



RELEVANCE AFFIRMATION INTERVENTION

HELPING STUDENTS FIND PURPOSE & RELEVANCE IN COLLEGE

- Students often struggle to find purpose and relevance in what they are learning or attending school in general. This is especially true for students who are at-risk for under-performance or traditionally underrepresented.
- Prior research suggests that when students connect what they're learning to their values and lives, they find the content more interesting and often perform better in their courses.
- Students can value different parts of school for different reasons, from the relationships they build with others to earning a degree that will let them pursue a career.
- We are focused on helping practitioners initiate and sustain students' feelings of purpose and relevance throughout their educational experience, both in and out of the classroom.

Students' sense of purpose and relevance is most effective when it is reinforced at all levels of the system. We develop tools to be incorporated at these different levels, from classroom practices to statewide policy, to promote messages that permeate the entire educational context.



STUDENT-FOCUSED INTERVENTIONS

Activities administered directly to students. Student-focused interventions can target growth mindset, purpose and relevance, social belonging, or a combination of learning mindsets.

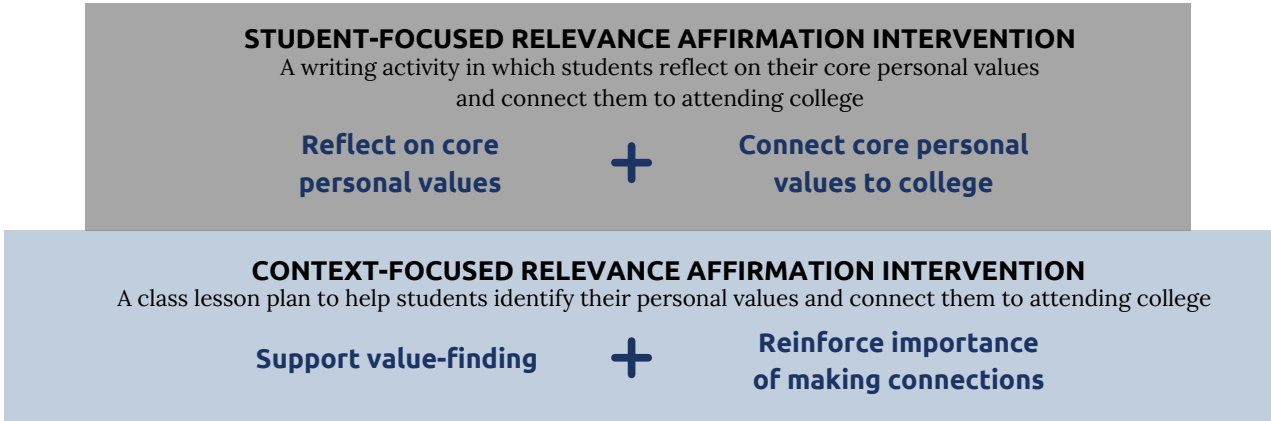


CONTEXT-FOCUSED INTERVENTIONS

Activities designed to make changes in the learning context, such as faculty professional development or course redesign.

RELEVANCE AFFIRMATION INTERVENTIONS

Relevance affirmation interventions prompt students to connect their **core personal values** to **attending college**. Doing this can help students affirm their identity, buffer against feelings of uncertainty about whether they belong in college, and find purpose and relevance in college. Relevance affirmation interventions are based on values affirmation interventions, which close achievement gaps for students who are traditionally underrepresented in higher education.



In Fall 2018, we implemented student-focused relevance affirmation interventions in first-year experience courses at two community colleges in Tennessee, including the most diverse community college in the state. In Spring 2019, we added a context-focused intervention lesson plan, which we collaboratively designed with our our partners.

LEARNINGS SO FAR

- **STUDENTS ARE FUTURE-FOCUSED**
78% of students wrote about how college will help them meet a future goal
- **SCAFFOLDING IS KEY**
Based on Fall 2018 data we made added a context-focused lesson plan to frame the student-focused intervention. 95% of Spring 2019 students were able to make a connection between their values and college, compared to only 68% in Fall 2018.
- **STUDENTS SHARE TOP VALUES**
The top five values students connected to were: Career (28.4%), Financial Security (11.4%), Purpose in Life (10.2%), and Relationships with Family and Friends (15.9%)

WHAT'S NEXT?

- **Summer 2019**
Further revise intervention materials based on quantitative and qualitative data
- Train faculty to deliver context-focused lesson plan
- Analyze quantitative and qualitative data to capture intervention effects
- **Fall 2019**
Continue implementing interventions
- Scale to additional First Year Experience courses