Core Function	Personalized Learning: Motivational Competency

Effective Practice	Promoting a growth mindset, stretching students' interest, connecting learning to student aspirations, and differentiating instruction to enhance students' engagement and persistence with learning

Indicator: The school's key documents explain the value of motivational competency and how it is enhanced through specific roles and relationships. (E5)

Explanation: The evidence suggests that student motivation is driven by four categories of factors: competence, autonomy, interest, and relatedness. Families and schools must work together to embrace students' natural motivation but also work to develop greater motivation for learning by rewarding and celebrating effort and mastery. By strategically sharing information about the Motivational Competency with families, the school can have a significant impact on how families understand their students' needs and progress, the strategies they are learning, and how they can help at home. Embedding the Motivational Competency into the school's key documents and then sharing those in meaningful ways can help families and the school community understand the priorities and values of the school.

Questions: Which of the school's documents currently focus on priorities and values? Which documents could be updated to include information about the Motivational Competency? In what ways are teachers, other staff, and the School Community Council supplementing these documents with conversations about expectations, standards, and student progress to families?

What is the Motivational Competency?

The Motivational Competency explains why students engage with learning, how hard they will work on a particular task, and why they do or do not persevere to achieve their goals (Carreker & Boulware-Gooden, 2015; Headden & McKay, 2015; Redding, 2016). Usher and Kober (2012) identify four dimensions of motivation: competence, control/autonomy, interest/value, and relatedness. Toshalis and Nakkula (2012) write that, "we are motivated to devote energy to those activities in which we expect to succeed, and we subsequently tend to value those activities over others" (p. 10). If a student feels capable of accomplishing the task before them, they will be more likely to deeply engage in the work and persist.

This internal, or intrinsic, motivation also occurs when students truly enjoy or are interested in their work or goals (Redding, 2006). Carreker and Boulware-Gooden (2015) explain:

> Motivation is wanting to do one task when there are competing tasks available. The learner believes that the task is important and has a belief in his or her ability to master the task through dedication and hard work. The learner persists even when mastering the task becomes difficult. (p. 8)

Many other factors affect a student's level of motivation—including their familial or social context, the classroom environment, and the degree to which teachers create an environment of mastery learning (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012; Headden & McKay, 2015; Redding, 2016). Recognition for effort, as opposed to commendations for innate ability, is a critical piece of developing a growth mindset. Headden and McKay (2015) explain that students with a growth mindset "believe that with effort, their ability and performance can improve… .The positive attitude prepares them for the

realities of later life, helping them recover when their efforts fail to produce the outcomes they have come to expect" (p. 8). In contrast, students who have been rewarded and commended simply for being smart tend to have a fixed mindset, leading them to believe that their efforts are inconsequential and that they will simply either be good or bad at a given task (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012; Headden & McKay, 2015).

Consequently, teachers who focus on student effort and mastery of a goal, instead of performance on a test or a grade on a report card, are more likely to foster a growth mindset and consequently, higher levels of motivation, for their students (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012; Usher & Kober, 2012). This type of mindset can also be developed in the home, as a result of parental expectations, attitudes, and habits, making it even more important for schools to engage families in their children's learning and provide them with strategies that they can use at home.

Why is it important to focus on Motivational Competency in key documents and conversations?

Not only can parents equally responsible for helping their students build a growth mindset, but they are also a critical lever for instilling values about certain tasks and processes in schooling, both of which lead to motivation. When families are informed about how outside factors can influence students' motivation for school and what strategies they can use to counteract that influence, they are better positioned to help their children engage in school.

One way to ensure alignment with the school about the Motivational Competency is to embed it into key communications and documents from the school. These documents include "the school's mission statement, compact with parents, staff employment manuals, and student handbook" (Redding, 2014, p. 24). Information about school programs, the school improvement plan, curriculum guides, and the list of policies and procedures are also important places to highlight the Motivational Competency (Redding, 2006; Redding, 2016). In these documents, the school can emphasize its focus on the Motivational Competency, explaining what it is and how it is addressed throughout the school day and year.

When shared publicly, through the school website or at events such as Back to School Night and parent-teacher conferences, families can be better informed about the

priorities and values of the school and how they can reinforce them at home (Redding, 2014). Schools must also provide guidance and strategies for parents to use in helping their children in these areas of growth at home (Kraft & Dougherty, 2013). Redding (2006) emphasizes that these constructive conversations around the Motivational Competency help to "build a sense of community around the purposes of the school," making it clear what each person's role is in that child's educational experience (p. 162). When the school informs parents about the Motivational Competency, families will be better prepared to foster motivation and support the learning practices happening at the school (Redding, 2006).

References and other resources

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