## Communicating Beliefs

**Do our beliefs matter?**

“Getting results for students is a matter of being clear on what we believe to be important (setting and communicating standards of performance) and having conviction that all students have the capacity to achieve those standards (expectations). To have the convictions that all students can achieve in school, we have to perceive them all as having sufficient ability to do so and have confidence in our capacity to meet students where they are now and move them incrementally toward meeting those standards. Both of these conditions can be seriously affected by the theories that we hold about people and their capacity to grow and develop.”

(Saphier, Haley-Speca, & Gower, 2008)

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| **Belief in your students** | “All of your students, whether you believe it or not, have to believe that you think they can do it. . . Educators need to send three key messages to students:   1. What we’re doing is important; 2. You can do it; 3. I won’t give up on you, even if you give up on yourself.”   (Jon Saphier. personal communication, Leading for Social Justice Institute, 2015) |
| **Belief in your efficacy as an educator** | “By ‘efficacy’ we mean the personal conviction of educators and administrators that their actions are the primary influences on the academic success of students.” (Reeves, 2010, p.26)   * In schools where leadership teams primarily attributed student achievement to student variables, the average gain between 2005 and 2006 scores on 25 assessments was 6.14%. * In schools where the leadership teams primarily attributed student achievement to teacher variables the average gain was 18.4%. (Reeves 2008) |
| **Belief in student-teacher relationships** | * “Establishing positive relationships between young students and their educators has been show to cascade and so result in lasting benefits involving trust and affection. Positive teacher-student relationships in the early years predict lower levels of antisocial behavior and may prevent students who began school with high levels of anxiety and emotional problems from developing behavioral problems.” (Hattie & Yates, 2014, p. 17) * “The notion that teacher-student relationships have enduring effects was supported by a recent American study that used a professional development training model to induce educators to focus on improving relationships with their students at the high school level. It was found that marked improvements in student achievement occurred not in the year the program was carried out, but the year following the intervention, with student grades improving nine percentile points in the targeted students.” (Hattie & Yates, 2014, p. 17) |
| **Belief in the power of effort** | “A major reason for developing closeness and reducing conflict is to build the trust needed for most learning. Learning requires considerable investment. It requires confidence that we can learn, it requires an openness to new experiences and thinking, and it requires understanding that we might be wrong, we may make errors, and we will need feedback. Learning for many students is a risky business. The positive teacher-student relationship is thus important not so much because this is worthwhile in itself, but because it helps build the trust to make mistakes, to ask for help, to build confidence to try again, and for students to know they will not look silly when they don’t get it the first time.” (Hattie & Yates, 2014, p. 21)  **“Smart is something you can get!”** Jon Saphier (personal communication, Leading for Social Justice Institute, 2015.  Carol Dweck has studied the power of having a growth mindset <http://www.mindsetworks.com/> . On her website (<http://mindsetonline.com/whatisit/about/>) she explains, “In a growth mindset, people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work—brains and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishment. In contrast, a fixed mindset, as defined by Dweck, is people’s belief that “their basic qualities, like their intelligence or talent, are simply fixed traits. They spend their time documenting their intelligence or talent instead of developing them. They also believe that talent alone creates success—without effort. They’re wrong.” Dweck’s research demonstrates that students with a growth mindset outperform students with a fixed mindset. But growth mindset is itself something that adults help children develop by holding high expectations and providing the support necessary to allow children to meet those high expectations.  For more information on Mindsets, see *“How Not to Talk to Your Kids”* <http://nymag.com/news/features/27840/> |
| **Belief in equity and high expectations through our language and actions:** | “If we offer students a remedial curriculum or run a structured schedule that allows minimal freedom, we are unconsciously preparing our students to aim low. When they are not given the freedom of choice or taught critical thinking skills, they are less likely to develop tools they need to fulfill career aspirations later in life.” (Novak, 2016, pp. 30-31)  <http://www.amazon.com/UDL-Now-Monday-Morning-Implementing-Standards/dp/0989867439/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1429640395&sr=8-1&keywords=udl+now+novak>) |

**Activities**

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| **ACTIVITY - What Do I Believe About Student Ability?**  **Read: “Mindsets and Equitable Education*”*** by Carol Dweck, in *Principal Leadership*, January 2010, Vol. 10, Issue 5, pgs. 26 to 29. It can be found at: <http://eschs.weebly.com/uploads/2/5/1/7/25174886/mind-sets-and-equitable-education.pdf>  **Discuss with a colleague or a team:** What do I believe about my students’ ability? What do my students believe about their own ability? What do my students believe that I believe?  **Pick a student:** Pick a student and plan how to help that student change his or her thinking about what he or she can accomplish. What will you do? What will you say? |

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| **ACTIVITY - Uncover the Story of Your Classroom**   * Create a list of twenty-five adjectives: 10 positive (engaged, interested, curious…), five neutral (coasting, comfortable, fine…) and 10 negative (tired, bored, frustrated…). * Ask students to select three words from the list to describe how they usually feel in school in general or in your class in particular. * Include a question asking students to identify how they see themselves academically: near the top, above average, average. * What does the pattern of their responses tell you? * If the pattern shows that some students are disengaged, think about what you might do to change the classroom to turn their boredom or frustration into excitement and curiousity.   NOTE: This activity is adapted from Richhart (2015).  **OIP Connections**  **TBT/BLT/DLT** – Use this activity across classrooms, a whole school, or a whole district. Share results from your survey of students with the DLT, BLT, and/or TBT. Develop a list of strategies for increasing expectations for student performance, support for student success, and overall levels of student engagement. |

## References:

Hattie, J., & Yates, G.C.R. (2014). *Visible learning and the science of how we learn.* New York, NY: Routledge.

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