

## I-1: Convince students that hard work leads to success (“I Can”)

### Market Your “I Can” Messages

Your students won’t change their beliefs and value what you do if you merely share your messages with your students. Rather, you will need to think of yourself as a marketer and maximize every opportunity to create a culture of achievement.

Marketers spend their time thinking of ways to get their audience to internalize the desired message and act accordingly. They think of clever slogans and visual images, plan events and rituals, develop promotional contests, create symbols or mascots to give personality to their messages, and so on. You’re the chief marketer in your classroom, and you’ll want to think of every creative way possible to reinforce what you value.

### To Create a Culture of Achievement in Your Classroom

#### STEP 1: Select Your Messages

Counter internalized low expectations by celebrating and valuing effort, growth, and collaboration\*. Select messages that will help students connect hard work to achievement to help them succeed in your class, in school and in life.

*\* Research shows that building a cooperative spirit among students reinforces a healthy conception of intelligence as attainable, rather than fixed. By building team-based classes to ensure the success of all students, teachers reinforce the idea that all students can achieve at high levels if they apply themselves. Many of the strategies listed below (like the use of class names, chants, and mottos) help build a sense of teamwork and interdependence and establish the notion of a collective quest for achievement, which leads to accelerated student progress. For more information on creating a classroom environment that encourages collaboration, visit the I-5 page.*

#### STEP 2: Model Your Messages

Practice what you preach to ensure your classroom reflects the clear, recurring messages you’re trying to send. Personally model the behaviors and values you wish to see in your classroom. Show students your sense of urgency by making yourself available before school and for after school study sessions, and by using every second of class time productively.

In addition to recognizing the ways in which you personally serve as a role model for your students, use others as role models to exemplify the effects of hard work as well. For more on using role models, visit the I-3 page.

#### STEP 3: Market Your Messages

Aggressively market messages of hard work and perseverance by packaging what you value in language that your students will understand and be able to internalize (essentially manifesting those values in clear, comprehensible “messages”).

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See below for strategies to package and market your messages.

### Strategies to Package and Market Your Messages

The following strategies give some starting ideas. You will need to think about what makes the most sense given your content, grade-level and community.

Strategies to Package and Market Your Messages	Examples
<b>Class Names</b>	<p>Allow you to shape your class identity as a whole.</p> <p><b>The A+ Class</b> (reinforces the value of achievement)</p> <p><b>The Helping Hands Classroom</b> (emphasizes collaboration and teamwork).</p> <p><b>The College Prep Class</b> (communicates that your students have the potential to go to college while also encouraging hard work)</p>
<b>Themes</b>	<p><b>“Excellence”</b> At the beginning of the year, Danielle Neves (Los Angeles '99) and her students talk about excellence and what it looks like in the classroom – considering everything from interaction between students to the quality of finished assignments. They write down what excellence will mean in their class throughout the year, and constantly refer to their “Excellence is...” poster at the front of the room.</p>
<b>Mottos</b>	<p>Can be displayed on the walls and/or written as headings on papers, on assignments, tests and/or quizzes.</p> <p><b>No Excuses</b></p> <p><b>There are No Shortcuts</b></p>

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	<p><b>Effort Breeds Success.</b></p> <p><b>Mistakes are Learning Opportunities</b></p> <p><b>You Have the Ability to Excel</b></p> <p><b>ALL of us WILL Learn</b></p>
<p><b>Chants/Pledges</b></p>	<p>Preston Smith (a Bay Area elementary school teacher) reinforces the message that mistakes are learning opportunities by teaching his first grade students the following class chant, “_____ made a mistake, but that’s ok, because as long as he learns from it, we say hurray!”</p> <hr/> <p>Sara Cotner (an elementary school teacher in South Louisiana) uses a teacher-student call and response. Teacher: <i>A+ Attitude.</i> Students: <i>Work Hard. Get Smart.</i> Sara also has her students recite the A+ Class Pledge every morning in unison. That class pledge reads as follows:</p> <p><i>I pledge allegiance to the A+ Class at J.A. Hernandez. I will do my best at all times. I am here to learn and get smart. I will make myself, my family, and my teacher proud. I will always be respectful, responsible, and ready to learn for my sake and for the sake of those around me.</i></p> <hr/> <p>Heather Hamilton (an Atlanta teacher) uses the following chant: “I am smart. I will work hard. At the end of today, I will be proud.” This is how her students start every day. Throughout the day, all she has to say is “I am smart,” and her students repeat the chant.</p>

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	<p>Rachel Schankula (an elementary school teacher in Mississippi) had her students recite the following class creed:</p> <p>I believe in myself and my ability to do my best.          I am intelligent. I am capable of greatness.          I can learn. I will learn. I must learn.          Today, I will listen. I will speak. I will see.          I will think. I will feel. I will reason.          I will read, and I will write.          I will do all these things with one purpose in mind: to do my best.          I am too smart to waste today.</p>
<p><b>Visual Displays</b></p>	<p>An elementary teacher might create a big red train engine on one of his walls where he hangs up pieces of work that represent tremendous effort and accomplishment under the title “<b>The Engine That Could.</b>”</p> <p>Banners might present messages in catchy slogans such as (all utilized in the KIPP Academies):</p> <p><b>“There Are No Shortcuts,”</b>  <b>“Team Beats Individual”</b>  <b>“Work Hard. Be Nice”</b></p> <p>Jaime Escalante (of <i>Stand and Deliver</i> fame) paced a large sign in his classroom that read:  <b>“DETERMINATION + HARD WORK + DISCIPLINE = THE WAY TO SUCCESS.”</b></p>
<p>NOTE: Recognize the danger of class names, slogans, or visual displays that have no reality behind them. If students in the “Helping Hands Classroom” never work with a partner or in collaborative groups, or are never affirmed for supporting their classmates’ achievement, that class name will probably ring false to students. Imagine if you hang a banner that reads “Try, Try, Try Again: Effort Breeds Success” and yet when Chantelle asks to retake the test on which she got 62%, you respond flatly, “No. What you got is what you got. You’ll just have to study harder for the next test.” Translating your values into messages and packaging them in a way that students can understand is one thing. Securing the reality behind those messages is another key piece. As any good marketer will tell you, you can’t send messages effectively unless there is a reality behind them – you must “walk the walk.”</p>	

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KIPP Academies rely heavily on the use of packaged slogans and messages. Co-founder Mike Feinberg (a former Houston teacher), explains KIPP’s rationale for this approach:

Students need to be set up for success before we place high expectations on them and hold them accountable to meet those expectations...

At KIPP, the teachers have realized that before students can DO the actions we want them to do, they first have to be able to SAY those actions. Therefore, those actions and expectations need to be taught, explained, and constantly reviewed in our classrooms. By saying the actions and expectations, the students acknowledge the existence of this particular expectation, buy into the fairness of its existence, and realize their responsibility to maintain it. At KIPP, this translates into “Say it, do it.”

We need to reach and teach from many different angles, and we need to review previous work in a spiral form to ensure long-term mastery. This is why KIPP has plastered its campuses with various sayings, slogans, values, rallying cries, and expectations. It is our assurance that all of our children are constantly bombarded by our positive expectations and values throughout the day – they hear it in class and they see it wherever they happen to look (even when they’re off task). On day one each year, we begin teaching such concepts as:

1. Team always beats individual.
2. There are no shortcuts.
3. Work hard. Be nice.
4. Climb the mountain to college in 20XX (XX = the graduation year)
5. Focus.
6. Be the constant, not the variable.
7. Actions speak louder than words.
8. Time and Place.
9. If you can’t run with the Big Dogs, stay on the porch!
10. ALL of us WILL learn.

...and many more to create productive classroom environments. These slogans and expectations are on the walls in our classrooms, are painted onto our sidewalks in between our modular buildings, hang from the ceiling over our covered walkways, decorate the windows in our front entrance, are on our letterhead, are on our bumper stickers, are on the students’ uniforms, and if I could hire planes to sky-write these slogans, I’d do that, too ☺. Children at KIPP are expected to learn, understand, and always remember what we ask them to do, and when they do the right thing, good things happen. A daily reminder is one small way that we as teachers make sure our students are set up to succeed.