At the end of their senior year, high school students are faced with one of their most critical and impactful decisions of their lives: what am I going to do after graduation?

Despite the importance of this decision, not all students receive the same messages, opportunities, and support throughout their K-12 education. This leaves some students ready for and confident about their postsecondary transition, and others uncertain and ill-prepared. In particular, students from traditionally marginalized and minoritized groups face these and additional obstacles, such as institutional racism and identity threat, that can impede their access to or usage of the support needed to be successful.

Postsecondary access and success programs are in a unique position to help develop transition-ready students who are prepared for life after high school and any changes that might accompany it. In this document, we discuss how programs and practitioners can help develop transition-ready students through concrete, targeted activities that support one key predictor of students' success: **learning mindsets.**

How can postsecondary access and success programs help develop transition-ready students?

Students' transition readiness is a function of many factors, some that can be influenced by postsecondary access and success programs and others that cannot. One high-potential area that practitioners can impact is learning mindsets, or students' beliefs about themselves as learners and the learning environment. Fostering students' adaptive learning mindsets is a promising approach to support transition-ready students because learning mindsets are:

- **Meaningful:** a robust body of research suggest that learning mindsets shape how students interpret difficulty and respond to challenge, making them critical during times of challenge or change. They also relate to the outcomes we care about supporting most for students, including academic success and holistic well-being. (Heckman & Krautz, 2012; Pellegrino & Hilton, 2013; Quay & Romero, 2015).
- **Malleable:** evidence from more than two decades of research suggests that learning mindsets can be altered through targeted activities, messages, and supports (Lazowski & Hulleman, 2016; Yeager & Walton, 2011). Most of this work has focused on the influence of educators and key mentors, providing a promising starting point for postsecondary access and success programs.
- **Measurable:** learning mindsets can be assessed through valid, reliable, and low-burden surveys (Cox, Foster, & Bamat, 2019; Kosovich et al., 2015).

There are many learning mindsets that practitioners might target to support students. Mindset GPS focuses on three of the most impactful and thoroughly studied learning mindsets.

G **Growth Mindset**
Belief that intelligence can be developed through hard work, the use of effective strategies, and help from others when needed

P **Purpose & Relevance**
Belief that schoolwork is valuable because it is personally relevant

S **Sense of Belonging**
Belief that one is connected to and respected by peers, cared for by teachers and mentors, and fits in with the culture

When these three learning mindsets are supported, students are more likely to feel prepared for key transitional periods in their lives, especially the one between high school and postsecondary opportunities. Research suggests that students with well-developed Mindset GPS are more motivated to take on challenging work, more likely to persist in the face of setbacks, and more likely to achieve at higher levels (Lazowski & Hulleman, 2016; Yeager & Dweck, 2012; Mueller & Dweck, 1998; Yeager & Walton, 2011).

For postsecondary access and success programs, we recommend focusing first on Mindset GPS because Mindset GPS is memorable. Just like the GPS in a phone guides people when they're feeling lost, Mindset GPS helps guide students through difficult transitions (Hulleman & Happel, 2018). This will make it easier for you and your colleagues to think about your interactions with students through a Mindset GPS lens, and help you send supportive messages that help students develop their transition readiness. There is strong evidence that each of these three learning mindsets is meaningful, malleable, and measurable. Importantly, these three learning mindsets are grounded in a substantial body of research in developmental, educational, and social psychology related to student motivation.

In the table below, we provide examples of outcomes that can be improved through supporting students' Mindset GPS, ways to support each mindset, and example questions that could be asked of students to assess whether and how their mindsets are changing.

	Is it meaningful? Notable outcomes and correlates	Is it malleable? example messages, activities, or pedagogical changes that can support adaptive learning mindsets	Is it measurable? Sample assessment questions
Growth mindset	• Better course grades • Willingness to try again after failing an assignment or assessment • Pursuing challenging material or activities (e.g., signing up for AP courses)	• Instructors provide students with a lesson about neuroplasticity and malleability of intelligence, and an activity in which students describe this to future students. • Instructors and/or advisors Reframing struggle/failure as an opportunity to grow and improve. • Instructors provide students with an opportunity to revise work or retake a test	• You can learn new things, but you can't really change your basic intelligence. • I prefer challenging material that I'll learn from rather than easy material. • If I'm having trouble on a task, I try out different strategies to find one that works.
Purpose and Relevance	• Increased interest in subject area • Taking more AP and college courses • Increased confidence in ability to perform well	• Instructors provide students with activities designed to help them make personal connections between class material and their interests, goals, or hobbies • Instructors and/or advisors offer students opportunities to identify and reflect on how their postsecondary pursuits will help affirm their most strongly-held values • Instructors and/or advisors support students in considering how doing well in school will help their community	• What I'm learning in this school/program will be useful to me in the future. • I often connect what I learn in this school/program to my everyday life. • I find this school/program really interesting.
Sense of Belonging	• Increased course persistence • Greater engagement in help-seeking • Improved course performance • Decreased likelihood of incurring disciplinary citations	• Instructors and/or advisors reframe uncertainty about fitting in as normal and transitory. • Instructors deliver explicit messages that critical feedback is a sign of high expectations and confidence in students. • Instructors and/or advisors foster opportunities for students to connect with teachers, peers, and mentors in meaningful ways.	• I belong in this school/program. • Sometimes I feel like I belong in this school/program, and sometimes I feel like I don't belong in this school/program. • I feel that my goals and values are well-matched with those of my future [postsecondary setting].

How can postsecondary access and success programs support Mindset GPS?

Many postsecondary programs are already engaging in work that develops learning mindsets. Using Mindset GPS as a design tool can help them identify how they are developing learning mindsets and plan for how to design messaging, opportunities, and supports to be even more encouraging. Below, we provide examples of some of our postsecondary access and success partners' practices. We highlight ways that these practices support students' learning mindsets, and provide suggestions for ways to bolster learning mindsets even further.

Additional Resources

Navigate Project Website

Measuring Learning Mindsets

Diving Deeper into Learning Mindsets

Classroom Activities and Pedagogical Changes

What is the Navigate Project?

The Navigate Project is a collective of educators, advocates, funders, and researchers dedicated to developing and adapting evidence-demonstrated practices in the postsecondary access and success space. Through support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, our mission is to:

- Understand how postsecondary access programs support or unintentionally undermine learning mindsets, especially for historically disenfranchised students.
- Co-create a suite of tools to support learning mindsets, to be shared across postsecondary access programs.
- Equip postsecondary access programs to support learning mindsets, in a way that honors students' backgrounds and experiences.
- Test high-leverage practices for supporting learning mindsets, especially for historically disenfranchised students.

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