

COLLEGE READINESS  
AND LIFE SKILLS:

# Moving Beyond Academics





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## College Readiness and Life Skills: Moving Beyond Academics

### Expert Presenters:

**Mandy Savitz-Romer**, professor, Harvard Graduate School of Education, co-author of [\*Ready, Willing, and Able: A Developmental Approach to College Access and Success\*](#)

**Susan Strickland**, counselor, Harrison High School, Kennesaw, Ga.

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# Landscape of college readiness

## What matters

- Rigorous curriculum, academic preparation, and academic skills
- Postsecondary aspirations, information, awareness,
- Specific college planning and support
- Financial aid, support and literacy

## Current priorities

- Academic policies, Common Core Standards
- K-16 Improvements, college going cultures, school university partnerships
- College preparation programs and community based providers

# Using a developmental approach

- Overemphasis on information and instrumental supports
- Little attention to students' developmental readiness
- Only serving a small portion of students
- A shift toward being developmentally aware



# 3 Key Developmental Processes

- Identity
- Motivation
- Self regulation



# Why does identity matter?

- Emphasis on College Going Identities
- Process of developing/adopting an identity is complex
- Other aspects of identity development happening simultaneously
- Dimensions of identity:
  - Membership, Roles, and Self Concept

# Self-efficacy

- Belief in the ability to accomplish a specific task or goal
- Varies for different tasks
- Developed over time
  - Mastery of Experience
  - Vicarious Learning
  - Social Persuasion
  - Affect



# Why does Motivation matter?

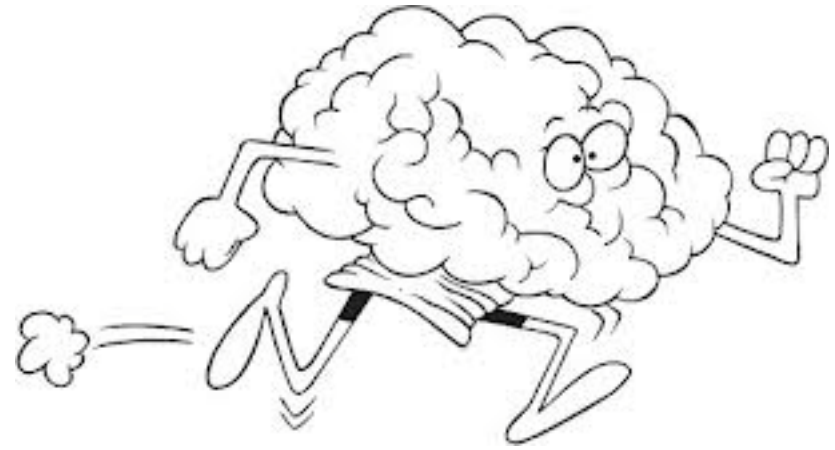
- Belief that when people are motivated by something they are more likely to carry out tasks to achieve it
- Emphasis on extrinsic motivators
- Misconceptions about motivation
  - Not a binary quality
  - Cannot be imparted to another

# What is motivation?

The beliefs and goals that  
drive action and  
associated behaviors  
conducive to success and well-being

# Beliefs: Fixed vs. growth mindset

- **Growth mindset:**  
Intelligence is like a muscle; you can always build it
- **Fixed mindset:**  
Intelligence is a set quantity; you have it or you don't



What influences these beliefs?

- \* Messages about effort and ability
- \* Feedback including praise for good performance

# Goals

- It's not just *whether* but *why* we do things
- The *reasons* students attend college and make choices about courses, careers, etc. influence persistence and completion
- Two common reasons for attending college:
  - Is going to college to earn a higher salary *enough*?
  - Is going to college to please others *enough*?

# Understanding self-regulation

- **Self-regulation:** Ability to manage thoughts, emotions, behaviors in the service of attaining goals
- **Specific skills:**
  - Emotional: Understanding and managing emotions
  - Social: Empathy and perspective-taking
  - Social: Social problem solving
  - Cognitive: Attention and focus
  - Cognitive: Inhibiting impulses/ delaying gratification
  - Cognitive: Flexibility/shifting (e.g., reflection, reassessment)

# How does self-regulation influence college readiness?

- Academic achievement (via planning, memory skills, etc.)
- Organizational skills (e.g., choosing courses, managing deadlines, etc.)
- Establishing clear but flexible routes to goals
- Staying on course, delaying long term gratification



# Becoming developmentally aware

- Integrate into **everyday practice**  
(it's not always about college)
- See students **as individuals**
- Focus on students who **do not seek**  
college readiness support
- Meet students **where they are**
- **Be aware** of how school experiences influence development



# Teaching Self-Advocacy in High School

The Comprehensive School Counseling Program

**Susan L. Strickland, Ed.D.**  
**Professional School Counselor**  
**Cobb County School System**

# Comprehensive School Counseling

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- Counseling Core Curriculum
- Responsive Services
- Individual Planning

# Know Your Audience: Gen WhY?

- Influenced by doting parents – optimistic about the future
- Confident in their abilities – everyone is a winner
- Technologically savvy and “street smart”
- Socially conscious and civic-minded – highly diverse
- Desire flexibility, recognition, and accountability
- Image-driven
- High priority placed on personal life – and they will share it!
- See themselves as “equal” to adults – no perceived hierarchy
- Generally trust those in authority, but mistrust individuals

# Understand the Potential for Conflict

What attitudes or priorities do you bring?

Traditionalists (1925-1945)	Baby Boomers (1946-1964)	Generation X (1965-1980)	Gen Y (1981 – 2000)
“Depression Babies”	“Woodstock Generation”	“Latchkey Kids”	“Entitled Generation” A.K.A. Millennials
Personal Contact	Telephone Contact	E-mail Contact	IM/Text Contact
Respect for Authority	Don't Respect “Titles”	Question Authority	Trust Authority
Respond to Direction	Sensitive to Criticism	Value Freedom/Independence	Crave Feedback/Structure
What needs to be done?	What does it mean?	Does it work?	How do we build it?

# Gen Y's Strengths

- Street Smarts – tend to be “in the know”
- Skill with Technology – the “digital natives”
- Ability to Learn Quickly
- Knack for Multitasking
- Appreciation for Diversity – respect for differences
- Confidence and Optimism
- Creativity
- Civic-Mindedness
- Desire for Challenge
- Relationship-Oriented

# Where Gen Y Needs Support

- Lack skills for dealing with difficult people or conflict
- Little understanding of the hidden curriculum or soft skills:
  - Eye contact, social etiquette & appropriate personal interactions
  - Professionalism, especially if perceived as compromising “self”
  - The idea of “paying one’s dues”
- Inability to cope with failure, loss, or disappointment
- Impatience and impulsivity:
  - Want to see results and rewards quickly
  - Tend to give up in the absence of immediate results
- Publicity v. Privacy – no filtering!

# Best Practices:

## 1) Speak Gen Y Language ... Multimedia

- Interactive Technology to Improve Communication
  - Free Text-Messaging Software for Educators (i.e. Remind 101)
  - Google Docs – used for appointments or “sign ups”
  - Smart Phone Apps (i.e. Student Life Organizer, Super Note, Ace Test)
  - Blogs – announcements, comments, video instructions, visual aides
  - Podcasts, YouTube Videos, Social Media
- Interactive Technology to Improve Classroom & Group Lessons
  - BYOD Initiatives – bring your own device
  - Tablets/iPads for research or creating multimedia
  - Data Collection Software or Apps (i.e. Socrative)
  - Information-rich websites and online portfolios
  - Podcasts, Blogs, Digital Simulations, Interactive Storytelling, Games



# Best Practices:

## 2) Utilize Backward Design

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- Teach with the end goal in mind – don't hide “the point.”
- Teach from the whole to the part – present the “big picture.”
- Begin with concrete information – scenarios, examples, data.
- Introduce new ideas with graphics, not text.
- Create “To Do” lists, so students know when the task is done.

# Best Practices:

## 3) Teach Specific Skills

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- Conflict Resolution – i.e. peer mediation training and lessons
- Coping Skills – i.e. peer leader programs, support groups <http://sourcesofstrength.org>
- Soft Skills – role play and practice
- Redefine “Parental Support” – open house, conferences, etc.
- Problem Solving – scenarios, “in their shoes” activities
- Practice Professionalism – office procedures, modeling

# Best Practices:

## 4) Be Learner-Centered!

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- Gen Y students like to learn, they learn well, and they learn independently.
- Give opportunities to extend, create, interpret, explore.
- Utilize peer tutors.
- Arrange mentors – Gen Y students are natural networkers.
- Mix it up – Gen Y assimilates information when presented using a variety of images and activities.
- Do not be afraid to let students develop materials.

# Potential Topics/Interventions

- Transition to High School Classroom Lessons
- Peer Mediation Classroom Lessons
- Interest Inventories
- Advisement Conferences
- College Application Process
- Teacher Advisory Program
- Lessons on Postsecondary Options
- Goal Setting Activities
- Scholarship Workshops
- Online Elective Registration
- Peer Leader Training and Peer Mediation
- Online Portfolios
- Academic Showcases
- Financial Aid Night
- 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Parent Night
- RTI Interventions
- Self-Directed Searches
- Support Groups
- Multimedia “tool kits”
- College Visits
- College & Career Center Resources

# Reminders

- Members of Gen Y are open to counseling, but they will lose interest quickly without tangible results or established goals.
- Gen Y students are crushed by failure, so they would rather give up than exhaust their efforts.
- They do not understand the work behind success – things have always been “fixed” for them – but they can learn!
- Success is the only option for Gen Y, but as adults we know one size does not fit all, so help students find their strengths.
- Consistency is important; students will not internalize a concept after a one-time lesson – maintain your “theme.”

# A Word About The Next Generation

- Gen Z, The Net Generation, Generation@, The Pluralists
- Even more tech savvy, but want it simple & interactive
- Acutely aware of threats, i.e. terrorism, global warming
- High priority placed on “going green”
- Constant connectivity to friends
- Increasing overlap with their parents’ interests and likes
- Living life “on demand”

What will Gen Z need?

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Q & A



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## College Readiness and Life Skills: Moving Beyond Academics

### Required Reading from *Education Week*:

#### 'Soft Skills' Pushed as Part of College Readiness

To make it in college, students need to be up for the academic rigor. But that's not all. They also must be able to manage their own time, get along with roommates, and deal with setbacks. Resiliency and grit, along with the ability to communicate and advocate, are all crucial life skills. Yet, experts say, many teenagers lack them, and that's hurting college-completion rates.

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