

# Building Academic Tenacity

DR. RENEE WRIGHT, TRITON COLLEGE

According to Dr. Gregory Walton of Stanford University, academic tenacity is not about being smart, but learning smart. This workshop will review the implications of using psychological interventions to address student achievement gaps with practical classroom examples used over two semesters. Student success rates will also be discussed.

# ACADEMIC TENACITY

- Most educational reforms focus on curriculum and pedagogy—what material is taught and how it is taught. However, curriculum and pedagogy have often been defined in a narrow sense, with an almost exclusive focus on cognitive factors, that is, on the academic content of the material and students' intellectual processing of that material. Research shows that this is insufficient. In our pursuit of educational reform, something essential has been missing: the psychology of the student. Psychological factors--often called motivational or non-cognitive factors -- can matter even more than cognitive factors for students' academic performance.

- Academic Tenacity: Mindsets and Skills that Promote Long-Term Learning  
Carol S. Dweck, Gregory M. Walton, & Geoffrey L. Cohen

# Academically Tenacious Students

- Feel as though they belong in school, academically and socially.
- See the relevance of education for achieving their personal future goals.
- Value effort.
- Seek challenging tasks that will help them learn rather than stick with easy tasks that offer no opportunity for growth.
- View setbacks as an opportunity for learning rather than an indication of their low innate ability or worth.
- Have a number of self-regulation strategies at their disposal to remain motivated and avoid distractions over the short and long haul.
- Believe in their ability to learn and perform.
- Enter the classroom with the goal of mastering the material, not outcompeting other students.
- Have a sense of purpose, and feel that their learning will contribute value to the world beyond themselves.
- Have positive, supportive relationships with teachers and peers.

# CHANGING MINDSETS

- Core beliefs can set up different patterns of response to challenge and setbacks
  - Growth mindset - most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work
  - Fixed mindset - intelligence or talent, are simply fixed traits
  - You can grow your intelligence
- What you should know about your brain
- Stereotype Threat - alleging inferior ability about their group (African American)
  - Less likely to view learning new concepts and improving their competence.

From: "Sheena" <[donotreply@blackboard.com](mailto:donotreply@blackboard.com)>

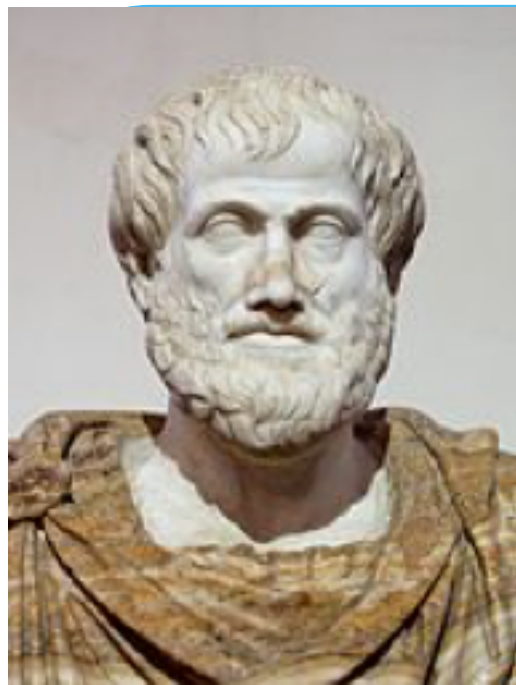
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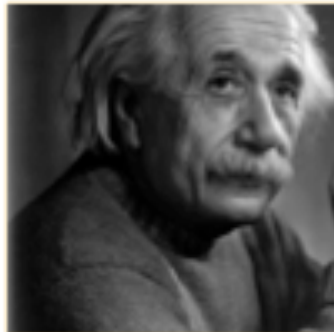
Subject: RHT101 072 Freshman Rhetoric & Comp I (2014 Fall):  
Sheena

Hello Dr. Wright,

Unit 1 is soooo amazing! I have been practicing the optimistic and positive thinking approach for a while now; this class was just what I needed. I manifested you into my life, I needed to hear and see everything you have assigned thus far. The quotes from Aristotle and Einstein on the syllabus even inspired me. I am taking Human Anatomy and Physiology II this semester. My professor instilled in my head that this was a very hard class, and we would be lucky to pass with a 'B'. It literally killed my spirit, took away all of my motivation. I was getting ready to drop the class. What I learned tonight about mindset has motivated me to study hard, focus, stay optimistic, and meditate on it. I want an 'A', and I now feel that I have the skills to get it. Thank you soooo much!



Excellence is never an accident.  
It is always the result of  
high intention, sincere effort, and  
intelligent execution;  
it represents the wise choice of  
many alternatives - choice,  
not chance, determines your  
destiny. ~ Aristotle



"The value of a college  
education is not the  
learning of many facts  
but the **training of the  
mind to think.**"

-- Albert Einstein

# INCREASING SOCIAL BELONGING

- Strengthening students' sense that they belong in the learning environment can alleviate their fears about performance, especially among at-risk minority students.
  - Peer discussion about school about what's 'normal' about school and the expectations
  - Studies showed just 5 minute conversation with students alleviated fears

# INCREASING SCHOOL IDENTIFICATION

- Ranking personal values of school and education
  - Serves as a reminder of why they're there
  - Self-affirmation
- Becoming What We're Called by Alice Walker
- Study of college performance and perceptions differences between 1<sup>st</sup> year and 4<sup>th</sup> year students

# INCREASING SELF-REGULATION

- Students select a personal goal they'd like to achieve that week
  - Reinforces behavior because they discuss it with a peer
  - Increases attendance
- Motivation and meditation
  - [Headspace](#)

# ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Deliberate practice
  - K.A. Ericasson
  - Deliberate practice involves more than just repetition; it requires activities that are designed to improve performance, challenge the learner, and provide feedback
  - [What It Takes To Be Great](#)
- Flow
  - [Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi](#)
  - A state of heightened focus and immersion in activities such as art, play and work