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Happy New Year! We hope you had a wonderful holiday season and your 2023 is off to a great start.

What we believe about ourselves has a direct impact on our ability to be successful. As we think about ways to support students and increase opportunities for their success, we must understand their academic mindsets and provide ways for them to increase their confidence and belief in themselves...

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## Academic Mindsets and Behaviors, Prior Achievement, and the Transition to Middle School

Students often experience a decline in academic achievement as they transition to middle school. This is true particularly for Black and Latinx students. Academic mindsets, such as a belief in academic ability or a reluctance to engage academically because of embarrassment or a fear of failure (performance avoidance), can support or undermine student success during this transition. Mindsets affect academic outcomes through their effect on academic behaviors, such as completing homework and participating in class. Positive academic mindsets and behaviors include high levels of growth mindset and of academic behaviors along with low levels of performance avoidance. This study examined the relationship between grade 5 student reports on levels of academic mindsets and behaviors and the predicted probability of having a grade point average (GPA) below 2.0 in the first semester of grade 6 (low GPA) in Nevada's Clark County School District, for all students and for student groups based on achievement and sociodemographic characteristics. [Learn more](#)

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## Academic Mindsets and Self-Affirmation Tools

- Infographic – This infographic builds an understanding of how positive academic mindsets and behaviors are associated with student success.  
<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/Products/Resource/100583>
  - Infographic – This infographic can help educators understand the benefit of self-affirmation classroom writing activities for Black and Latinx students.  
<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/Products/Resource/100581>
  - Webinar – This webinar provides an overview of the academic mindset, academic behaviors, and transition to middle school work that REL West did in partnership with Nevada’s Clark County School District.  
<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/Products/Event/100609>
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### Spotlight on Our Work

In our last newsletter, we introduced our partnership with the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) focusing on Creating Equitable Educator Practices and Improved Discipline Outcomes for Black Students. As part of this project, REL West and SFUSD will co-design and conduct a randomized control study to test several interventions the district is currently using including the Perspective Experiences Program (PEP), an online educator intervention as well as a [self-affirmation student intervention](#) to help buffer students against stereotype threat. This study will explore how these interventions work together to create an effective package of evidence-based interventions for improving equitable discipline outcomes for Black students.

The goal of this work is to identify and test systemic changes at the district level to ensure students have the opportunity to develop a growth mindset regarding their academic ability and can overcome external influences such as stereotype threat.

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### More REL Resources

- REL Midwest: Examining the use of discipline reform plans to reduce discipline disparities in Minnesota  
[https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/regions/midwest/pdf/REL\\_MW\\_Discipline\\_Reform.pdf](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/regions/midwest/pdf/REL_MW_Discipline_Reform.pdf)
- REL West: Short-term impacts of student listening circles on student perceptions of school climate and of their own competencies  
<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/Products/Publication/3856>

## Resources for Educators

The What Works Clearinghouse has published a [Practice Guide](#) for educators to explore reading interventions for students in grades 4–9. This webinar introduces evidence-based recommendations and features a panel of seven reading experts who compiled the Practice Guide. The guide outlines four recommendations on how educators can help students build skills needed to improve their reading skills.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHQFZol63mc>

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## Connect with us!

Visit our [website](#) to learn more about our work. Follow us on Twitter at [@REL\\_West](#) or email us at [RELWest@WestEd.org](mailto:RELWest@WestEd.org).

If you are not already subscribed, please [click here](#) to sign up for our quarterly newsletter and share with others who may be interested in learning more about how to make evidence-informed changes to improve student success.

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