

Gateway Prompts Research & Rationale

Click to Navigate.

Week One: Perception of School	2
Week Two: Areas of Interest/Passion.....	3
Week Three: Future Goals	4
Week Four: Exploring Skills Aligned to Goals.....	5
Week Five: Setting Short-Term Goals	6
Week Six: Developing Your Personal Brand.....	7

Week One: Perception of School

Research and Rationale

Understanding how a student feels about school can shape the tone of future messages. If a student is struggling in school, you will probably offer different advice than you would to a student who is excelling. For example, if a student mentions school being difficult, you may want to think about how you can connect their interests and the effort they put into that interest, to school. Also, instead of focusing primarily on post-secondary education, you may want to talk about more immediate goals, like passing the 9th grade and even graduating high school.

If a student is excelling in school, you may want to talk about post-secondary education more frequently than graduating high school. After week 1, you'll get a sense for the type of student you're working with to determine if your messages should be longer and more detailed, or shorter and more to the point. This will also clue you in as to which direction the conversation will take.

Week Two: Areas of Interest/Passion

Research and Rationale

Research conducted at Search Institute has shown that when a young person has a deep interest or passion in their life (what Search Institute calls the young person's *spark*), they are much more likely to succeed at school and much less likely to participate in risky behaviors such as using drugs or alcohol. Search Institute's national studies have shown that the most common sparks of teenagers today are sports, performing arts, and technology, but sparks also come in many other forms, like taking care of animals, reading, working, or improving the environment (Benson and Scales, 2009).

Knowing your student's interests is a great way to build a relationship and to acknowledge an area of their life in which they work hard and feel a sense of accomplishment. Knowing their spark could provide insight into their lives, and can give you a better idea of the person they are, or hope to become. In future message exchanges, their spark can be leveraged to connect school and their future goals.

Week Three: Future Goals

Research and Rationale

An extensive body of research shows that helping young people develop powerful visions of their possible future selves can enhance motivation, effort, and educational outcomes in the present (Oyserman, Terry, and Bybee, 2002; Oyserman, Bybee, and Terry, 2006; Dweck, Walton, Cohen, 2011). Studies also find, however, that while many teenagers today – more than in prior generations – have high goals for the future, they are often unclear about what they need to do to achieve those goals and passive about working hard in the present to achieve them (Schneider and Stevenson, 1999; Rosenbaum and Person, 2003; Damon, 2008). The good news is that other studies have shown that when people are helped to see how their present actions are likely to influence whether or not they achieve their goals (such as getting into a particular type of college or enjoying a relaxing retirement), it can produce significant and positive changes in behavior in the present (Oyserman, 2013). Other researchers have shown that it is especially important to help students who struggle in school understand how educational success will help them achieve their goals for the future – even if those goals don't seem closely connected to the work that students are doing in school at present (Dweck et al., 2011; Hulleman and Harackiewicz, 2009). While these are strong findings from extensive research, it is important to remember that they may not reflect your student's approach to future goals and objectives. Be attentive to what they say in responding to your questions this week so that you are providing feedback that will resonate with your student. This will also be the beginning of the discussion on how they will achieve their goals for the future.

Week Four: Exploring Skills Aligned to Goals

Research and Rationale

In many American schools today, the emphasis is on mastery of the type of academic knowledge and skill that can be measured on a standardized achievement test. While those abilities are unquestionably important, a large body of research in economics and other disciplines is now demonstrating that what were once thought of as “soft skills” are essential for success in all aspects of life. For example, Nobel Laureate in economics James Heckman and his colleagues have demonstrated that character strengths such as perseverance, sociability, conscientiousness, and curiosity are as influential as IQ in determining performance not only in school but also in the labor market, health outcomes, and incarceration rates (Heckman and Kautz, 2012).

In this exchange you have the opportunity to convey the importance of character strengths to your student, which is a message they may not often receive. It will be particularly valuable for your student to hear from you about the ways that “soft skills” matter in the workplace.

Week Five: Setting Short-Term Goals

Research and Rationale

During the second half of the program the students will be asked to think about how they can act now to achieve the future goals that they identified earlier. The process of identifying a short-term goal and the benefits of achieving that goal is part of a specific research methodology called WOOP. The letters in WOOP stand for Wish, Outcome, Obstacle and Plan.

- Wish: A wish or goal in your life that is challenging but possible within a span of time
- Outcome: The best thing that could come from fulfilling the wish or goal
- Obstacle: Something that holds you back from fulfilling the wish or goal
- Plan: A step you could take to remove or overcome the obstacle

WOOP was designed to help people achieve short-term goals that take weeks or months rather than days or years to complete. These goals can be the building blocks of success in school and in life. A variety of studies have found WOOP to be effective in enhancing student motivation and perseverance. Angela Duckworth and colleagues (2013) found that using WOOP significantly improved grades, attendance, and conduct in a group of fifth graders.

In this week's prompt, the focus will be on the Wish and the Outcome.

Week Six: Developing Your Personal Brand

Research & Rationale

Personal Branding as a concept is credited to a 1997 article by business/organization guru Tom Peters. It is seen as a response to increased competition in the job market brought on by globalization and other tech factors. At the core of Personal Branding is the idea that workers can (1) distinguish themselves from others by offering a unique and valuable skillset and (2) market their skillset online, in person, on paper, etc. (Lair). Ultimately, the type and quality of service the worker can provide becomes their brand (Peters).

The concept of Personal Branding is not without criticism. For example, some academics believe the idea encourages employees to think of themselves only in terms of what monetary value they can bring to their employer (Lair). For our purposes, make sure students are identifying and celebrating the authentic skills and expertise they have and/or are developing, not just labeling themselves with skills they think are the most financially expedient.

Research Citations

- Ben-Eliyahu, A., Rhodes, J. E., & Scales, P. (2014). The interest-driven pursuits of 15 year olds: “Sparks” and their association with caring relationships and developmental outcomes. *Applied Developmental Science, 18*(2), 76-89.
- Benson, P. L. (2008). *Sparks: How parents can help ignite the hidden strengths of teenagers*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Benson, P. L., & Scales, P. C. (2009). The definition and preliminary measurement of thriving in adolescence. *Journal of Positive Psychology, 4*, 85–104.
- Damon, W. (2008). *The path to purpose: Helping our children find their calling in life*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Duckworth, A. L., Kirby, T. A., Gollwitzer, A., & Oettingen, G. (2013). From fantasy to action: Mental contrasting with implementation intentions (MCI) improves academic performance in children. *Social Psychological and Personality Science, 4*(6), 745–753.
- Dweck, C. S. (2015, September 23). Growth mindset, revisited. *Education Week, 24*.
- Dweck, C.S., Walton, G., & Cohen, G. (2011). Academic tenacity: Mindsets and skills that promote long-term learning. Paper prepared for the Gates Foundation.
- Heckman, J. J., & Kautz, T. (2012). Hard evidence on soft skills. *Labour Economics, 19*(4), 451–464.
- Hulleman, C. S., & Harackiewicz, J. M. (2009). Making education relevant: Increasing interest and performance in high school science classes. *Science, 326*, 1410–1412.
- Lair, Daniel et al. (2005). Marketization and the Recasting of the Professional Self. *Management Communication Quarterly, 18*(3), 307-343.
- Oyserman, D. (2013). Not just any path: Implication of identity-based motivation for disparities in school outcomes. *Economics of Education Review, 33*, 179–190.
- Oyserman, D., Terry, K., & Bybee, D. (2002). A possible selves intervention to enhance school involvement, *Journal of Adolescence, 25*(3), 313–326.
- Oyserman, D., Bybee, D., & Terry, K. (2006). Possible selves and academic outcomes: How and

when possible selves impel action. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 91(1), 188.

Peters, Tom. "The Brand Called You." Fast Company. 31 Aug 1997,

<https://www.fastcompany.com/28905/brand-called-you>. Accessed 24 Sept 2018.

Rosenbaum, J. E., & Person, A. E. (2003). Beyond college for all: Policies and practices to

improve transitions into college and jobs. *Professional School Counseling*, 6(4), 253–260.

Scales, P. C., Benson, P. L., & Roehlkepartain, E. C. (2011). Adolescent thriving: The role of sparks, relationships, and empowerment. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 40(3), 263–277.

Scales, P. C., Benson, P. L., & Roehlkepartain, E. C. (2010). *Teen voice 2010: Relationships that matter to America's teens*. Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute and Best Buy Children's Foundation.

Schneider, B., & Stevenson, D. (1999). *The ambitious generation: America's teenagers, motivated but directionless*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Stipek, D., & Seal, K. (2001). *Motivated minds: Raising children to love learning*. Macmillan.