Core Function	Personalized Learning

Effective Practice	Motivational Competency: Promote a growth mindset, stretch students' interests, connect learning to student aspirations to enhance students' engagement and persistence with learning

Indicator: All teachers help students articulate their personal aspirations and connect their learning to the pursuit of these aspirations. (5348)

Explanation: It is important for students to learn to identify their aspirations and set their own goals because goals have been widely demonstrated to increase learners' achievement and motivation. After students' goals have been set, they can best connect their progress to their aspirations through self-monitoring practices.

Questions: How can students be taught to articulate their personal aspirations and goals? How can students be taught to connect their learning to the pursuit of personal aspirations and goals?

In learner-centered classrooms, the student becomes an agent of his or her own learning. The student is responsible for setting goals he or she would like to reach as well as work closely with the teacher in determining a path to reach those goals. Redding (2014) writes, "When the student both assumes control over actions that lead to outcomes (internal rather than external locus of control) and takes responsibility for the efforts that produce the outcomes (attribution), he is inclined to engage and persist with goal pursuit" (p. 14).

How can students be taught to articulate their personal aspirations and goals?

The Self-Directed Learning Model of Instruction (Mithaug, Wehymeyer, Agran, Martin, & Palmer, 1998; Wehmeyer, Palmer, Agran, Mithaug, & Martin, 2000) was designed to provide a model that assists in teaching students to direct their own instructional process through goal setting. The model includes a three-stage process; in each stage the student answers a series of four questions whereby they reach self-selected goals, based on their aspirations. Teachers who implement this model teach students to construct a planned sequence of actions to move them from where they are toward their goals.

The three stages of the model have different questions, but as Palmer & Wehmeyer (2003) point out, they represent four fundamental "identical steps in the problem-solving sequence" (p. 117); the questions are supplemented by teacher discussion and facilitation. At each stage, the questions support the student in a) identifying the problem, b) identifying potential solutions to the problem, c) identify barriers to the solutions, and d) identify the consequences of each solution. The student questions, which may need to be modified for learners at different ages, include:

Stage I

1. What do I want to learn?
2. What do I know about it now?
3. What must change for me to learn what I don't know?
4. What can I do to make this happen?

Stage II

5. What can I do to learn what I don't know?
6. What could keep me from taking action?
7. What can I do to remove these barriers?
8. When will I take action?

Stage III

9. What actions have I taken?
10. What barriers have been removed?
11. What has changed about what I know?
12. Do I know what I want to know?

Teaching students to determine their own aspirational goals is important because goals increase learners' achievement by specifying the requirements for personal success (Bandura, 1986, 1991). Teaching low-achieving students to set proximal goals for themselves has been shown to enhance their academic achievement, and their self-reports of self-confidence and interest in the subject matter (Bandura & Schunk, 1981; Schunk, 1983). Numerous studies have shown that students who report higher levels of self-confidence also display greater persistence, effort, and interest in their academic learning and performance (Schunk, 1984, 1989).

How can students be taught to connect their learning to the pursuit of personal aspirations and goals?

Research shows that students best connect their effort and progress to their goals through self-monitoring and self-judgments of performance attainments (Bandura & Cervone, 1983, 1986; Locke, Cartledge, & Knerr, 1970). One of the most effective ways for students to do this is by teaching them to self-record their performance in real time, as they complete activities. Self-recording is effective because it provides immediate feedback to learners; it is also convenient because each student is responsible for her own recording (O'Leary & Dubey, 1979).

When learners see recorded marks as symbols of achievement those self-recordings are particularly effective (Morgan, 1984). Further, self-graphing is one common and effective method of self-monitoring for students. According to Moxley, Lutz, Ahlborn, Boley, & Armstrong (1995) and Kasper-Ferguson & Moxley (2002) frequent self-graphing provides learners with regular opportunities for positive evaluation of their progress toward their goals. The graph tells the students how well they have understood what they need to do and what more they need to do to achieve their goals. Visual displays in graphic form make patterns conspicuous and allow inferences to be drawn more easily than a table allows.

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