

2 **How to Motivate Students to Work**
3 **Harder**

4 In an era of rising academic standards, more kids than ever will struggle and fail. But research
5 suggests new ways to help them thrive in the face of adversity.
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9 Over the past five years, more than \$200 million has gone toward launching the new Common
10 Core standards, with the goal of closing achievement gaps in public schools. But for all their
11 meticulous detail about math and language curricula, the standards fail to address one
12 important factor: the psychological barriers that stand between many students and deeper
13 learning. Unless students are motivated to take on the new standards, and persuaded that
14 they're up to the challenge, the Common Core could have the unintended effect of leaving
15 many students even further behind.

16 Researchers like Stanford psychology professor Carol Dweck—best known for her 2006
17 book *Mindset*—have been gathering insights into student motivation for three decades. New
18 work by her colleagues makes a strong case for focusing on students' perceptions of
19 themselves. In a variety of studies, these researchers have found that students who doubt their
20 academic abilities, or question whether students with their particular backgrounds belong at
21 their schools, frequently fall behind or fail at school—regardless of their innate intelligence or
22 the quality of the teaching they receive.

23 **... (discussion of three separate studies removed from this excerpt)**

24 Some may draw uneasy connections between the new psychological strategies for
25 strengthening students' resolve and the self-esteem movement of years past, which sought to
26 motivate students through a trophies-for-all approach. The difference is that self-esteem
27 advocates would typically praise students regardless of their performance, which meant they
28 didn't distinguish earned praise from unearned praise. Instead, they unintentionally
29 encouraged a belief that effort doesn't matter, leaving students with a sense of "learned
30 helplessness" that greatly diminished their capacity to tackle challenges and rebound from
31 failure, researchers now say.

32 The new work by Dweck and her protégés suggests that students are far more likely to be
33 encouraged by the opposite message: You have the capacity to be great *if* you work hard. Their
34 studies suggest that when students feel "dumb," the solution is not to tell them they're "smart"
35 but to make them feel as though being "smart" or "dumb" is irrelevant to success, Yeager says.

36 Unless students are persuaded that they're up to the challenge, the Common Core could leave many
37 students even further behind.

38 And while that's a critical message for struggling students suddenly facing a substantial new
39 challenge like the Common Core, the researchers say it's also what high-achievers should hear.
40 As Dweck has found, many top students who have been told that they're smart (and often
41 officially labeled "gifted and talented") are unwilling to take academic risks for fear of
42 jeopardizing their status, and often struggle in environments where they're suddenly
43 outperformed by others.

44 The strategies that Dweck and her colleagues have developed need to be tested by a wider
45 range of researchers, with an eye toward learning how long their motivating effects last. And
46 fortifying students for the rigors of higher standards shouldn't supplant efforts to strengthen
47 teachers and improve teaching. Nor should it burden students with responsibility for the
48 shortcomings of schools and society.

49 But it's encouraging that this preliminary evidence comes from gold-standard randomized
50 studies. And while good teachers have long found ways to overcome students' psychological
51 hurdles, the new research points to the possibility of systematizing effective strategies. The new
52 studies point to the possibility of strengthening students' resolve through relatively simple
53 messages delivered widely and inexpensively over the Internet.

54 More broadly, the new research elevates a neglected aspect of learning. It represents a chance
55 to recast what has been an unproductive debate between warring camps of school reformers—
56 those who demand accountability and those who focus on tackling poverty's causes and
57 consequences. The new insights into the psychology of learning suggest that there is indeed
58 more to student success than school quality, but that we may not have to eradicate poverty to
59 start attending to its consequences.

Practice with Marker Verbs

Change the underlined verbs below by inserting a closely related marker verb.

- ***Change the tense of the marker verb from the list, if necessary.***
- ***Add or delete a word or two from the sentence, if necessary.***

New work by her colleagues makes _____ a strong case for focusing on students' perceptions of themselves. In a variety of studies, these researchers have found _____ that students who doubt their academic abilities, or question whether students with their particular backgrounds belong at their schools, frequently fall behind or fail at school—regardless of their innate intelligence or the quality of the teaching they receive.

The new studies point _____ to the possibility of strengthening students' resolve through relatively simple messages delivered widely and inexpensively over the Internet.

More broadly, the new research elevates _____ a neglected aspect of learning. It represents _____ a chance to recast what has been an unproductive debate between warring camps of school reformers—those who demand accountability and those who focus on tackling poverty's causes and consequences. The new insights into the psychology of learning suggest _____ that there is indeed more to student success than school quality, but that we may not have to eradicate poverty to start attending to its consequences.

