Academic Tenacity for Postsecondary Readiness
REL Northwest
Eight Research Alliances

- Alaska State Policy Research Alliance
- Northwest Tribal Educators Alliance
- Idaho Statewide System of Recognition, Accountability, and Support Alliance
- Montana Data Use Alliance
- Oregon College and Career Readiness Research Alliance
- Oregon Leadership Network Alliance
- Road Map for Education Results Project
- Washington ESD Network Alliance
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 Performance Work Statement, April 2011)
Welcome and introductions

Behind the buzz
  - Context: academic tenacity for postsecondary readiness
  - The three constructs of academic tenacity
  - Stories of tenacious students

Inspiring interventions
  - Practices to promote academic tenacity
  - Evidence of results

Discussion: What can I do at my school?

Reflection and wrap-up
Definition used in Oregon:
“The level of preparation a student needs in order to enroll and succeed—without remediation—in a credit bearing general education course at a postsecondary institution.”

Three important factors:
➢ Academic preparedness
➢ College knowledge
➢ Academic tenacity

Source: Conley, 2007
“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.”

Source: Dweck, Walton, & Cohen, 2014
What Is Academic Tenacity?

Three constructs are particularly important for academic tenacity:

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

Fixed mindset
“...because I’m dumb.”

Growth mindset
“Maybe I need a new strategy.”
Mindsets and goals

**Fixed mindset**

You're better at art than at math.

**Growth mindset**

You put a lot of work into that project.
Mindsets and goals

Fixed mindset

Growth mindset

Performance goals

Mastery or learning goals

Mindsets and goals
Mindsets and goals

**Fixed mindset**

“I failed because I’m dumb.”

You’re better at art than at math.

**Growth mindset**

“Maybe I need a new strategy.”

You put a lot of work into that project.

**Performance goals**

**Mastery or learning goals**

Mindsets and goals
Values, identity, and social belonging: Jerry
Values, identity, and social belonging

Relationships with teachers and peers

Sense of social belonging
Values, identity, and social belonging

- Relationships with teachers and peers
- Sense of social belonging
- Improved grades and achievement
- Long-term motivation and engagement
Self-regulation and self-control: Susanna
Self-regulation and self-control

- Tune out distractions and temptations
- Stay on task
- Navigate obstacles
Self-regulation and self-control

- Tune out distractions and temptations
- Stay on task
- Navigate obstacles

Mindfulness

Stress management
Which of the three constructs of academic tenacity do you think this intervention is targeting?

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

- Mindsets and goals
- Values, identity, and social belonging
- Self-regulation and self-control
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.
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.
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.
How Does Academic Tenacity Relate to Postsecondary Readiness?

“Educational interventions and initiatives that target [academic tenacity] can have transformative effects on students’ experience and achievement in school, improving core academic outcomes such as GPA and test scores months and even years later.”

— Dweck et al., 2014
In this study online growth-mindset and sense-of-purpose interventions were given to 1,594 students in 13 geographically diverse high schools. Both interventions were intended to help students persist when they experienced academic difficulty. The interventions were most beneficial for low-performing students. Among students at risk of dropping out of high school (a third of the sample), each intervention raised students’ semester grade point averages (GPA) in core academic courses and increased the rate of satisfactory performance in core courses by 6.4 percentage points.

Students read an article describing the brain’s ability to restructure itself through effort. The article focuses on the implications for students’ potential to become more intelligent through study and practice. This message is reinforced through several writing exercises. In the first, students summarize the scientific findings in their own words. In the second, they read about a hypothetical student who is becoming discouraged and starting to think of himself as “not smart enough” to do well in school. Students are asked to advise this target student based on what they have read.

An intervention designed to help low-income and minority eighth-graders imagine “possible selves” increased their success in moving toward APS goals: academic initiative, standardized test scores, and improved grades. Depression, absences, and in-school misbehavior also declined. The effects were still present during a two-year follow-up.


Students take part in a 10-session workshop in which they are asked to imagine a future “possible self,” list the obstacles they might encounter to realizing that self, and strategies they can use to overcome the obstacles.
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.*


The authors evaluated a small-group counseling intervention, Student Success Skills, provided to 53 fourth- and fifth-grade African-American students in an inner-city environment. **Compared with the control group, students who received the treatment reported significant changes in metacognitive skill, feelings of connectedness to school, and executive function.**
What are you doing in your own school to promote academic tenacity? What would you like to do? What questions do you have?

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

Research suggests that academic tenacity is malleable


References, continued


Thank you

For more information, please contact:

Shannon Davidson
(shannon.davidson@educationnorthwest.org)