to pass the math course and will opt to drop the class before damaging their GPAs.

Common mitigations to students dropping a math class include early diagnostics and targeted support, prerequisite remedi-

assessments, and grade replacements with final exam grades. Not all of these require the initiative of the student but are supportive nonetheless.

Comprehensive

Reassessments: To implement a clear reassessment policy, make the retests dependent on student certain requirements. For students to qualify for a retest, they must complete missing homework, correct their test errors with a brief reflection, attend tutoring as needed, and meet with the instructor to discuss what they learned and how they have made changes to their study practices.

Consider adopting a re-assessment policy for your classes. You might be surprised at the confidence boost your students experience when they

1. ...are able to master the content,
2. ...know they have a chance to pass, and
3. ...begin to understand how to study effectively and prepare for future tests.

It might just be the game-changer your students need to succeed!

Benefits of a Reassessment Policy



- A reassessment policy emphasizes the mindset that students earn and own their grades.
- Therefore, you will see subsequent improvements in student accountability.
- A reassessment policy is mastery-based. Students are held responsible for learning and mastering content.
- Retesting teaches quality preparation for taking future tests.
- Reassessments reduce the potential for course failure.
- These policies inspire a growth mindset.
- The opportunity to retest encourages students, bringing hope for continuing in college.

Q&A About Way to Succeed

Q: How does Way to Succeed help to coach my students?

A: This is a great question! We coach your students in two ways:

2. We offer seven chapters in our eBook covering common difficulties first-year and at-risk students have when taking a STEM class. We point out that learning math and other STEM content is different than learning for other subjects. We address those differences so that students know what to do to be successful in math.



1. Students take three Personalized Diagnostic Learning Assessments with Prescriptive Feedback which focus on personal learning beliefs and practices. We help them identify strengths and weaknesses and offer targeted solutions to correct areas of weakness.

The goals of these lessons and Learning Assessments are to coach students in how to identify and make changes in their study habits and goals to become more academically successful while they progress through your math or other STEM course. Students learn to take on the responsibility for their own education to become self-sufficient learners.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"It's a funny thing, the more I practice, the luckier I get."

Arnold Palmer





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 2026 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 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
- Our focus is on improving self-regulation, time-management skills, metacognition in your students, and how to access extra help resources
- Nothing to grade; No essays for your students
- Personalized learning diagnostics for each student
- LMS integrated for better student accountability and ease of use
- APA compliant
- Research-based process with significant improvement in grades
- Low department and per-student costs
- Appropriate for learning in any STEM text, curriculum or class format
- Easy-to-access instructor reports

Upcoming Articles in the next issue of *Learning Insights*

1. Advice for Improving Student Effort
2. Memorizing versus Understanding Algorithms

....and more!

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Learning Insights Issue 24 MAY 2026



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