

Abstract

Through the Perseverance Process Project, Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) will partner with Search Institute to build the capacity of teachers to strengthen students' non-cognitive skills through their instructional practice and the relationships they build with and among students. This project seeks to strengthen non-cognitive skills through changes in ongoing teacher practice, rather than through the adoption of new standalone programs or curricula. The Perseverance Process builds the capacity of teachers to address five factors that have been shown to influence student perseverance: (1) future-oriented thinking and action, (2) deep interests or *sparks*, (3) growth mindset, (4) mental toughness, and (5) developmental relationships.

Over the course of two school years, the project would build the capacity of 45 teachers in three Saint Paul middle schools to address those factors. The resulting changes in instructional practice and teacher-student relationships will positively influence the more than 2,000 students who are enrolled in those teachers' classes. Approximately 75% of those students will be low-income students of color. The project will use improvement science to validate and enhance a set of practical tools and approaches for strengthening perseverance and other non-cognitive skills.

The evaluation of this project will assess the intervention effect by drawing within-school and within-grade comparisons of students on four measures: self-reported motivation and persistence, GPA, course failure, and disciplinary infractions. Subgroups of students in each grade whose teachers participate in the intervention will serve as the experimental group, while students whose teachers do not participate will serve as the comparison group. Through analysis of the class assignments of students organized by teacher, a dosage variable will be created for each student for Fall and Spring semesters, thereby allowing for tests of an intervention and a dosage effect. Propensity score matching will be used to minimize bias.