

Hope Toolkit:

Inspiring Hope to Drive Student Success



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Hope as a Fundamental Component of College and Career Readiness

College and career aspirations are predicated on students' dreams for their future. Dreams about what they want to be and do and how they want to live drive goal-setting, career planning, and college exploration. Hope for what is possible is an implicit driver of successful postsecondary planning. And helping students connect what they are learning and what efforts they make today with the potential for those dreams to become a reality is fundamentally connected with hope for the future.

If students lose hope, they stall on this journey. They no longer think about the future and get stuck in the present. In other words, a lack of hope is the death knell of college and career planning and readiness.

In order for students to be confidently striving towards postsecondary success, they need to feel purpose in what they are doing—that they are working toward the next step on their way to their hopes and dreams. They need to be able to envision what their hard work will bring about and have voice and agency over determining that future. And they need to know that they are not on this journey alone—that counselors, teachers, administrators, families, and the broader community are there to support them along the way, help them get back up if they stumble, and celebrate with them when they succeed.

Why Hope Matters

There is an extensive and growing body of research documenting the positive effects hopeful thinking can have on student persistence and success.



Students who are hopeful are more likely to:

- 1 Set **goals** and **persist** through realizing those goals.
- 2 Show stronger rates of **resilience**.
- 3 Have higher levels of **self esteem** and **confidence**.
- 4 Have better **social and emotional skills**.
- 5 **Connect** and **collaborate** with others.

Best Practices

Inspiring hope in students,
educators, and families



There are some overall guiding principles that all practitioners in a school building can put into practice when interacting with students, colleagues, and families – both formally and informally – to catalyze hope throughout a school community.

BEST PRACTICE:

Be Thoughtful with Words and Actions

People know when others around them believe in them. Students feel when teachers think they are capable of great things. Educators recognize when their administrators and colleagues respect and feel their efforts are impactful. And families realize how schools view the value of their contribution and whether their children are headed for success.

These sentiments are not just communicated through words, but through action and behavior. Educators need to be intentional about finding small and big ways to convey confidence in and appreciation for the effort that others are making to work towards a successful future for students. Simple words and gestures can dramatically change how individuals see themselves and view what is possible.



BEST PRACTICE:

Empower with Actionable Steps to Take

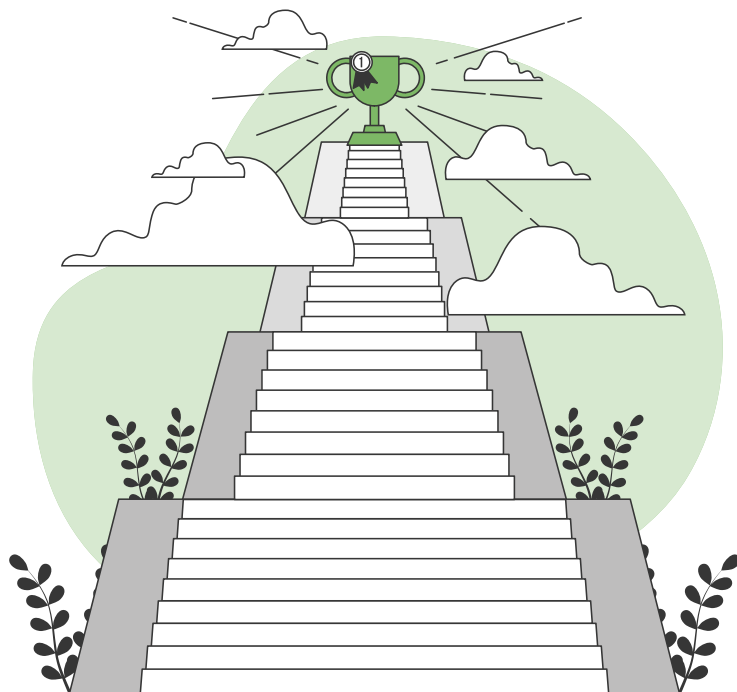
An antidote to hopelessness is creating a clear plan with iterative and achievable steps to take. This gives students, educators, and families a sense of agency in outcomes and control over a given situation. This is especially true for those feeling a sense of chaos or failure as it provides students clarity on what efforts to make and assurance from a trusted partner or respected authority figure that there is hope.

BEST PRACTICE:

Commit to Supporting Goals

When people feel that they have a team of support behind them, they are more likely to believe their goal is possible and stay on track to be successful.

Find ways to follow up with students and families who you know are working towards a particular goal. This communicates that you are invested in their success and willing to help them along the way. If possible, connect students to mentors or other support networks who may be able to offer deeper insights and more extensive support.



BEST PRACTICE:

Provide Tangible Models

Oftentimes, the very best inspiration comes from a real-world and relatable success story—whether it is someone famous, from history, or from the local community. Models of individuals who have come from similar backgrounds, persevered through adversity, and achieved their aspirations convey to students, families, and teachers that, with effort and determination, these goals are possible. Even reminding students of times when they, themselves, overcame a barrier or showed resilience to inspire their hope in current goals can be tremendously impactful.

Activating and Fostering Hope



School counselors already do so much to help students work through adversities, explore their passions, and achieve lifelong dreams. Because of this, counselors have a unique opportunity within a school community to inspire and share hope. And their efforts serve as both a model for others and set in motion chain reactions of optimism and positivity looking to the future.

The following checklists are organized by different components of a counselor's role. Use them to consider additional ways you can embed conversations and actions that increase morale and spark feelings of hope across the school community.

CHECKLIST:

Goal Setting, College Planning, & Career Exploration

College and career planning, in and of itself, is hopeful as it forces students to look to the future. Goals are the guideposts on that journey.

- ✓ Encourage all students to set well-thought-out goals in a structured way.
- ✓ Find ways to help students to connect current work and efforts with their goals.
- ✓ When students articulate a goal, work with them to make an action plan for success with specific, tangible tasks.
- ✓ Regularly check in with students as they work towards goals. Cheer on any progress and offer support with struggles or challenges.
- ✓ Point out skills and talents in students that may be relevant for future aspirations.
- ✓ Provide role models that students can relate to and who share similar backgrounds. When students see themselves in these role models, they are more likely to see future paths as attractive and realistic.






“Every child deserves a champion—an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be.”

– Rita Pierson

CHECKLIST:

Students Facing Academic or Financial Challenge

Academic struggles or financial concerns are major obstacles for students in feeling hopeful and optimistic about the future. Some students may not think there are any options for them to afford postsecondary schooling. And those who struggle with course grades or test scores may feel that many postsecondary options are unattainable for them. Counselors can help these students identify tangible options to overcome these barriers.

-  For students struggling with grades, work with the student and teachers as an intermediary to create an action plan. Ask the teacher to explicitly define what the most important assignments are, what can be made up, and how to improve.
-  Connect students and families with supports and tools, such as before- and after-school tutoring, that can help them to make progress on their goals.
-  Advocate for students who are struggling academically. Help other other stakeholders see a path towards improvement or success. This asset-based mindset can reset a problematic dynamic and trajectory.
-  Normalize the idea that many students require financial assistance for postsecondary learning, and regularly share a wide variety of scholarships, grants, and other funding resources with students and families.
-  Share a broad set of postsecondary options with students and families, such as community colleges or trade schools, and explain that these can be worthwhile pathways to postsecondary success.







“You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them.”

–Maya Angelou

CHECKLIST:

School Climate & Family Engagement

The school and home environments that surround a student offer important inputs of connection, joy, support, and hope. It is important to be thoughtful about finding ways to build relationships between individuals and with the community as a whole.

-  Write a note, send an email, or make a phone call to share positive updates with families about what students are doing well.
-  Help families to understand that their efforts supporting their children are directly linked to future success. Notice their contributions and compliment the deep impact they are having.
-  Notice and share gratitude for teachers who follow up with students or regularly spend time ensuring they understand content. These behaviors communicate belief in a student and work to build a culture of hope.
-  Create a calendar of events that students can look forward to attending together. These can include sports games, performances, or other events.
-  Regularly find ways to celebrate students, colleagues, and families. Expand the types of accomplishments that are noticed and celebrated.
-  Make a special effort to create positive moments at high-stress times during the year to offset the anxiety that often comes with transitions or testing periods.

“Hope can be a powerful force. Maybe there’s no actual magic in it, but when you know what you hope for most and hold it like a light within you, you can make things happen, almost like magic.”

– Laini Taylor



Turning Student Dreams into Actionable Plans

