

# BEYOND BROWNIES: REINFORCING STUDENT EFFORT AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL

An inventory of  
secondary investment  
best practices

Compiled by:  
Emily Abeles  
(a Memphis teacher)





## INVESTMENT IDEAS FOR SECONDARY CLASSROOMS: REINFORCING STUDENTS' EFFORTS TOWARDS BIG GOALS

### Session Agenda:

- I. Warm-Up! (5 minutes)
  - Think about a class (either from college or high school) to which you devoted lots of time and energy. What motivated you to work hard? What has motivated your students this summer to work hard?
  
- II. Introductions (8 minutes)
  - a. Who's in the room? Why did we choose this workshop?
  - b. Session overview, aims, and objectives
  - c. What is investment and why should I take the time and energy to invest my students?
  - d. Investment in the context of your classroom and teaching
  
- III. Video and video reflection (12 minutes)
  - Athena Palmer taught ecology, chemistry, and anatomy at Kingsbury High School in Memphis. As we watch a tour of Athena's classroom, think about the following questions: How does Athena invest her students in her big goals? How does she invest her students in the class? How does Athena reinforce her students' academic and behavioral efforts?
  
- IV. Different types of investment (20 minutes)
  - a. Academic
  - b. Behavioral
  - c. Individual
  - d. Whole-class
  - e. Absolute
  - f. Relative
  - g. High-preparation
  - h. Low-preparation
  
- V. Thinking about YOUR investment strategies: A well-rounded approach (10 minutes)
  - a. At institute
  - b. In your regional placement
  
- VI. Closing (5 minutes)

## Investment Table of Contents:

	<b>Academic</b> Reinforces positive academic gains / effort	<b>Behavioral</b> Rewards positive behavior	<b>Individual</b> Rewards individual students	<b>Whole-Class</b> Rewards the entire class	<b>Absolute</b> Rewards students who meet an absolute standard or bar	<b>Relative</b> Rewards students showing improvement / meeting an individualized goal	<b>High- preparation</b> Requires significant teacher time	<b>Low- Preparation</b> Requires little teacher preparation time	<b>Page #</b>
Objective mastery chart	✓		✓		✓		✓		4
Bar graphs / public class objective mastery	✓			✓	✓			✓	5
Mastery Zone Folders	✓		✓		✓			✓	6-7
"Superstars" Wall	✓		✓			✓		✓	8
"Stepping UP" Wall	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	9
Smart "Cookies" of the Week	✓				✓	✓		✓	10
Class Cash		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		11-13
Attendance Tracker		✓	✓		✓		✓		14
Music Minutes		✓		✓	✓			✓	14
Model Citizens	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		15
General Messaging	✓	✓		✓				✓	16-17
Key Points									18
Investment reflection									18





**PUBLIC (classroom-wide) bar graphs and / or public class objective mastery**

Academic	Behavioral	Individual	Whole-Class	Absolute	Relative	High-Prep	Low-Prep
✓			✓	✓			✓

**What it is:**

Each time teachers in the examples below gave a mastery quiz, they charted the performance of their students by class. In the first example, I made a bar graph indicating my students' overall mastery average for the objective (color-coded by class). In the second example, the teacher made a poster of each standard she planned on teaching over the course of the year. Once her students had taken a mastery quiz/test on the standard, she charted each class' overall mastery average. In example 3, the 8<sup>th</sup> grade math teacher charted her students' performance - by class - for each standard. A similar - but more complicated - example is shown in example 4. In example 4, the teacher actually used 2 tracking systems for her bar graphs. The bar graphs show the percentage of students in each class period who met their **INDIVIDUAL GOALS**. A white square at the bottom of each bar actually indicates the **OVERALL MASTERY** by **CLASS** for each standard.

**Positives (+):**

- Public reminder of success and areas for improvement
- Encourages strong class cultures and a way to provide incentives on a class-wide level
- Fairly low-prep
- Provides a visual reminder of overall performance by class periods

**Potential drawbacks (-):**

- Does not show mastery on an individual student level
- Does not publicly hold each student accountable for objective/standards mastery

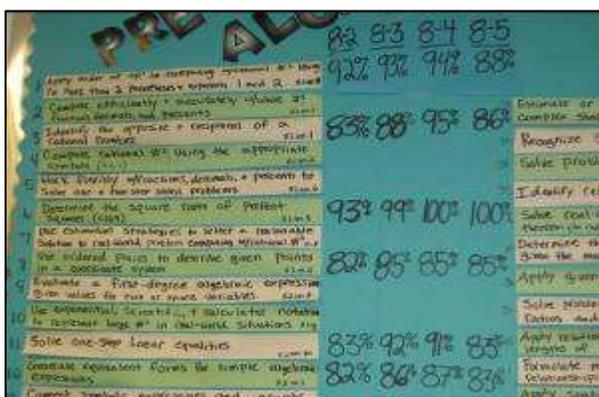
**Example 1: High school resource English**



**Example 2: High school resource algebra/English**



**Example 3: 8<sup>th</sup> grade pre-algebra/algebra**



**Example 4: High school chemistry and anatomy**





## Mastery Zone Folders

Academic	Behavioral	Individual	Whole-Class	Absolute	Relative	High-Prep	Low-Prep
✓		✓		✓			✓

**What it is:** Athena and I both used mastery zone folders as a way to invest our students in their progress toward big goals. Mastery zone folders held all of my students' tests and quizzes (organized by unit), as well as a tracking sheet (**see example 1 below**). Athena also had her students graph their progress on unit tests and quizzes (**see example 2 below**). Mastery zone folders were actually "hanging files." The files were housed in "milk crates." Standard hanging files (which are usually kept in filing cabinets) fit perfectly into milk crates. I had about 50 students over 5 class periods, so I only needed 2 milk crates for my mastery zone. Athena needed one milk crate for each class period she taught. In my classroom, we went over our quizzes from Friday each Monday morning. We tracked our mastery for each standard at this time as well. Quizzes were then stored in the mastery zone folders for later studying. **NOTE:** On the following page, you'll find a hard copy of the tracking sheet I used. You can also e-mail me for the soft copy!

### Positives (+):

- A private way for students to track their individual mastery for each standard
- Provides a great way to organize quizzes and tests
- Allows students to reflect on WHY their mastery increased or decreased
- After initial set-up and explanation, the routine is easy to maintain

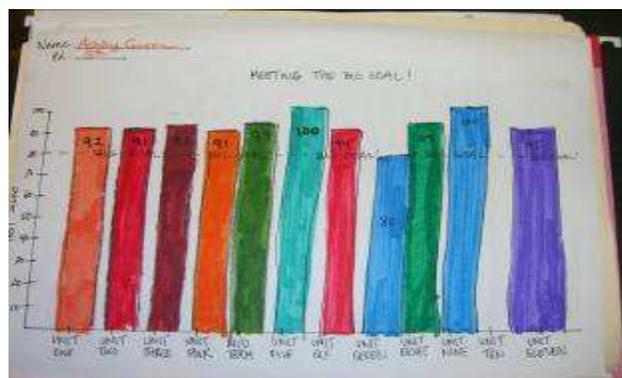
### Potential drawbacks (-):

- Hanging file folders and milk crates are not cheap; however, most offices have TONS of hanging file folders floating around and would possibly be willing to donate them to your classroom.
- Similarly, milk crates can be expensive if purchased at office supply stores.

Example 1 of mastery zone folders contents:

QC	Quick Quiz Number:	Gateway Standard	Try #1	Try #2	Try #3	Mastered YES or NO
1	1	Fiction/NE	90%			Yes
2	2	Authors purpose	70%	100%		Yes
3	3	Main idea	90%			Yes
4	4	IT3/7+5	100%			Yes
5	5	Sequence order	80%			Yes
6	6	Text structure	80%			Yes
7	7	Compare & contrast	80%			Yes

Example 2 of mastery zone folders contents:



My mastery zone milk crates and hanging file folders were housed on the A/C unit.





## TRACKING OUR PROGRESS TO OUR BIG GOAL

Date:	Quick Quiz Number:	Standard:	Grade Try #1	Grade Try #2	Grade Try #3	Mastered YES or NO	Why?
EXAMPLE: 10-2	EXAMPLE: 1	EXAMPLE: Fact and Opinion	60	80		YES	I went to tutoring to get help.
	1						
	2						
	3						
	4						
	5						
	6						
	7						
	8						
	9						
	10						
	11						
	12						
	13						
	14						
	15						
	16						
	17						
	18						
	19						
	20						



## "SUPERSTARS" Wall

Academic	Behavioral	Individual	Whole-Class	Absolute	Relative	High-Prep	Low-Prep
✓		✓			✓		✓

### What it is:

The superstars wall (as well as the stepping up wall - see page 9) are great ways to encourage students' relative academic achievement. In my classroom, I found it incredibly important to make sure each student felt successful. I made a point to recognize each student publicly for his or her progress toward our big goals. Athena's "SUPERSTARS WALL" was reserved for students who may not have met her absolute goal (e.g. 80% mastery on all standards), but made incredible progress. The "SUPERSTARS WALL" can be as high-prep or low-prep as you wish. **The key idea is to reserve a portion of your classroom to recognize those students who are SHOWING ACADEMIC IMPROVEMENT.** In the example below, Athena recognized her students showing progress by designing a unique picture for each student and listing the GROWTH (in points) each student made on his or her unit tests.

### Examples 1 and 2: High school chemistry and anatomy class





## "STEPPING UP" Wall

Academic	Behavioral	Individual	Whole-Class	Absolute	Relative	High-Prep	Low-Prep
✓	✓	✓			✓		✓

### What it is:

Each Monday, I recognized students who had "stepped up" in my class the previous week. "Stepping up" could include anything from an improvement in test scores to an improvement in attendance. I even recognized students who showed improvement in their preparedness for class each day. I also recognized positive behaviors. For example, one time two students worked out a conflict on their own; the following Monday, I publicly recognized both students on the "stepping up" wall. I took about 3 minutes each Monday to explain why I had chosen students for the stepping up wall. Their names were placed on a circle (along with the date), and after being recognized, each student received a prize of their choice. I also used the board to track unit test GROWTH. The circles on the far right side of the board were updated after each unit test. Students' names, as well as the amount of growth they made from the previous test (e.g. +12), appear on each circle.

### Positives (+):

- A great way to publicly recognize IMPROVEMENT (either academic or behavioral)
- Very low-prep
- Students LOVED being featured on the wall, and enjoyed the extrinsic reward, too

### Potential drawbacks (-):

- Though I verbally explained why students were featured on the stepping up wall each Monday, there is no permanent written record of the reasoning





## SMART COOKIES OF THE WEEK

Academic	Behavioral	Individual	Whole-Class	Absolute	Relative	High-Prep	Low-Prep
✓		✓		✓			✓

### What it is:

Smart Cookies of the Week was an investment system utilized by a high school (11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades) English teacher in Memphis. Each Monday, she brought cookies and publicly recognized students who had met their mastery goals the previous week. In addition to receiving an actual cookie, students were featured on a bulletin board in her classroom.

### Positives (+):

- A great way to publicly recognize high-achievers
- Very low-prep
- More than just a "cookie" - a constant reminder of great work
- Encourages students who are motivated by public praise and students who are motivated by extrinsic rewards (e.g. food)

### Potential drawbacks (-):

- Depending on your classroom, the same students could potentially be rewarded week after week



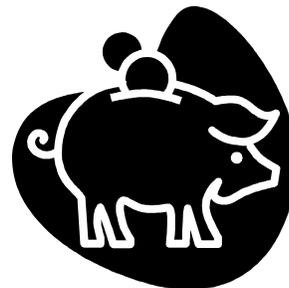
### BONUS! EXTRA IDEA: A "Wall of FAME" to display student work!







## CLASS CASH: MONEY IN THE BANK



### How it works: **YOU'RE HIRED!**

Congratulations on your new job. You've just been hired to spend the school year working extremely hard in Gateway English. We're not just going to work hard, we're also going to follow our 4 core values:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

When you follow our *CORE VALUES*, you will be *REWARDED*. One of the ways you will be rewarded will be: *ABELES CASH!* In particular, you will be rewarded with Abeles Cash if you are a *PROFESSIONAL*. What do *PROFESSIONALS DO?*

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Each day that you show up to class on time (and *STAY* in class until the end of the period), follow classroom rules, and work hard to learn is just like another day you've shown up to *WORK*.

Just like in the real world, when you show up to work, you get *\$PAID\$*. Also like in the real work, if you do not show up to work, you will not be paid.

**YOUR DAILY PAY FOR SHOWING UP ON TIME, FOLLOWING OUR CORE VALUES, and DOING ALL OF YOUR WORK is \$6.00.**

### How you can earn **MORE** money ☺:

- Class contests:** I will often offer bonus money to a person, a group, or even the whole class when they are able to correctly answer a question or win a classroom contest.
- Promotions:** From time to time, I will offer "PROMOTIONS" by which you earn extra money for participating in extra-curricular events such as tutoring, school functions, or other activities.
- Early finishers tasks:** If you finish the day's work early, you should choose an early finisher task: reading a book, writing a letter, or working out of a Gateway exercise book. For each task you finish *with good effort*, you will receive \$1.00.



## How you can LOSE money ☹:

- NOT BEING HERE!** If you do not show up to work, you will not get your MONEY! If your absence is an unexcused absence, you will be FINED an additional \$6, meaning you will lose a total of \$12 you could have had. Any student without a pink absent excuse note for me to sign will be considered unexcused.
- Tardies:** Professionals get to work ON TIME! Show up to work late could result in the LOSS of your JOB! Therefore, you must get to class on time.
- Sleeping or putting your head down on your desk.** Sleeping or putting your head down on your desk will cause you to lose your daily PAY.
- Poor behavior:** We show extreme effort. We are professional. We are respectful. We are humble. Any behavior that does not follow our CORE VALUES will cause you to LOSE money ☹
- Whiteboards:** You can lose your daily pay if you do not respect the whiteboards and the whiteboard markers/erasers. We will discuss this more when we begin using our whiteboards.

## JACKPOTS:

- Perfect attendance:** Those students who have PERFECT ATTENDANCE for a 6-week period (including 0 unexcused absences and 0 excused absences) will get an extra \$200.
- Excellent TESTS:** If you get an 80% or better on all of your tests and quizzes during a 6 week period, you will get a \$200 bonus.
- CORE VALUES BONUS:** If you have no deductions for poor behavior you will get a \$200 bonus.

## SPENDING YOUR MONEY:

You can use your ABELES CASH to buy things or rewards or you may pool your money to buy CLASS REWARDS. Items are available ONLY while supplies last. No guarantees!

### Things you can buy:

- Paper:** \$2/sheet
- Pen or pencil:** \$5/pen or pencil
- Food or drink DURING CLASS pass:** \$12/pass
- RAFFLE TICKETS:** We will have a raffle EVERY OTHER Friday. You may buy raffle tickets for \$1/ticket. I will raffle off food and SOMETIMES (NOT every raffle) Wal-Mart or Walgreens cards.

### Class items for sale:

- Class gets to listen to music during the WARM-UP: \$300.00.
- Class party (food and music provided but we still learn): \$1,000.00.

## HOW TO BUY THINGS:

You will not get fake "dollar bills." I will keep track of all your money on our computers. Every Monday, you will see an updated list of EVERY student's balance (how much money you have). You will have to fill out a "PURCHASE ORDER" for all items EXCEPT pens, paper, and pencils. If you need to buy a pen,



pencil or piece of paper, you must get to class BEFORE THE BELL RINGS! Nothing will be sold after the bell rings!

**FINE PRINT:**

Ms. Abeles has the right to change this system at any time without prior notice IF the system is CLEARLY not working or if classroom behavior is not worthy of these privileges.



## ATTENDANCE TRACKING

Academic	Behavioral	Individual	Whole-Class	Absolute	Relative	High-Prep	Low-Prep
	✓	✓		✓		✓	

### What it is:

Excellent student attendance can be a major contributor to student success. On the other hand, poor student attendance can be a major hindrance to student success in middle and high school. Therefore, taking the time to create an investment system which promotes student attendance could greatly increase student achievement. Meredith Smith's attendance tracking system (right) tracked and provided incentives for her students' good attendance. A "star" indicated that a student had achieved perfect attendance for a week. Prizes were given on a weekly basis.



### Positives (+):

- Public display of good attendance
- Provides incentives for good attendance
- If attendance is the key lever for your students' success, publicly tracking attendance could be well worth your time

### Potential drawbacks (-):

- Time consuming

## MUSIC MINUTES

High school resource English and algebra

Academic	Behavioral	Individual	Whole-Class	Absolute	Relative	High-Prep	Low-Prep
	✓		✓	✓		✓	

### What it is:

Meredith Smith, a high school English and algebra teacher, used music minutes to reward good behavior. At the end of each class period, she asked her class whether or not they had followed each of her 5 rules for the day. If the ENTIRE class had followed a rule, the class received a "point," or "music minute." For example, one of Ms. Smith's rules was to come to class prepared (i.e. with a pencil and a piece of paper). If the ENTIRE class came prepared on a given day, the class earned 1 music minute. Every 2 weeks (on Fridays), each class used the music minutes they earned by following the class rules over the previous 2 weeks. Each class could potentially earn 25 music minutes a week. A class DJ was chosen, and the student could play his or her music for the earned amount of time. Students STILL WORKED during MUSIC MINUTES, and the system provided a reward for excellent student behavior on a class-wide level.

### Positives (+):

- Daily reinforcement of class rules
- Class-wide incentive for good behavior

### Potential drawbacks (-):

- Tracking music minutes could make it a high-preparation strategy



## 8<sup>th</sup> Grade ESL/Social Studies

Academic	Behavioral	Individual	Whole-Class	Absolute	Relative	High-Prep	Low-Prep
✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	

### What it is:

Ari Kerr's "model citizens" investment system encompassed both academic and behavioral expectations. Each week, students had the opportunity to earn a "hard worker," "scholar," or "model citizen" status. As the stars below show, to earn the status of "hard worker," a student had to complete all assignments with effort for the week. To earn the title of "scholar," a student had to earn at least an 80% on all tests or quizzes for the week, and to earn the "model citizen" title, a student had to have good behavior ("model citizen behavior"), completed all assignments, and earned an 80% or higher on quizzes or tests for the week. Prizes were associated with each status on a weekly basis (see the boxes below from Ari's syllabus). At the end of each 6 weeks, Ari held a pizza party for all students who had been model citizens during the 6-week period.

### Positives (+):

- Encompasses both academic and behavioral investment
- Provides multiple opportunities for students to be recognized in the classroom

### Potential drawbacks (-):

- Depending on the number of students you have, this could be a high-preparation investment system

### From Ari's syllabus:

#### MODEL CITIZENSHIP STATUS

- **Hard worker:** Completes all assignments. Earns a homework pass.
- **Scholar:** Earns a grade of 80% or better on the weekly quiz. Gets a prize.
- **Model Citizen:** Completes all assignments and earns a grade of 80% or better on the quiz. Earns a homework pass and prize!

**Other Rewards:** note home, treat, shout-outs...

#### MODEL CITIZENSHIP

1. Show RESPECT at all times.
2. Come PREPARED.
3. Follow directions quickly.





## General Messaging

One of the easiest ways to invest your students is to use general messaging throughout your classroom which emphasizes your key academic and behavioral expectations. The following posters/bulletin boards are from various secondary classrooms in Memphis.

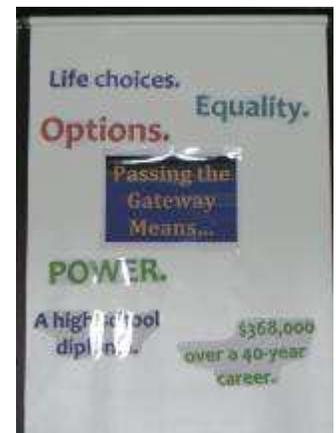
**Example 1:** Athena's students made college pennants which displayed the colleges they wished to attend upon graduation. Athena hung the pennants from her ceiling. The pennants served as a constant reminder visual reminder that their hard work in chemistry / anatomy would ultimately help them achieve larger goals.



**Example 2:** Ari Kerr's students signed graduation caps and wrote the colleges of their choices on the graduation caps.



**Example 3:** In Tennessee, students are required to pass 3 "gateway tests in order to earn a high school diploma. In my class, we worked on passing one of these 3 tests. This signage related to an investment lesson I did before I introduced our big goals for the year. The middle sign reads "passing the Gateway means..." and the signs around the middle sign say "life choices," "options," "equality," "power," "a high school diploma," and "\$368,000 over a 40-year career." The last statistic is the average amount of money a person with a high school diploma makes versus a person without a high school diploma (over a 40-year career).



## Example 4:

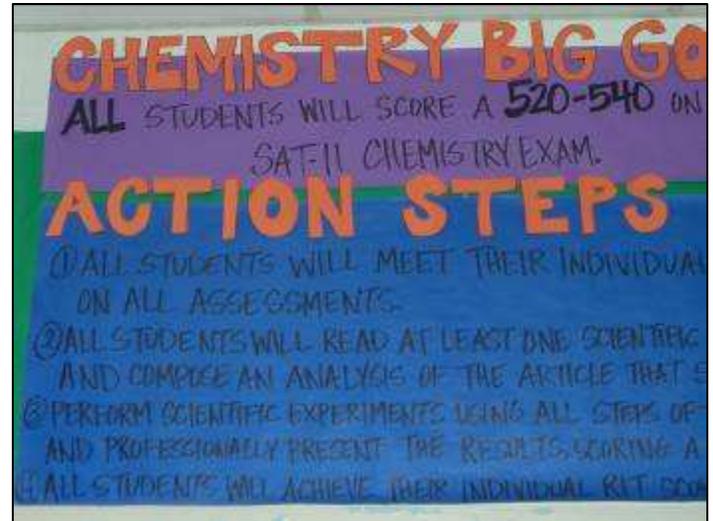
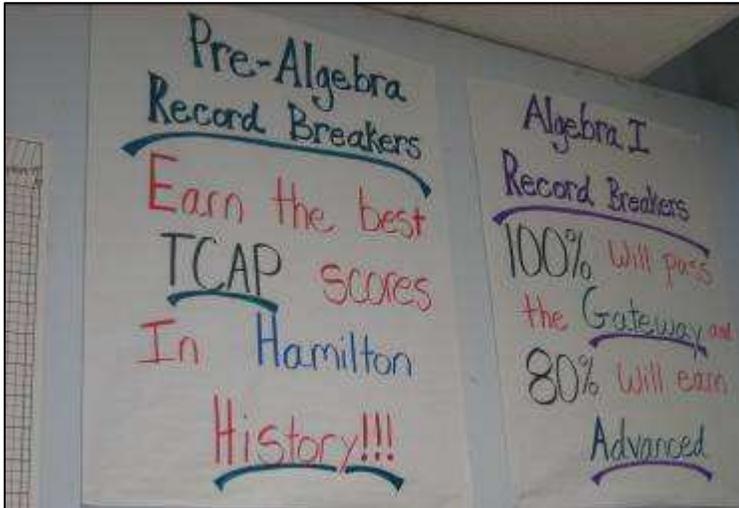
If your class has an end of course test, a countdown to the test day can be a powerful motivator and provide both you and your students with a sense of urgency. Below the countdown sign, was a sign that said "every minute counts."





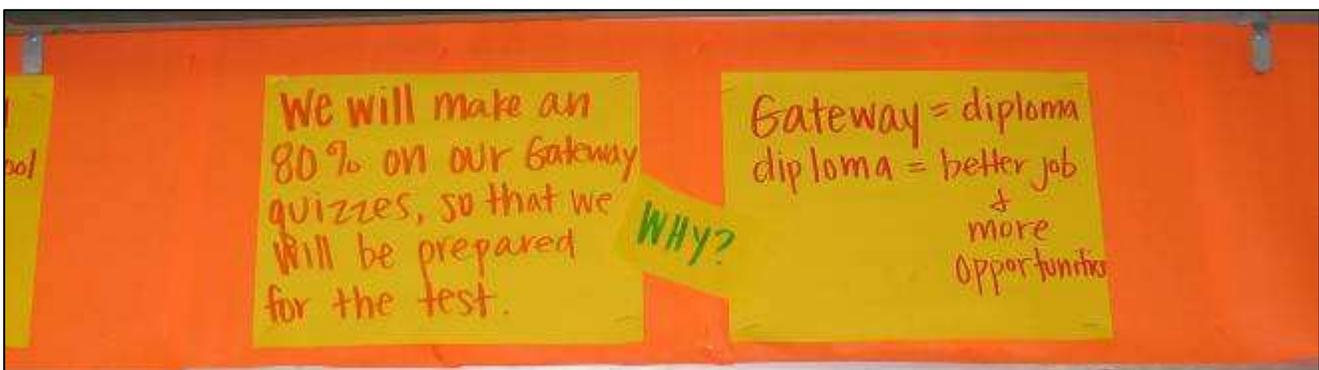
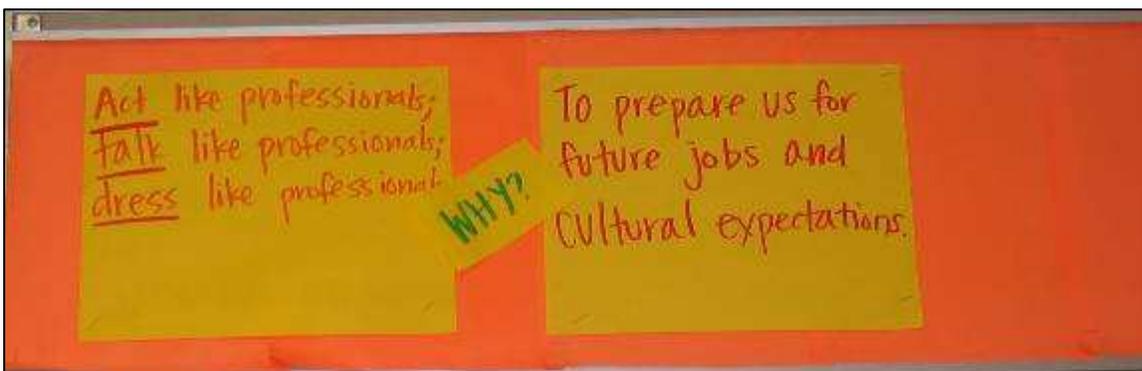
Examples 5 and 6:

Don't forget to POST YOUR BIG GOALS!



### Example 7: Give reasoning to your BIG GOALS

The following bulletin boards are related to Meredith Smith's big goals. After each BIG GOAL, she provides a "WHY" poster. In other words, she permanently reminds students WHY they are working hard to reach their big goals. One of Meredith's big goals was to "act like professions, talk like professionals, and dress like professions." Her "WHY" poster reads: "To prepare us for future jobs and cultural expectations." Another one of Meredith's goals was for all of her students to make an 80% on Gateway quizzes, so that they would be prepared for the test. Her "WHY" poster reads "Gateway = diploma; diploma = better job and more opportunities."





## KEY IDEAS AS YOU START TO THINK ABOUT YOUR OWN INVESTMENT SYSTEMS:

- Students are motivated by different things (praise, a brownie, a pencil, a homework pass, a note home, etc.). A good investment system is well-rounded; it reinforces positive behavior and academic success through a variety of strategies.
- Students must be able to SEE their progress toward the BIG GOAL to continually work to achieve it.
- Reinforcing student progress requires a simple, regular routine to make it a part of a classroom. In order to make your investment systems maintainable, make sure you balance high and low-preparation strategies.

Investment ideas for my classroom this summer:

Investment strategy #1:

Steps I need to take:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Investment strategy #2:

Steps I need to take:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Investment strategy #3:

Steps I need to take:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Investment ideas for my classroom in my region:

Investment strategy #1:

Steps I need to take:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Investment strategy #2:

Steps I need to take:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Investment strategy #3:

Steps I need to take:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_