



# Academic Tenacity for Postsecondary Readiness: Facilitators Guide

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Prepared for the Oregon College and Career Readiness Research Alliance

## Limited Circulation Document

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## About REL Northwest

REL Northwest, operated by Education Northwest, partners with practitioners and policymakers to strengthen data and research use. As one of 10 federally funded regional educational laboratories, we conduct research studies, provide training and technical assistance, and disseminate information. Our work focuses on regional challenges such as turning around low-performing schools, improving college and career readiness, and promoting equitable and excellent outcomes for all students. For more information, please go to <http://relnw.educationnorthwest.org/>.

## Academic Tenacity for Postsecondary Readiness: Facilitators Guide

TOTAL TIME: 90 minutes

This training was developed by REL Northwest for the Oregon College and Career Readiness Research Alliance (OR CCR)

### SLIDE 1: Welcome and Objectives

Time: 5 minutes

*Facilitator's instructions:*

Welcome the participants and introduce yourself.  
If time allows, have participants introduce themselves.  
Introduce the objectives of the workshop.

Objectives:

1. Understand why academic tenacity is important for postsecondary readiness
2. Learn about the research on academic tenacity
3. Learn about what other educators are doing to promote academic tenacity for postsecondary readiness
4. Discuss strategies for promoting academic tenacity in your work

### SLIDE 2: Introduction to REL Northwest (1 of 3)

Time: 1 minute

*Facilitator's instructions:*

Introduce the REL Northwest region (sample text provided).

Sample text:

REL Northwest is one of 10 [Regional Educational Laboratories \(RELs\)](#) funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences. Operated by Education Northwest since 1966, REL Northwest serves Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. REL Northwest works side-by-side with stakeholders to conduct rigorous research, analyze data, provide technical assistance, and share evidence that can improve education decisionmaking. Through eight research alliances and other activities, REL Northwest tackles such issues as dropout prevention, equitable outcomes for English language learners, college readiness and persistence, discipline disparities, and school improvement strategies.

### SLIDE 3: Introduction to REL Northwest (2 of 3)

Time: 1 minute

*Facilitator's instructions:*

Introduce the 8 alliances, and explain that the current workshop is part of REL Northwest's work with the Oregon College and Career Readiness alliance.

REL Northwest participates in eight research alliances:

1. Alaska State Policy Research Alliance
2. Northwest Tribal Educators Alliance
3. Idaho Statewide System of Recognition, Accountability, and Support Alliance
4. Montana Data Use Alliance
5. Oregon College and Career Readiness Research Alliance
6. Oregon Leadership Network Alliance
7. Road Map for Education Results Project
8. Washington ESD Network Alliance

### SLIDE 4: Introduction to REL Northwest (3 of 3)

Time: 1 minute

*Facilitator's instructions:*

Define "research alliance" for participants. Read the definition and explain that this is what OR CCR strives to do in Oregon.

Definition of a research alliance:

"A group of stakeholders who share a specific educational concern and agree to work together to learn more about the concern so that they can make sound decisions to improve education outcomes." (REL, 2011)

### SLIDE 5: Agenda

Time: 2 minutes

*Facilitator's instructions:*

Introduce the agenda for the day and ask if anyone has any questions.

Agenda (see slide):

- Behind the buzz
- Inspiring interventions
- Discussion
- Reflection

## SLIDE 6: Defining Postsecondary Readiness

Time: 6 minutes

*Facilitator's instructions:*

Provide the example of Conley's definition.

Introduce the three factors and define each one.

Explain that this is from the CRIS framework (see [http://gardnercenter.stanford.edu/our\\_work/cris.html](http://gardnercenter.stanford.edu/our_work/cris.html))

*Sources:*

Allensworth (2011)

Attewell & Domina (2008)

Conley (2005)

Endsley & Maruyama (2008)

Geiser & Santelices (2007)

Horn & Kojaku (2001)

McAlister & Mevs (2012)

Roderick, Coca, & Nagaoka (2011)

Warburton, Bugarin, & Nuñez (2001)

Wiley, Wyatt, & Camara (2011)

Research suggests that three factors are especially important for postsecondary readiness:

**1) Academic preparedness**

*GPA:* Some studies show that high school GPA predicts first-year grades in college, cumulative GPA in college, and degree attainment. GPA may reflect skills such as time management and organization.

*Coursework:* The level of high school curriculum that students take is also strongly correlated with college persistence. One study found that students who took rigorous coursework in high school accounted for more than 80 percent of those students who persisted in college. Taking honors, AP, and dual-credit courses is positively correlated with college success.

*Performance on standardized tests:* Research in Oregon has demonstrated that statewide Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (OAKS) scores are correlated with college success in the state.

**2) College knowledge**

*College knowledge* is the term used for the knowledge and actions necessary to get to college. Researchers note that the students most likely to attend college typically have the savvy to learn the steps necessary to get there, including how to complete the FAFSA and how to complete college applications. College knowledge is currently a difficult measure for schools to track.

## SLIDE 7: What Is Academic Tenacity? (1 of 2)

Time: 2 minutes

*Facilitator's instructions:*

Point out that when we talk about academic tenacity, there is a tendency to put all of the responsibility on the student. We should also focus on promoting academic tenacity through changes to the culture and the climate of a school or classroom.

### 3) Academic tenacity

We will explore this concept in the following slides. One definition of academic tenacity:

“Academic tenacity is about the mindsets and skills that allow students to look beyond short-term concerns to longer-term or higher-order goals, and withstand challenges and setbacks to persevere toward these goals.”

(Dweck, Walton, & Cohen, 2014)

## SLIDE 8: What Is Academic Tenacity? (2 of 2)

Time: 2 minutes

*Facilitator's instructions:*

Read the three constructs. Explain that we are going to explore these three constructs through stories of tenacious students.

Three constructs are particularly important for academic tenacity:

- Mindsets and goals
- Values, identity, and social belonging
- Self-regulation and self-control

## SLIDE 9: Mindsets and Goals (1 of 5)

Time: 6 minutes

*Facilitator's instructions:*

If possible, ask a participant to read the vignette. If it's not feasible to have a participant read the vignette, read it yourself.

Oksana is seventh-grader. Her grades have been declining in math since the fourth grade, but she recently went to summer school and learned about how her brain grows new connections and “gets smarter” when she works on challenging tasks and how to apply this lesson to her schoolwork. At the end of the first semester of seventh grade, her math grades were up to a C, and by the end of the year she received a B in math. Moreover, both her mother and her math teacher noted a change in her attitude toward math—she enjoyed

	working on challenging problems because she said that challenging herself helps her brain get stronger. “I concentrate better on tests as well as homework. I have also been very responsible, and I know I can do what I put my mind to.”
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**SLIDE 10: Mindsets and Goals (2 of 5)**

**Time: 3 minutes**

<i>Facilitator’s instructions:</i> Compare and contrast fixed mindset and growth mindset. Suggested text appears at right.	Students’ beliefs about their academic ability influence their academic tenacity. According to Dweck and colleagues’ research, students may view intelligence as a fixed quantity that they either do or do not possess (a fixed mindset) or as a malleable quantity that can be increased with effort and learning (a growth mindset). Students with a fixed mindset tend to worry about proving it rather than improving it. This can lead to destructive thoughts (e.g., “I failed because I’m dumb”), feelings (such as humiliation), and behavior (giving up). By contrast, students with a growth mindset will often perceive challenges or setbacks as an opportunity to learn and will respond with constructive thoughts (e.g., “Maybe I need to change my strategy or try harder”), feelings (such as the excitement of a challenge), and behavior (persistence).
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**SLIDE 11: Mindsets and Goals (3 of 5)**

**Time: 1 minute**

<i>Facilitator’s instructions:</i> Point out the role of praise in promoting a growth mindset. Suggested text appears at right.	Praise can have dramatic effects on students’ mindsets. Praising students for their ability can promote a fixed mindset, but praising them for their effort or the strategy can teach a growth mindset and can foster resilience.
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**SLIDE 12: Mindsets and goals (4 of 5)**

**Time: 1 minute**

<i>Facilitator’s instructions:</i>	Students who see intelligence as fixed tend to focus on performance goals—to
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Discuss the role of performance versus mastery or learning goals. Suggested text appears at right.

perform well and to avoid performing poorly They also aim to exert as little effort as possible, because they tend to believe that high effort will be seen as a sign of low ability. By contrast, a growth mindset tends to emphasize mastery goals or learning goals—to learn and master challenging academic material.

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### SLIDE 13: Mindsets and Goals (5 of 5)

Time: 1 minutes

*Facilitator's instructions:*

Present the combined slide showing the components of the growth mindset.

Students' higher order or long-term goals—or *purposes*—contribute to their self-beliefs and tenacity. Long-term purposes, even when they are still developing, can help students feel that they are learning to become the kind of person they would like to be and that they would like to contribute something of value to the world.

### SLIDE 14: Values, Identity, and Social Belonging (1 of 3)

Time: 6 minutes

*Facilitator's instructions:*

If possible, ask a participant to read the vignette. If it's not feasible to have a participant read the vignette, read it yourself.

As a freshman at the University of Washington, Jerry was feeling overwhelmed by college. He noticed that there were very few African-American men on campus and felt that he would not do well in school because he did not fit in. In his freshman seminar, he had the opportunity to meet one-on-one with an upperclassman who talked with him about his own experiences as a freshman. He told Jerry that it was normal to worry about fitting in during your first year—regardless of your ethnicity—and that over time he would feel more at home. After this meeting, Jerry went back to his dorm and reflected on the conversation. It did help him feel less isolated and like he might be able to fit in if he gave it some time. During the next seminar, the professor asked the class to write about their one-on-one conversations with upperclassmen. The process of writing about it helped Jerry feel even more reassured. Throughout the course of the year, Jerry did begin to feel more and more that he belonged at the University of Washington, and he went on to connect with many students and adults that would shape his successful college career.

**SLIDE 15: Values, Identity, and Social Belonging (2 of 3)**

Time: 2 minutes

*Facilitator's instructions:*  
Introduce values, identity, and social belonging.  
Suggested text appears at right.

The discontinuity between the goals students personally endorse and the goals they see as valued in school could affect their sense of social belonging in the classroom. This appears to be especially true for minority students. Research shows that a sense of social belonging allows students to rise above the concerns of the moment and that it is linked to long-term student motivation and school success. Specifically, adolescents who feel they have better relationships with teachers and peers experience a greater sense of belonging in school.

**SLIDE 16: Values, Identity, and Social Belonging (3 of 3)**

Time: 2 minutes

*Facilitator's instructions:*  
Suggested text appears at right.

As a result, they are more motivated and engaged in class and earn better grades—effects that hold regardless of previous motivation and performance.

**SLIDE 17: Self-Regulation and Self-Control (1 of 3)**

Time: 6 minutes

*Facilitator's instructions:*  
If possible, ask a participant to read the vignette. If it's not feasible to have a participant read the vignette, read it yourself.

Susanna joined a lunch-time group at school that talked about life skills, such as how to manage stress and how to set goals and work toward them. In the group, she learned deep breathing exercises that she used before taking tests or when she got upset with her brothers at home. "If I remember to use my breathing exercises, I feel more calm and able to make a good decision," she said. Susanna also liked the group because she had made new friends there and had realized that most of her peers were going through similar things and were also learning to deal with stress. By joining the group, she came to feel more connected to school, more motivated to attend, and more willing to share her experiences with others.

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**SLIDE 18: Self-Regulation and Self-Control (2 of 3)**

Time: 3 minutes

*Facilitator's instructions:*  
Introduce self-regulation and self-control. Suggested text appears at right.

Even if students have the mindsets and goals that encourage tenacity, they may still perform below their potential. But self-regulatory skills—those that allow students to rise above the distractions and temptations of the moment, stay on task, and navigate obstacles to long-term achievement—also contribute to academic tenacity and school achievement.

Most of us are familiar with the “marshmallow” studies conducted by Walter Mischel and his colleagues in the 1970s. In these studies, preschoolers were given a choice between having one marshmallow whenever they wanted or having two marshmallows if they waited. Children’s responses varied greatly, ranging from eating one marshmallow in a few seconds to waiting a full 15 minutes to have 2 marshmallows. Years later, researchers have followed up with the participants and found significant positive correlations between children’s ability to wait as preschoolers and a range of outcomes in their childhood, adolescence, and even adult lives. Self-regulation allows students to put aside activities that may distract or tempt them in the short term so they can pursue tasks that are important to their long-term success.

**SLIDE 19: Values, Identity, and Social Belonging (3 of 3)**

Time: 2 minutes

*Facilitator's instructions:*  
Suggested text appears at right.

Stress-management and mindfulness strategies have been shown to break the negative self-talk that could otherwise distract students from the task at hand and keep them focused.

Note: It is important to distinguish between self-control, which involves the ability to resist temptation and control impulses in the short-term, and

	another well-known construct called “grit,” which emphasizes perseverance in the pursuit of long-term goals.
<b>SLIDE 20: Activity (1 of 5)</b>	
Time: 1 minute	
<i>Facilitator’s instructions:</i> Introduce the activity. Suggested text appears at right. If in person, have the participants break into small groups for this activity. If conducting a webinar, use the chat feature to collect responses.	In this activity, I’m going to present you with two examples of interventions from the Academic Tenacity research. As a group [or using a chat feature if conducting a webinar] indicate which of the 3 constructs of academic tenacity you think this intervention is mostly targeting.  Note that these constructs are inter-related, so each intervention could apply to more than one construct. Pick the one that stands out most clearly.
<b>SLIDE 21: Activity (2 of 5)</b>	
Time: 2 minutes	
<i>Facilitator’s instructions:</i> Read the intervention aloud and give participants one minute to decide which construct it applies to. If possible, have participants share out loud or summarize responses from the online chat (if conducting a webinar) before advancing to the next slide.	Intervention text: Students picture a safe place where they feel protected and in control: a caring, supportive, and encouraging place. Before a task, students spend a few minutes breathing deeply and imagining their safe space.
<b>SLIDE 22: Activity (3 of 5)</b>	
Time: 6 minutes	
<i>Facilitator’s instructions:</i>	See visual elements on slide 22.

<p>If possible, facilitate a short discussion exploring how this intervention reflects self-regulation and self-control. Tell participants that they will be receiving more information about this research as a handout.</p>	
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### SLIDE 23: Activity (4 of 5)

Time: 2 minute

*Facilitator's instructions:*

Read the intervention aloud and give participants one minute to decide which construct it applies to. If possible, have participants share out loud or summarize responses from the online chat (if conducting a webinar) before advancing to the next slide.

Intervention text: Students create a list of personal values that are important to them. They choose the value that is most important and spend 15 minutes writing about why this value is important to them.

### SLIDE 24: Activity (5 of 5)

Time: 6 minutes

*Facilitator's instructions:*

If possible, facilitate a short discussion exploring how this intervention reflects values, identity and social belonging Tell participants that they will be receiving more information about this research as a handout.

See visual elements on slide 24.

### SLIDE 25: How Does Academic Tenacity Relate to Postsecondary Readiness?

Time: 2 minutes

*Facilitator's instructions:*

Call attention to the handout of “emerging research” in folder (or sent under separate cover if conducting a webinar).

To show the ways that academic tenacity can promote postsecondary readiness, we're going to look at some highlights of the research evidence.

### SLIDES 26, 27, 28: How Does Academic Tenacity Relate to Postsecondary Readiness?

Time: 8 minutes

*Facilitator's instructions:*

If possible, break participants into small groups to discuss the “emerging research” handout. If small groups are not feasible, go through slides 26–28 together, reading aloud and calling attention to the results in bold text.

See content on slides 26, 27 and 28, which present some highlights from the research evidence about academic tenacity.

(Additional research evidence is provided in the “emerging research” handout in the folder (or sent under separate cover if conducting a webinar.)

### SLIDE 29: Interactive Discussion

Time: 8 minutes

*Facilitator's instructions:*

If possible, keep participants in small groups for this discussion. If conducting a webinar, use a chat feature to gather responses to the facilitation questions. After several minutes of discussion, invite participants to share the results with the larger group.

Discussion questions: What are you doing in your own school to promote academic tenacity? What would you like to do? What questions do you have?

Probe questions: What interventions are currently being implemented at your school around academic tenacity or related approaches? Who is implementing these interventions? How are they implementing them? How is this implementation going? Successes? Challenges?

### SLIDE 30: Key characteristics

Time: 1 minute

*Facilitator's instructions:*

Recap some of the key characteristics that distinguish academically tenacious students from other students. Stress that academic tenacity is especially important/promising because it is malleable and therefore educators can influence outcomes.

Key characteristics and behaviors of academically tenacious students:

- Belong academically and socially
- See school as relevant to their future
- Work hard and can postpone immediate pleasure
- Do not get derailed by intellectual or social difficulties
- Seek out challenges
- Remain engaged over the long haul

SLIDE 31: Thank you

Time: 1 minute

*Facilitator's instructions:*

Thank everyone for their participation and direct them to further resources (add your contact information to the slide).

For more information, please contact:

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