

Two Strategies for Exploring Students' Views of Intelligence

Strategy #1: In order to shape your students' view of intelligence and whether or not they believe in the value of hard work to "get smart", it may be helpful to diagnose students' perceptions of why they were able to succeed on an assignment. Below is a sample student survey that could be modified for a variety of assignments, such as a test, a project, an oral presentation, etc.

Student Name: _____

	Not at all a reason	Not much of a reason	A reason	A good reason	A very important reason
If you did well on this test, is it because:					
You studied hard?	1	2	3	4	5
You studied the right things?	1	2	3	4	5
You are smart?	1	2	3	4	5
I explained things well?	1	2	3	4	5
You studied the right things?	1	2	3	4	5
Someone helped you?	1	2	3	4	5
The work was easy?	1	2	3	4	5
If you did poorly on this test, is it because:					
You didn't study much?	1	2	3	4	5
You didn't study the right things?	1	2	3	4	5
You are not smart?	1	2	3	4	5
I didn't explain things well?	1	2	3	4	5
You weren't helped by anyone?	1	2	3	4	5
The work was hard?	1	2	3	4	5

Strategy #2: Some teachers might be surprised at the thought of spending class time discussing the theory of malleable intelligence or the value of hard work. However, identifying whether students view their intelligence and ability as something they can improve through hard work, or something they can never change, will help you identify students most in need of a "mind shift."

Conversation starters:

- Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? You have a certain amount of intelligence, and you really can't do much to change it.
- What does it mean to be smart? (in science? in math? in English?)
- Could a student who has a lot of trouble with _____ ever become really good at it?
- What would a student who doesn't do well in _____ need to do if he or she wanted to do well?
- If a student didn't think he was as smart in _____ as he would like to be, is there anything he could do to become smarter? If yes, what could he do? If no, why isn't there anything he could do?

These two strategies were modified from: Stipek, Deborah. *Motivation to Learn: Integrating Theory and Practice*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2002.

[Back](#)