

# Life Skills: Tracking Individual Student Growth & Providing Meaningful Feedback

Promoting Academic and Personal Behaviors at  
Soundview Academy for Scholarship and Culture, Bronx, NY

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## Academic Behaviors Guides: An Introduction

In the 2012-13 school year, the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) laid out, for the first time, a set of academic and personal behaviors critical for New York City’s public school students to be college and career ready. Based on a growing body of research that demonstrates the critical nature of a set of skills and mindsets to successful learning, the NYCDOE identified persistence, academic engagement, communication and collaboration, work habits and organization, and self-regulation as key to student success.

In addition to identifying the importance of these skills and behaviors, the NYCDOE committed to exploring how schools are developing effective resources and scaffolds to address them. Working with Eskolta, the NYCDOE launched the Academic Behaviors Pilot with five schools—two middle schools, two high schools, and one transfer school. These schools engaged in an inquiry process whereby they simultaneously studied their existing efforts to promote academic behaviors and set out to deepen those efforts through new practices.

From this work, the NYCDOE and Eskolta jointly published a series of four guides. Each guide highlights a set of practices at one school: a student “desktop rubric” at School for Classics; a system for assessing and giving feedback on key student behaviors and mindsets at Soundview Academy for Culture and Scholarship; lessons that integrate writing and exploration of self-identity at New York City Lab Middle School; and a series of activities for students to reflect on off-site internships at Flushing International High School.

This publication shares resources and materials from Soundview Academy for Culture and Scholarship. It is designed to highlight specific steps and materials that the school has used in its efforts to promote academic and personal behaviors, making these accessible for other schools and educators to adapt to their needs. Each guide also provides background context on the school to help readers understand the way in which school structures and culture enabled the effective development and deployment of the work.

In sharing these resources, we hope to further reflection on and discussion of the academic and personal behaviors and their critical role in our schools. We welcome educators’ comments and feedback on this important work for New York City’s children, and look forward to much-needed attention to these critical skills and behaviors in our public schools.

Sincerely,

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## Academic and Personal Behaviors: Persistence and Self-Regulation

This guide provides sample activities developed at Soundview Academy for Culture and Scholarship to develop the key academic and personal behaviors of persistence and self-regulation in their middle-school students. Research on such academic behaviors (**Savitz-Romer and Bouffard 2012**) highlights the importance of creating opportunities for students to develop a confident belief that their efforts will lead to success in college and career, that they are “college material,” and that they can “fit” into a professional environment. These findings are buttressed by David Conley and his work on college readiness, which notes that a “lack of understanding of the context of college” and of options after high school, “causes many students to become alienated, frustrated, and even humiliated” (**Conley 2011**).

At Soundview, self-assessment tools for teachers to reflect with students on their thinking and behavior were developed with the intention of improving students' self-concept and sense of self-efficacy. This guide provides detailed information about how the school developed these tools and offers materials that can be used by others to do the same.

The NYC Department of Education has identified five key academic behaviors critical to college and career readiness: persistence, engagement, communication and collaboration, work habits and organization, and self-regulation. The activities in this guide are particularly focused on two of these behaviors: building **persistence** and **self-regulation** skills.

**This Guide focuses on two of the five NYC Department of Education Academic and Personal Behaviors**

<b>Persistence</b>
Engagement
Collaboration & Communication
Work Habits & Organization
<b>Self-Regulation</b>

According to NYCDOE: **Persistence** is needed to support long-term commitment to educational goals through a positive mindset and self-efficacy.

**Self-Regulation** is key to resiliency. Students must develop coping skills, self-control, and confidence to work through challenges.

**Persistence** is needed to support long-term commitment to educational goals through a positive mindset and self-efficacy. Savitz-Romer and Bouffard suggest that underrepresented youth who are not realizing their full potential may be acting based on a conviction that “people like me” are not able to succeed in college (**2012**). The tools shared in this guide were designed in part to help students identify such beliefs, which may lie behind a lack of self-efficacy in school. Identification of these mindsets enables students to reflect on their attitudes, while providing teachers with the necessary insight to begin a dialogue around self-concept. A recommended approach is to create opportunities for self-assessment (**Savitz-Romer and Bouffard 2012**). Soundview utilizes this strategy through its academic behaviors rubric, which both students and teachers use throughout the year to evaluate five key behaviors correlated with academic success.

**Self-regulation** is key to resiliency. Students must develop coping skills, self-control, and confidence to work through challenges. Soundview explicitly teaches self-regulatory skills in its advisory classes for sixth through eighth grade students. Students use the tools shared in this guide to reflect on personal development and confront challenges. One-to-one conferences in the advisory classes allow time for mentors to provide meaningful feedback to students regarding individual growth.

**Objectives of this Guide:**  
This guide offers resources to help students:

1. Develop **persistence** in education through a positive mindset and sense of self-efficacy
2. Strengthen the **self-regulation skills** needed for college success through self-assessment and feedback
3. **Track** individual growth through clear assessment tools and routines

## Academic and Personal Behaviors at Soundview Academy

### Supporting Structures and Culture

To make this work succeed at Soundview, three elements had to first be in place:

**1. Emphasis on psychosocial growth.** Soundview is committed to developing a student beyond his or her test scores. Teachers are expected to actively cultivate psychosocial growth in their students. From leadership to teaching staff, there is consistent emphasis on holistic support to students. This thinking helped inform the development of the Scholars Program at Soundview.

**2. Advisory class (The Scholars Program).** The Scholars



*see video*

Program meets for one class period three times per week at Soundview. This advisory time provides an ideal setting for introducing the academic behaviors/mindsets,

assessments, and reflection tools outlined in this guide. This class enables mentors to conference individually with scholars to provide meaningful feedback. Mentors also meet with scholars for ten minutes at the beginning and end of each school day.

**3. Academic Behaviors Pilot Team.** Soundview created a pilot team consisting of the school's guidance counselor and one teacher from each grade level. The pilot team spearheaded the work promoting academic behaviors while incorporating feedback from the full staff. This four-person team was essential for creating the tools, as well as experimenting with them to make adjustments and assess impact informed by their different perspectives. The team members were provided with time for regular meetings to review their work and learn from each other. They shared their work with the full staff in occasional professional development sessions throughout the year.

#### Introducing Soundview:

Soundview Academy for Culture and Scholarship, located in the South Bronx, is a middle school dedicated to students' personal and academic growth.

Soundview's goal is to provide a college-preparatory curriculum in the core content areas, while prioritizing intercultural awareness and expression through arts and languages. As part of its holistic support system for students, Soundview has developed the Scholars Program, in which groups of ten to fifteen students meet every day with a teacher-mentor committed to their socio-emotional and spiritual development.

Over the course of the 2012-13 school year, Soundview developed and piloted an academic behaviors rubric and academic mindset survey, both aimed at strengthening and tracking persistence and self-regulation in all students. Pilot teachers also integrated consistent goal-setting and individual conference time into the Scholars Program curriculum. This guide shares the steps Soundview took in designing, testing, refining, and ultimately putting into practice these tools and structures, with the idea that other schools can learn from the school change process.

While the tools used in this guide were introduced in the school's Scholars Program, this guide is not intended to share all aspects of that program. We do, however, recommend that, as at Soundview, adults using these tools with students:

1. Have a caseload of no more than 15 students.
2. Have at least 2 class periods per week to meet with students.
3. Have structures in place to see those students individually or in a group at least once every day.

## School data suggest that Soundview's Scholars program addresses students' needs.

During the 2012-2013 school year, Soundview administered Engage, an assessment recently developed by the American College Testing organization (ACT) to assess students' self-reported psychosocial attributes as indicators of college readiness. The assessment asks students to respond to questions regarding academic discipline, commitment to school, optimism, family attitude toward education, family involvement, relationship with school personnel, school safety climate, managing feelings, orderly conduct, and thinking before acting, and produces norm-referenced results for each indicator. The assessment also produces an index score—the Academic Success Index—which ACT has shown to be predictive of future success in high school. Findings from this assessment led Soundview to focus in particular on three indicators: orderly conduct, thinking before acting, and managing feelings. These indicators, as well as a set of skills identified by staff at Soundview, are reflected in the tools discussed here. Through some of the activities presented here, students reflect on behaviors such as participation and time-management, which promote orderly conduct. Others support thinking before acting and managing feelings by helping students develop and carry out plans and assess their own behavior, discussing with staff how to confront outside challenges.

## Developing Materials for the Academic and Personal Behaviors Pilot

**Selecting Life Skills to Promote**

Things to consider when prioritizing life skills:

- They are based on existing research.
- They are high-priority skills for your students to develop in the coming year.
- They are skills on which your students can make progress and receive meaningful feedback.
- They reinforce and enhance elements of the existing curriculum and your school's mission.

**Steps to Prepare Materials**

The following three steps were valuable to the school's initial preparation in August and September.

**Step 1: Use existing research for full staff to identify high-priority life skills.**

Soundview began with a 75-minute, full-staff discussion at the beginning of the school year. At this session, staff engaged in three activities.

**First, they read the research.** A facilitator shared research on academic behaviors and students' psychosocial development with the entire staff. Participants read excerpts from *Teaching Adolescents to Become Learners* by the University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research (Farrington et al 2012), and looked at skill lists from a variety of other scholarly sources.

**Second, they dissected it.** In small groups, school staff then used a modified Four "A"s Text Protocol (from the National School Reform Faculty) to dissect the research. Participants read the text, underlining and writing notes in the margin to answer the following four questions:

- What do you **agree** with in the text?
- What do you want to **argue** with in the text?
- What non-cognitive factors do you feel **align** well with the Scholars curriculum and your current work with students?
- What non-cognitive factors do you **aspire** to help students develop as high-priority skills at Soundview?

**Then, they chose a focus.** Staff engaged in a structured debate, in groups of four to five people, around their reactions to the particular college-ready skills the authors described. They voted on various academic behaviors proposed by the literature,

choosing five top focus skills within each group. The goal was to narrow the selection down to a shortlist of skills that met three criteria: skills that were high-priority for their students, were easy to use for meaningful feedback, and would reinforce the school's curriculum and mission. It was valuable for the teachers to both draw upon existing research and to create their own selections; this allowed them to focus on the unique behaviors and needs of their specific student population without having to start from scratch.

**Lastly, a pilot team was formed to continue the work.** Following this full-staff discussion, the pilot team reviewed the top vote-getters against the research and used this to define three focus areas:

- *Academic mindsets* focused on students' belief in their own efficacy as scholars
- *Academic behaviors* focused on students' skills to manage their own learning
- *Emotional literacy* focused on students' awareness of their place in their environment

The team recognized that each focus area would need to be assessed in a different way: academic behaviors through teacher assessment against a rubric, academic mindset through student self-reporting by survey, and emotional literacy through performance-based tasks.

This guide focuses on the development of assessment and conferencing tools for two of the three skill-groups: academic behaviors and mindsets. Alongside this work, Soundview teachers were also developing a curriculum to support students' emotional literacy skills, which was still in development at the time of publication.

**Summary of Socio-Emotional, Academic, and Life-Skills Competencies from the Research**

What categories might you want to use if you are providing students with feedback on critical skills and behaviors? Following are some of the categories suggested by the research:

**From the University of Chicago**

Farrington, C., et al. *Teaching Adolescents to Become Learners: The Role of Noncognitive Factors in Shaping Achool performance*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research, 2012.

- Academic behaviors (going to class, doing homework, organizing materials, participating, studying)
- Academic perseverance (tenacity, delayed gratification, self-discipline)
- Academic mindsets (belonging, self-esteem, growth, value for the work)
- Learning strategies (metacognitive strategies, goal-setting, study skills, self-regulated learning)
- Social skills (interpersonal skills, empathy, cooperation, assertion, responsibility)

**From the NYC Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Readiness**

Office of Postsecondary Readiness. *Developing the student mindsets that support higher standards: Academic and personal behaviors in the 2012–2013 citywide instructional expectations*. New York, NY: Department of Education, 2012.

- Persistence
- Engagement
- Organizational skills/work habits
- Communication/collaboration skills
- Self-regulation ▶

**From David Conley on College and Career Readiness**

Conley, D. *Redefining College Readiness, Volume 5*. Eugene, OR: Educational Policy Improvement Center, 2012.

- Metacognitive skills
- Research skills
- Study skills
- Communication
- Teamwork
- Interpersonal skills
- Problem-solving
- Intellectual openness

**From the Yale RULER Approach**

The RULER Group. *The RULER approach: Building emotionally literate schools*. New Haven, CT: Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, 2013.

- Recognizing emotions in oneself and others
- Understanding the causes and consequences of emotions
- Labeling the full range of emotions using a rich vocabulary
- Expressing emotions appropriately in different contexts
- Regulating emotions effectively to foster healthy relationships and achieve goals

**From the KIPP Character Report Card**

The Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP). KIPP Character Growth Card. New York, NY: Kipp 2012.

- Zest
- Grit
- Self-control (School, work, interpersonal)
- Optimism
- Gratitude
- Social intelligence
- Curiosity

**Step 2: Create a rubric by identifying a few clear indicators related to academic behaviors.**

Among the skills and behaviors staff identified, some were best gauged by teacher assessments using a rubric. These were *organizational skills, time management, academic preparedness, participation* and *goal-setting*. The group's next step was to define clear indicators that allow teachers to easily assess student growth. To arrive at these indicators, the team reviewed the research base of indicators for the given skills, then asked themselves what the described skill or behavior looked like day-to-day in class for their students. They then decided upon one or two indicators for each behavior. This was used to draft a rubric with an emphasis on using language that students could understand and use in conferencing with teachers and for self-assessment. The rubric features four levels of mastery for each of these four skills and behaviors: Needs Improvement, Developing, Proficient, and Well-Developed. It also includes space to write down action steps that the student can take to improve any areas that need work.

**What makes a good indicator?**

Just as with setting goals with students, indicators should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound).

**What is the ideal number of indicators per behavior?**

One or two indicators per behavior keeps the assessment process focused and manageable.

**A Rubric for Monitoring Progress on Scholars Skills**  
*Soundview Academy for Culture and Scholarship*

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

Mentor: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Academic Behaviors				
Scholars Skill	Well-Developed	Proficient	Developing	Needs Improvement
<b>Organizational Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student regularly uses a planner or other tool to record assignments and other class-related events.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student regularly uses a planner or other tool to record assignments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student sometimes uses a planner or other tool to record assignments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student rarely uses a planner or other tool to record assignments.</li> </ul>
<b>Time Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student plans and uses time efficiently and effectively.</li> <li>Student regularly hands in completed work on time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student plans and uses time well.</li> <li>Student regularly hands in completed work and provides a valid explanation for any delay.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student makes attempts to plan and use time well.</li> <li>Student sometimes hands in semi-completed work and/or sometimes misses deadlines.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student does not plan and use time well.</li> <li>Student rarely hands in completed work and/or often misses deadlines.</li> </ul>
<b>Academic Preparedness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student always comes to class on time. Attendance is near 100%.</li> <li>Student regularly comes prepared to class with notebooks, folders and other materials neatly organized.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student regularly comes to class on time. Attendance is over 90%.</li> <li>Student regularly comes prepared to class with notebooks, folders and other materials.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student is occasionally late to class. Attendance is over 80%.</li> <li>Student sometimes comes to class without notebooks, folders or other materials.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student is often absent or late to class.</li> <li>Student often comes to class without notebooks, folders or other materials.</li> </ul>
<b>Participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student is a leader in class activities or discussions and encourages others to participate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student regularly participates in class activities or discussions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student sometimes participates in class activities or discussions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student rarely participates in class activities or discussions, and/or is disruptive.</li> </ul>
<b>Goal-Setting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student sets goals that meet all SMART characteristics.</li> <li>Student uses reflection on progress towards goals to adjust strategies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student sets goals that meet several SMART characteristics.</li> <li>Student reflects on and effectively monitors progress towards goals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student sets goals, but goals may be non-specific or unrealistic.</li> <li>Student makes attempts at reflecting and monitoring progress towards goals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student does not set goals.</li> <li>Student has difficulty reflecting on or monitoring progress towards achieving goals.</li> </ul>
<b>Action Steps</b>				

**How many questions should a survey contain?** The team aimed to produce 20 questions: five for each of the four mindsets chosen. This was enough to give a meaningful assessment of a particular mindset that could be administered within one period.

#### Academic Mindsets

As defined in the University of Chicago study, academic mindsets are the “psycho-social attitudes or beliefs one has about oneself in relation to academic work” (Allensworth et al 2012: 9). Research shows that positive academic mindsets are correlated with increased academic perseverance, behaviors and performance. The four mindsets are:

1. *I belong in this academic community.*  
Academic performance is positively correlated with having a sense of belonging in a school or classroom.
2. *My ability and competence grow with my effort.*  
One’s belief in the ability to improve intelligence and academic success is a stronger predictor of school performance than test scores (also known as a “growth mindset”).
3. *I can succeed at this.*  
Students are more likely to persevere in school if they are confident in their academic abilities.
4. *This work has value for me.*  
Students value work if they see the task as important, enjoyable, or leading to an end goal.

### Step 3: Create a survey by identifying approximately twenty questions to assess the mindsets behind persistence and self-regulation.

The next focus skill-group, academic mindsets, drew upon research from the University of Chicago (Allensworth et al 2012) that highlights four mindsets as critical precursors to persistence—specifically, the belief that school has value, that effort matters, that success is possible, and the sense of belonging in an academic community. The research suggested student self-report to be the most efficient means of measuring these mindsets. In October, the pilot team reviewed questions from a range of established scales, including child development, student opinions on school, and strategies for learning, and settled on 23 questions that they felt aligned with the four mindsets while at the same time used language appropriate to the Soundview student population.

The survey (on page 13) contains 23 questions on a six-point Likert scale, and three opportunities for students to further explain a response. The responses are compiled to create an index score to accompany each of the four academic mindsets. The students complete the survey and compile the results themselves.

What questions might you ask if trying to use surveys to get feedback on students' academic and personal behaviors? Following are various examples of research-based questions that align to the NYCDOE academic and personal behaviors:

#### Persistence

1. When I make plans, I follow through with them (Wagnild and Young 1993).
2. When I fail in something, I am willing to try again and again forever (Lufi and Cohen 1987).
3. Sometimes I make myself do things whether I want to or not (Wagnild and Young 1993).
4. When I have trouble performing some skills, I go back and practice (Agbuga 2011).
5. I am good at resisting temptation (Tangney, Baumeister and Boone 2004).

#### Engagement

1. It is important for you to be honest with teachers (Narvaez 2008).
2. It is important to support those who are following the rules (Narvaez 2008).
3. It is important to be on time to school or appointments (Narvaez 2008).
4. I think I will be able to use what I learn in this class in other classes (Pintrich and deGroot 1990).
5. Understanding this subject is important to me (Pintrich and deGroot 1990).
6. The most satisfying thing for me in this course is trying to understand the content as thoroughly as possible (Cobb 2003).

#### Organizational Skills/Work Habits

1. Before I study new course material thoroughly, I often skim it to see how it is organized (Cobb 2003).
2. I make sure that I keep up with the readings and assignments for this course (Pintrich and deGroot 1990).
3. Before I begin studying, I think about the things I will need to do to learn (Pintrich and deGroot 1990).
4. I take good notes during class instruction (Cobb 2003).
5. I do a thorough job (John 1991).
6. I have a regular place set aside for studying (Pintrich and deGroot 1990).

#### Communication/Collaboration Skills

1. I can work with someone who has different opinions than mine (California DOE 2012).
2. I try to understand how other people feel and think (California DOE 2012).
3. If I don’t understand something, I will ask for an explanation (Springer and Phillips 1997).
4. Helping others makes me feel good (Springer and Phillips 1997).
5. It is more important to play fair than to win (Springer and Phillips 1997).

#### Self-regulation

1. I can control my thoughts from distracting me from the task at hand (Schwarzer 1999).
2. In a class like this, I prefer course material that arouses my curiosity, even if it is more difficult to learn (Cobb 2003).
3. I always concentrate on school subjects during class (Bandura 2006).
4. When I become confused about something I’m reading for this class, I go back to try to figure it out (Pintrich and deGroot 1990).
5. I’m confident I can do an excellent job on the assignments and tests in this course (Pintrich and deGroot 1990).

### Academic Mindset Survey

Soundview Academy for Culture and Scholarship

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

Mentor: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions:** For each statement below, circle the number that corresponds to how much you agree or disagree.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. My peers want me to succeed.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Even when I do poorly in class I try to learn from my mistakes.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. I'm certain I can understand the ideas taught in this course.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. It is important to me to learn what is being taught in this class.	1	2	3	4	5	6
If so, why? (Write your answer)						
5. In the last week, I have received recognition or praise for doing good schoolwork.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I can think of many ways to get good grades.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. I think I will receive a good grade in this class.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. I think that what I am learning in this class is useful for me to know.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. I think I make a positive contribution to the learning environment.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. I can do most things if I try.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. I know that I will be able to learn the material for this class.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. I am learning skills in this class that I will use in my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. The teachers in my class really care about me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. The more I try, the better I do.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. I know I can reach my potential in all my classes this year.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Survey continues on the next page 

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
16. I have a good idea why we're learning the topics that we're taught in this class.	1	2	3	4	5	6
If so, what are the topics and why are you learning them? (Write your answer)						
17. I think I'm a good student.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. I can always find a way to do better.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. I expect to do very well in this class.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. The work that I'm doing in this class will help prepare me for the future.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21. I am comfortable asking for extra help if I need it.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22. My school is committed to building the strengths of each student.	1	2	3	4	5	6
23. I enjoy what I learn in school.	1	2	3	4	5	6
If so, why? (Write your answer)						

**Your survey is complete! Thank you!**

#### Calculating your results

**Instructions:** Write the number you circled above in the response column next to the appropriate question number below. Then calculate the average of each response column by totaling the responses and dividing by the number of questions. Write it in the big box at the bottom. This is your score for each Academic Mindset.

Question #	Response	Question #	Response	Question #	Response	Question #	Response
1		2		3		4	
5		6		7		8	
9		10		11		12	
13		14		15		16	
17		18		19		20	
21							
22							
23							
Total:	/8	Total:	/5	Total:	/5	Total:	/5
I belong in an academic community		My ability grows with my effort		I know I can succeed at this		The work I'm doing has value to me	

**Step 4: Create a goal-setting template that will help drive conversation in one-to-one conferencing.**

As pilot teachers began to have individual conversations with students to provide feedback on their growth on mindsets and behaviors, it became apparent that students needed a way to record action steps from these conversations that would enable them to reflect on progress. Teachers developed a simple goal-setting template that encouraged students to identify strengths, as well as challenges and strategies for overcoming them. The template connects to both the Scholars Program curriculum unit on goal-setting and to the academic behaviors rubric.

The goal-setting template is divided into two sections. Students complete the first half of the template immediately prior to or during a conference. A month later, they complete the lower half, reflecting on the progress they have made so far. They then start a new sheet and set a new goal for the coming month. Students have the option, with the support of their mentor, to decide on an academic goal or a personal goal.

**Soundview Academy Scholars  
Goal-Setting Template**

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

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

**Strengths:** One thing I did well this month was \_\_\_\_\_

I think this is because \_\_\_\_\_

**Challenges:** One thing I found challenging this month is \_\_\_\_\_

I think this is because \_\_\_\_\_

<b>My Goal for _____ (month)</b> <i>Remember: a SMART goal is Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timebound.</i>	
My goal for next month is...	To reach my goal I will...
I chose this goal because...	My mentor can help me by...

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Complete this part at next month's check-in.

How are you doing on reaching your goal?	What <b>obstacles</b> did you face in working towards your goal?	What <b>strategies</b> did you use to help you reach your goal?
<input type="checkbox"/> Completed <input type="checkbox"/> Almost complete <input type="checkbox"/> Working on it <input type="checkbox"/> Just started <input type="checkbox"/> Not started yet		

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## Running the Academic and Personal Behaviors Pilot

### Steps for Piloting with Students

#### Step 1: Test, discuss and revise the rubric and survey. Norm grading.

Each pilot teacher first used the rubric in early October to assess one student he or she knew well. After this, the team discussed their reasons for making the assessment choices they did, and made slight revisions to the rubric. In order to gain familiarity with the survey questions and see what it would feel like to answer them, the pilot team members also took the academic mindsets survey, answering as their middle school selves. This led to interesting discussion and a chance to refine and revise.

#### Step 2: Explicitly introduce the skills to students.

When utilizing the rubric in Scholars classes for the first time, the pilot teachers began by introducing the vocabulary to the students to help them reflect on the skills. The teachers explained each of the five behaviors and led full-class discussions regarding the indicators for each.

**Organizational skills** are measured by use of a planner. Think about whether or not you regularly write down assignments and school events in a planner or other tool.

**Time management** is how well you handle your time and meet deadlines. Think about how efficiently and effectively you plan and use your time, as well as whether or not you regularly turn in your completed work by the deadline.

**Academic preparedness** is about attendance, preparedness, and organization. Think about your

#### The Rubric in Use: An Example from the Soundview Pilot

Damien Cabrera, seventh-grade Humanities teacher and mentor at Soundview, shared his experiences as a pilot teacher in using the rubric with students.

Damien saw one student greatly improve his organizational skills as a result of the academic behaviors rubric. This student was consistently disorganized and repeated seventh grade, yet gave himself a high score on “Organizational Skills” when Damien first introduced the rubric. During one-to-one conferencing, Damien discussed the discrepancy between this student’s self-assessment and the score that Damien gave the student. Damien used evidence from classroom behavior to help the student understand what strong organizational skills looks like and how he could improve. By the end of the school year, the student showed dramatic improvement in organizational skills. He also more accurately assessed his own skills using the rubric.

### Tips for Using the Academic Mindset Survey

The mindsets are complex concepts. At Soundview, teachers have begun work on a full-period class to introduce the mindsets and provide time for discussion and questions

1. When administering the survey, first provide context and facilitate group discussion. Explore what the mindsets mean and help students make the connection between the academic mindsets and academic performance.
2. Emphasize that the survey is not an evaluation, responding honestly is very important, and that responses are not graded. There are no right answers.
3. Cultivate a growth mindset by emphasizing that these behaviors and mindsets are not fixed and that they can change.

attendance and if you come to class on time. Then, consider how prepared you are for classes every day — do you bring a pencil and paper with you? Do you come to school with folders and notebooks neatly organized?

**Participation** is how much you speak and lead in the classroom. Do you take charge of in-class activities? Do you ask questions, contribute to class discussions, and encourage others to do so as well?

**Goal-setting** refers to your strategy for goal-setting and reflection. For this, consider whether or not you set SMART goals. Do you reflect on these goals to check your progress and adjust your strategies?

### Step 3: Compare and discuss teacher assessment with self-assessment.

The pilot teachers began to implement the rubric with all students in their Scholars Program classes in late October, combining teacher assessment with student self-assessment. Soundview suggests using the rubric at the end of each marking period to consistently track student progress throughout the school year.

### Step 4: Explicitly introduce mindsets and complete survey.



see video

In early November, pilot teachers administered the survey with their Scholars Program classes. Students were instructed to complete the survey individually, assessing their own academic mindsets. After completing the survey, students calculated their results using the instructions at the bottom of the survey. Teachers then led a full-class discussion around what the results meant and how they connected to academic

performance. Soundview suggests administering the survey two to three times per year—roughly in October, January, and late April.

### Step 5: Use one-on-one conferencing to reflect and set monthly goals.



see video

In November, pilot teachers began conferencing with students individually to reflect on results from the survey and rubric. Individual conferencing allows time for teachers to open a discussion of students' behaviors and mindsets, especially focusing on cases where a student self-assessment differs from teacher perception or where both agree an area is scored low. Teachers should focus on identifying one or two strengths for each student and one concrete action that each student can take to improve. Students may respond sensitively to these socio-emotional topics, particularly when topics connect back to home situations. If a student has scored low on one or more mindset, teachers try to have an honest conversation in which they seek to offer a concrete example where they have seen the student do well. It is best for teachers to come prepared with such examples ready.

At Soundview, each conference lasts about ten minutes. The staff found that dedicating one class period per week to one-to-one conferencing enabled them to meet with each student about once every four weeks. While teachers are conferencing individually with students, the rest of the class can be working individually or in small groups on a reading assignment, a writing prompt, or watching a video and recording thoughts in preparation for another day's discussion.

### A Protocol for One-to-One Conferencing

1. Review student grades, reflect on strengths and areas for improvement.
2. Review academic behaviors rubric or academic mindset Survey results, reflect on strengths and areas for growth.
3. Set personal goals, reflect on progress, and collect strategies for overcoming obstacles.
4. Be responsive to students' needs: discuss socio-emotional topics that students bring up as needed.
5. Record the takeaways from the conference using the goal-setting template.

### Affirmation in Conferencing: An Example from the Soundview Pilot

Damien Cabrera, seventh-grade Humanities teacher and mentor at Soundview, shared his experiences as a pilot teacher talking about academic mindsets with students. Damien uses post-survey individual conferences to ask certain students why they do not believe they can do well in school. He ends the conferences saying "You don't believe you can do well but I believe that you can because you've proven it with (insert positive example) you've done in (insert class and marking period)." After Damien reaffirms his belief in the students' success, the students often display a greater confidence in their own academic abilities.

**Tips for Using the Goal-Setting Template in One-to-One Conferencing**

1. Re-visit previous goals. At the bottom of each worksheet, there is a section to reflect on progress toward the goal. To ensure continuity from month to month, carve out time during the conference to complete this section for the previous month's worksheet thoroughly, in addition to discussing the new worksheet for the month.
2. Push scholars to explain the "why." During conferencing, ask scholars why they selected a given goal. This will help you understand their reasoning, and can prompt revision if students realize their goal is not linked to their biggest needs.
3. Help scholars link goals in data. You can bring ARIS or grade data into conversation to help students think about reasons for or revisions to their goals. Referring to specific grades or absences can help students hone in on areas for growth, and understand the connection between grades and goals.
4. Remind students that they can set academic or socio-emotional goals. When reviewing goals, remind students that their goals can be academic OR socio-emotional in nature (i.e, a goal need not be "Bring up my grade in science to an 80%." It could be "Speak up for myself when I need help").

**Step 6: Record and share progress to date.**

In January, the pilot team entered scores to date for each individual mindset or behavior into a simple spreadsheet from their first round of use of the rubric and survey. Mentors also added comments and next steps. Then, a simple Scholars Program progress report was generated to share the data with students and parents during student-led conferences. This progress report contains two sections. The first provides a space for mentors to rate the student on each of the five academic behaviors as Well-Developed, Proficient, Developing, or Needs Improvement and to write comments. In the second section, the student responds to statements related to academic mindsets such as confidence in one's abilities and belonging. The pilot team used one-to-one conferencing time to review the progress report with each student, encouraging them to draw connections between their behaviors/mindsets and their academic progress. Students then shared their academic standing with their parents in student-led conferences, using the Scholars Program progress report as evidence regarding why they succeeded or needed improvement in certain classes.

**Step 7: Repeat steps three through six, checking progress.**

Teachers encouraged students to set goals for the future regarding academic behaviors and then reflect on their progress at each monthly conference. When not conferencing on survey or rubric results, mentors used conference time to work through goal-setting templates with students.

**Academic Behaviors and Mindsets**

Soundview Academy for Culture and Scholarship

Academic Behaviors and Mindsets, while not measured by standard test scores, have a direct positive relationship to students' school performance and future academic outcomes. Students with strong Academic Behaviors and Mindsets are more likely to succeed in school, college and beyond.

Scholar: **Sample Student**

Mentor: **Gribbins**

Academic Behaviors		Rating: [Well-developed, Proficient, Developing, Needs Improvement]
<b>Organizational Skills:</b> Student uses a planner or other tools to record class-related assignments and events.		Proficient
<b>Time Management:</b> Student plans and uses time efficiently and effectively. He/she turns in work on time.		Proficient
<b>Academic Preparedness:</b> Student comes to class on time, has near 100% attendance, and regularly comes prepared with neatly organized materials.		Well-Developed
<b>Participation:</b> Student is a leader in class activities and discussions, and encourages others to participate.		Needs Improvement
<b>Goal-Setting:</b> Student sets "SMART" goals and uses reflection to adjust strategies. [SMART= Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound]		Proficient
<b>Comments:</b>		

Academic Mindsets		Rating: [6.0=Strongly Agree]
<b>I belong in this academic community.</b> I feel comfortable at school and as a learner.		3.8 = Slightly Agree
<b>My ability grows with effort.</b> The harder I work at something, the better I get at it.		5.2 = Agree
<b>I can succeed at this.</b> I am confident in my own abilities.		4.6 = Agree
<b>This work has value for me.</b> The things I am learning are interesting and worthwhile.		4.6 = Agree
<b>Comments:</b>		

5. Push scholars to think about mentor engagement. When reviewing goals, emphasize that mentors can and should play a role in supporting scholars to achieve their goals. Ask scholars to think about the support they need from you.
6. Take note of personal connections. Mentors who piloted the goal-setting worksheet said it helped them learn about students' lives outside of school. They found that understanding more about students' lives allowed them to support students in setting realistic and targeted goals.

### Step 8: Collect and share lessons learned with other teachers.

Soundview shared their work with full staff in April of 2013, in the form of a presentation followed by a panel discussion and Q&A. Pilot teachers sat on the panel and shared their experiences developing and giving feedback to students on academic behaviors and mindsets. Staff provided feedback on the rubric and survey.

#### Next Steps: Expand to full staff.



see video

At print, Soundview was working to incorporate lessons from the pilot year so that the tools described here can be expanded school-wide. The pilot teacher team was in the process of deepening their curriculum to better reinforce the mindsets and behaviors, along with the socio-emotional literacy skills that complement them.

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