

## I-2: Convince students that they want to succeed (“I Want”)

### Connect Content to Students’ Current Lives

Since any effective investment strategies must be age-appropriate and meaningful to specific students and subgroups, teachers must:

- Know their students well enough to know what would motivate them by learning about students’ values, interests, strengths and needs
- Make a meaningful link between what students value and class content

By getting to know their students well, teachers are able to describe the class’s academic goals in ways that appeal to their students. Successful teachers mold their students’ long-term desires by deliberately developing a strong understanding of their students’ short-term interests and values.

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### Who do your students admire?

Determine who students admire and recognize who among those exemplify the ambitious goals and accomplishments you want students to emulate. Find ways to feature in your classroom pop culture icons that your students naturally admire, but be sure to connect their achievement to the academic values you want to instill.

Recognize your students’ inherent admiration for peer role models--including both fellow students within the classroom and older students. One Houston teacher we spoke with says:

One of the top ways I got my kindergarten students invested in our Reading Big Goals was through older, third-grade reading buddies. The third graders knew [the kindergarteners] were trying to learn over 100 sight words in a year and praised their younger buddy when they could read independently. My student Jenay asked, “Can I write a letter to my buddy while I am at the writing center? I want to tell her I know eight new sight words!”

One Los Angeles teacher found motivation for her incoming seventh graders, simply by calling upon the advice of her outgoing seventh graders:

I actually found that older students were incredibly influential to my students. I had my seventh grade students from my first year write letters to my incoming seventh grade students. I asked them to be really specific about what a student needed to do to be successful in my class. Their responses were humorous, inspiring, and very honest. My students truly looked up to the older students in the school and were very open to hearing their advice and guidance.

For more on using role models, visit the I-3 page.

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### What do your students value?

Determine your students’ passions and integrate them into your curriculum:

If your students love sports and you’re a math teacher, create lessons that incorporate the math behind baseball, football and basketball statistics.

If you teach reading, encourage your students to read about what interests them. (If your students are passionate about hip-hop, astronauts and horses, let them read about those topics.) Consider featuring “Student Recommendations” of reading materials on your walls.

If your students love car racing, incorporate references to it in your lessons of the concepts of velocity, speed and acceleration.

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### What are your students’ short-term goals and aspirations?

Build a bridge between the desires students already have and those you want them to develop.

Elementary School Example: Atlanta teacher Crystal Jones inspired her first graders with the notion that they would all “be third graders” by the end of the year. She realized that all of her children had older siblings and friends whom they looked up to, and she harnessed that common value to invest her students in hard work.

Middle School Example: An 8<sup>th</sup> grade science teacher in New York explains his approach with his older students:

In 8<sup>th</sup> grade, high school was very much on the minds of my students. They all wanted to go to the most popular (and usually most competitive) New York City schools. I walked through the high school guidebook with my students. We discussed the scores that it would take to get into their desired school and how having taken a regents course would set them up for success at any school and would be impressive to high school admissions counselors. But we didn’t stop there. We also discussed why going to a good high school was important given their personal goals and how doing well in my class (and in all their classes) was critical to realizing these ambitions. This was initially effective in investing my students in my class, but it was hard-earned success on rigorous assessments that kept them invested. They came to believe that they really could reach, and even surpass, the high bar we set for ourselves.

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### How does your subject relate to your students lives?

It is vitally important that students see your subject as relevant to them personally. Highlight for them the ways your curriculum affects their actual lives by seizing every opportunity to relate your subject to real-life applications (e.g. have classroom displays that list the reasons your subject matters).

#### High School Science Example

Wall Display:

<p>“WHY SHOULD YOU LEARN CHEMISTRY?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• REACTIONS are really fun!</li> <li>• Learn to THINK, REASON and DEDUCE.</li> <li>• You get to create THEORIES (so you don’t have to be right every time!)</li> <li>• It offers REAL WORLD APPLICATIONS.</li> <li>• Learn to use PRINCIPLES, LAWS and EQUATIONS.</li> <li>• To learn all 112 KNOWN ELEMENTS.</li> <li>• It will make you a better COOK!</li> <li>• Because it MATTERS.</li> </ul>	<p>CHEMISTRY IS USED IN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making MEDICINES</li> <li>• Ensuring clean WATER supplies</li> <li>• Making PERFUMES</li> <li>• COOKING</li> <li>• Making PLASTICS</li> <li>• Making METALS</li> <li>• HEATING</li> <li>• FREEZING</li> <li>• FORENSICS (Watch CSI!)</li> </ul>
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#### Elementary Math Example

With math I’ve worked really hard to get them to realize how prevalent math is in the world. In the beginning of the year I felt like a lot of my students weren’t motivated to do math and didn’t think it mattered. So once a week I assign a different student to be our “Math Reporter.” That student’s job is to interview one person they know and ask that person how and when they use math in their lives. Then the Math Reporter gives a little presentation to the class at our Friday meeting. Last week Luis interviewed his aunt who is a cashier at Domino’s pizza. And he explained how she has to count money at the cash register and give people their change. And he said that she would lose her job if she made mistakes if she wasn’t good at math. I remember Jacinda’s presentation a few weeks ago—she interviewed her grandmother who is a nurse and she talked about having to measure medicines and keep track of patients’ temperatures and decide if the temperatures are higher or lower each time. It’s been a great method of getting them to recognize math in the real world.

We also have a classroom grocery store that I set up with fake fruits and vegetables and empty cans and cereal boxes. There’s a cash register with fake money and all the items have price tags on them. I use it as an activity center. And on different slips of paper I’ve created different grocery lists. So they can come to the center and “go shopping” and they have to answer questions like “How much money did you spend in total? If you wanted to spend \$5 less, which items might you put back? If you had \$10 more to spend, what else could you buy?” Questions like that. Again, it just helps them to realize why we’re learning math and to see math in the real world and motivate them to want to learn more.

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How to Get to Know Your Students	
<b>Inside the Classroom</b>	<p><u>Through:</u>                      Journal entries                      Student surveys and questionnaires                      Assignments that invite revelations about students' lives                      Classroom displays that feature individual students</p>
<b>Inside the School</b>	<p><u>Through:</u>                      Eating lunch with your students                      After-school tutorials                      Talking to students during detention                      Coaching/leading extra-curricular activities</p>
<b>Outside the Classroom</b>	<p><u>Through attending:</u>                      School sporting events                      Church dinners                      Cookouts                      Community events</p>

### Sample Student Survey

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Period/Subject: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

Interest Inventory

*Please answer all questions honestly and thoroughly, continue on the back if necessary.*

1. In a word, describe “school”:

2. Write one word that describes you as a person:

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3. When was the last time you voted for something?
4. What time do you usually go to bed during the school year?
5. In a word, what do you want to achieve this year?
6. What was the last play you saw, and what did you think of it?
7. How would you describe the perfect teacher?
8. If you could have lunch with a historical person, with whom would you dine? Why?
9. If you had an unlimited ticket to travel anywhere in the world, where would you go? Who would you take with you? Why?
10. What is your favorite book/play and why?
11. Write down three things you would like to learn in this class.
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
12. What extra-curricular activities (sports, drama, music, ROTC, etc.) do you participate in?
13. If you could change one thing about OHS, what would it be? What are your ideas for making that change?
14. What grade do you expect to earn in this class? \_\_\_\_\_
15. Below, write a paragraph about something you would like me to know. (examples: your summer, why you want to take this class, what you think or feel about Reading/Speech/Civics or something unique about you).