

# Building Persistence & Maintaining Motivation

Catherine McCall

[catherine@literacyforall.org](mailto:catherine@literacyforall.org)

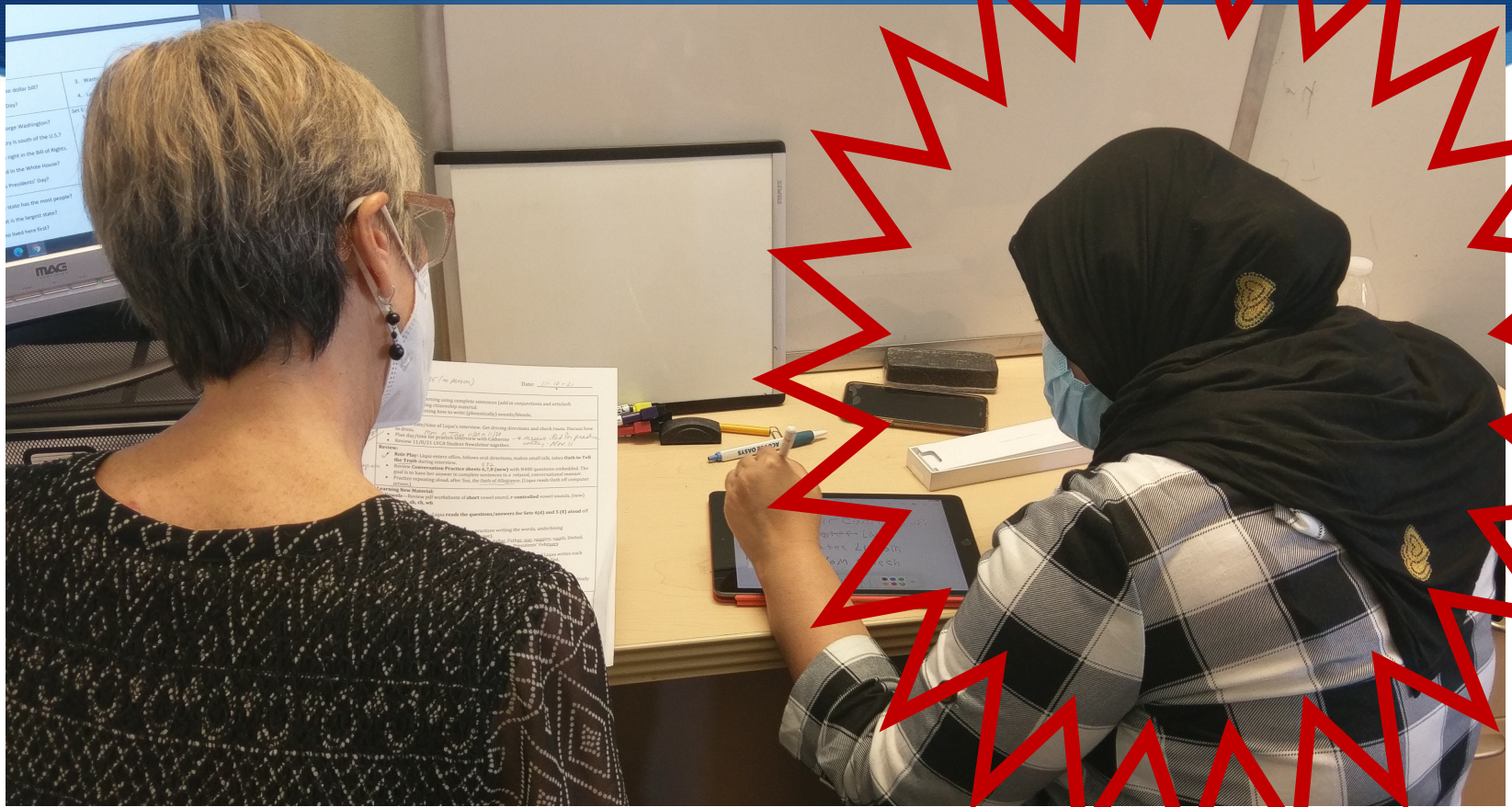
Literacy Volunteers of Charlottesville/Albemarle

January 16, 2024



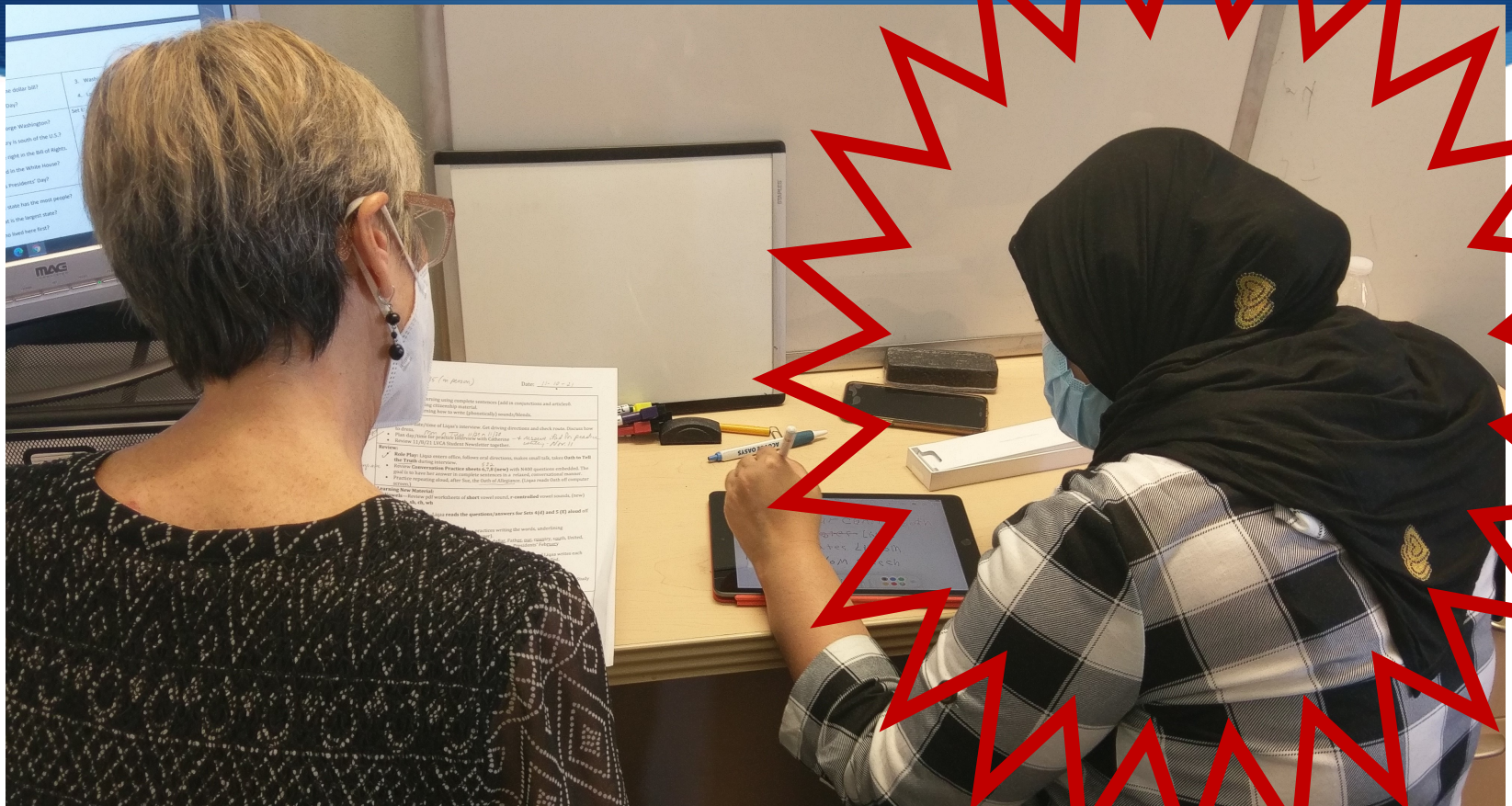
# Questions we will explore

- ❖ What does research tell us about persistence and motivation in adult learners?
- ❖ How do those research findings mesh with our experiences working with adult learners?
- ❖ What strategies enable us to build persistence in our students and help them maintain motivation to tackle the incredibly challenging work of learning English?



**Motivation**: the desire to do something





**Motivation**: the desire to do something

**Persistence**: continued effort to do it,  
in spite of difficulty



# What does research tell us about **persistence and motivation** in adult learners?

- ProLiteracy Research Brief, Webinar & Adult Student Persistence courses – Findings from NCSALL  
(Nat't Center for the Study of Adult Learning & Literacy)
- Making it Worth the Stay: Findings from NEALPP  
(New England Adult Learner Persistence Project)
- Nat'l Academies of Sciences Adult Literacy Book  
Chapter: Motivation, Engagement & Persistence
- Psychology Today

Disproportionately  
Adult Basic  
Education  
Students

**Key Supports:**

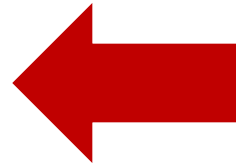
1. Managing positive and negative forces
2. Establishing goals
3. Building self-efficacy
4. Seeing progress toward reaching those goals

**Affective Needs:**

1. Agency
2. Sense of belonging and community
3. Stability
4. Clarity of purpose
5. Relevance
6. Competence

## Key Supports:

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# Managing positive and negative forces



Life Circumstances

Family/friend support

Self-determination

Teacher & students

Goals

Life Demands

Lack of F/F support

Poor Self-determination

# Managing positive and negative forces



Life Circumstances

Family/friend support

Self-determination

Teacher & students

Goals

Life Demands

Lack of F/F support

Poor Self-determination

Which positive and negative forces appear to be most relevant to your student's motivation and persistence?

# Managing positive and negative forces



Life Circumstances

Family/friend support

Self-determination

Teacher & students

Goals

Life Demands

Lack of F/F support

Poor Self-determination



# NCSALL

Managing positive  
and negative forces



Self-determination

Teacher & students

Goals

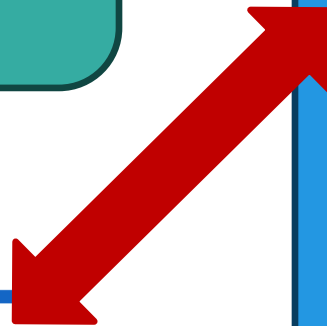
Managing positive  
and negative forces



**Self-determination**

Teacher & students

Goals



## Affective Needs:

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4. Clarity of purpose
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## Self-determination

In the NEALPP study, **instructional changes showed the greatest effect on persistence.**

Instructional changes included:

- ✓ Providing learning options
- ✓ Providing opportunities for students to be included in decision-making
- ✓ Engaging students in dialogue about their own learning



# NCSALL

Managing positive  
and negative forces



Self-determination

Teacher & students

Goals

Managing positive  
and negative forces

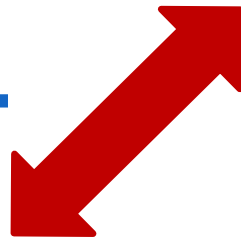


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Self-determination

Teacher & students

Goals



## Affective Needs:

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4. Clarity of purpose
5. Relevance
6. Competence



## Teacher & students

What do you do / what can you do to help ensure that your student's experience with tutoring helps meet their affective need for a sense of:

- belonging and community?
- stability?



# NCSALL

Managing positive  
and negative forces



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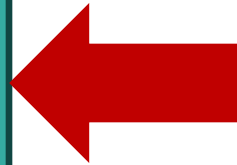
Self-determination

Teacher & students

Goals

## Key Supports:

1. Managing positive and negative forces
2. Establishing goals
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## Establishing Goals

Adults who were able to clearly identify their specific learning goals were more likely to persist and to persist longer.

# Longer Term Goals



**PVCC**  
PIEDMONT VIRGINIA  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
*Opportunity. Access. Excellence.*



## Shorter Term Goals

- Applying for a library card
- Attending a parent-teacher conference
- Making an appointment over the phone
- Asking for directions
- Reading to a child or helping with homework
- Improve English at work
- Learning 10 new vocabulary words



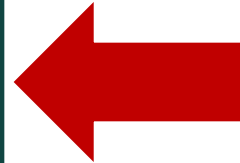
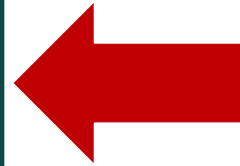
## Key Supports:

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# Establishing Goals

...which our student believes they can achieve

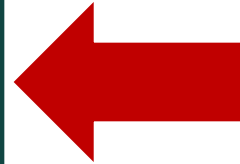
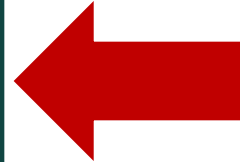
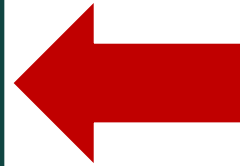
## Key Supports:

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# Establishing Goals

...which our student believes they can achieve & which they will be able to readily see progress toward

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## Affective Needs:

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4. Clarity of purpose
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# Establishing Goals

...which our student believes they can achieve & which they will be able to readily see progress toward & which will meet their affective needs for clarity of purpose and relevance

🟢 **S**pecific

🟢 **U**seful

🟢 **M**easurable



# Establishing Goals

...which our student believes they can achieve & which they will be able to readily see progress toward & which will meet their affective needs for clarity of purpose and relevance

 **Specific**

 **Useful**

 **Measurable**

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🟢 **Specific**

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🟢 **Measurable**

# Establishing Goals

...which our student believes they can achieve & which they will be able to readily see progress toward & which will meet their affective needs for clarity of purpose and relevance

🟢 **Specific**

🟢 **Useful**

🟢 **Measurable**

# Establishing Goals

- ★ Break goals down into smaller, more readily achievable incremental goals

*“Opportunities to achieve short-term goals are especially motivating in complex domains such as reading and writing, in which substantial time and effort are required and reaching long-term goals can take months or even years.”*

*- Improving Adult Literacy Instruction:  
Options for Practice & Research*

# Establishing Goals

- ★ Break goals down into smaller, more readily achievable incremental goals

Improve  
English at  
work



- Understanding work hours orally
- Reading work schedule
- Greeting customers
- Taking messages
- Telling my boss I need to miss work
  - Because I am sick
  - Because I have an appointment



Self-determination

# Establishing Goals

★ Break goals down into smaller, more readily achievable incremental goals

Get a  
Driver's  
License

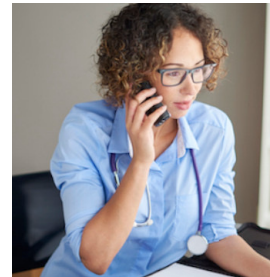
Become a  
Citizen

Read to  
Child

Improve  
English at  
work

Make  
Appt by  
Phone

Apply for  
Library  
Card



JEFFERSON-MADISON REGIONAL LIBRARY LIBRARY CARD APPLICATION		
<small>Applicant must present picture identification with name and current address. If address is not in Charlottesville, Albemarle, Louisa, Greene, or Nelson there is an annual out-of-area fee of \$30.00. Please print all information clearly.</small>		
City or County of Residence	Birth Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Sex (Optional) M <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/>
Last Name	First Name	Middle Initial
Mailing Address	Apt. #	
City, State	Zip Code	
E-mail Address	Telephone	
Residential or permanent address, if different from above. Required if a PO Box is listed above.		
Street	Apt. #	
City, State	Zip Code	
The following individuals have full access to the account:		
Full Name		
Full Name		



# Establishing Goals

★ Break goals down into smaller, more readily achievable incremental goals

1. Pick a goal
2. Break it down into possible smaller step-stone goals

Get a  
Driver's  
License

Become a  
Citizen

Read to  
Child

Improve  
English at  
work

Make  
Appt by  
Phone

Apply for  
Library  
Card



JEFFERSON-MADISON REGIONAL LIBRARY LIBRARY CARD APPLICATION		
<small>Applicant must present picture identification with name and current address. If address is not in Charlottesville, Albemarle, Louisa, Greene, or Nelson there is an annual out-of-area fee of \$30.00. Please print all information clearly.</small>		
City or County of Residence	Birth Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Sex (Optional) M <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/>
Last Name	First Name	Middle Initial
Mailing Address	Apt. #	
City, State	Zip Code	
E-mail Address	Telephone	
Residential or permanent address, if different from above. Required if a PO Box is listed above.		
Street	Apt. #	
City, State	Zip Code	
The following individuals have full access to the account:		
Full Name		
Full Name		

# Establishing Goals

- Create & talk with your student about goals for short intervals, such as this week, this month, this season



- Try to focus on developing learning or mastery goals which enable your student to monitor improvement instead of only results

# Establishing Goals

If possible, engage your student in one or more of the following:

- Prioritizing their goals
- Identifying benefits and barriers to reaching their goals
- Creating a plan with steps to work toward their goals



# Establishing Goals

🟢 **S**pecific

🟢 **U**seful

🟢 **M**easurable



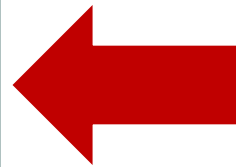
- Break goals down into smaller incremental goals
- Create goals for short intervals
- Try to focus on developing learning or mastery goals



# NCSALL

## Key Supports:

1. Managing positive and negative forces
2. Establishing goals
3. Building self-efficacy
4. Seeing progress toward reaching those goals



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## Building Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is the belief that you can accomplish a particular task

It impacts:

- Willingness to try a task
- Willingness to put in increased effort
- Likelihood of giving up when you encounter difficulty

# Strategies for Building Self-Efficacy

1. Mastery Experiences

2. Vicarious Experiences

3. Positive Support



# Strategies for Building Self-Efficacy

## 1. Mastery Experiences: Early opportunities for and tangible evidence of success

Provide tasks students can do, provide scaffolding as needed to ensure success

Provide specific feedback & opportunities to try again with increased success and/or ease

Gradually increase task difficulty



## Strategies for Building Self-Efficacy

### 1. Mastery Experiences:

Early opportunities for and tangible evidence of success

### Generating Momentum

- Do 2 or 3 quick tasks that are less demanding before attempting the more difficult task
- Help your student use this strategy on their own when they are working on English independently

# Strategies for Building Self-Efficacy

2. **Vicarious Experiences**: help students picture success by seeing & learning about the success of other students, particularly those who may be social models



**My Time in the United States**  
by Juan Valle

I came to the United States from El Salvador in 2008. I was seventeen. I went to Los Angeles to live with my mother. I did not like California. It had too many cars, houses, buildings and people. I like trees and grass.


After 8 months, I moved to Texas and lived with my aunt. I cleaned machines after work hours for a chicken processing company.

After 6 months, I moved to Virginia to be with my wife Ana. Our son Carlos Daniel was born in 2011. We call him Dani.

In Virginia I worked for my uncle in construction. I moved building trash into the dumpster. I was very tired at the end of the day. I told everyone I was a mechanic. The other workers brought me cars to fix. I worked in construction for 3 or 4 years. Then I became a full-time mechanic. I worked for myself.

Our daughter Nathaly was born in 2018.

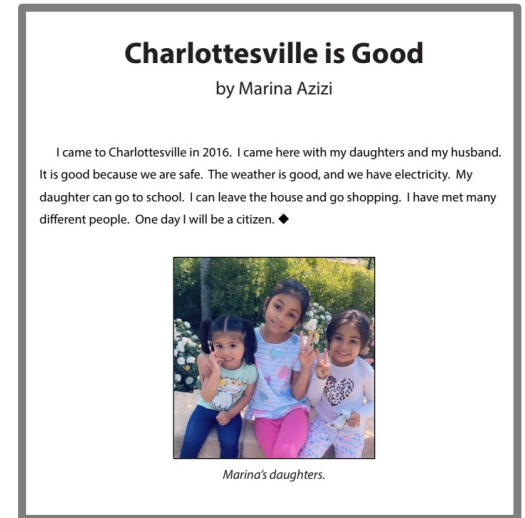
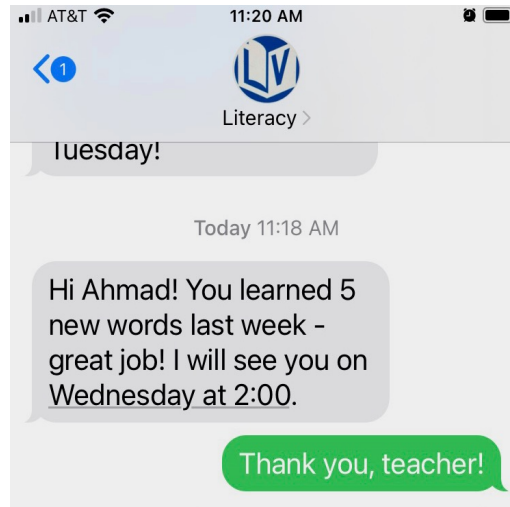
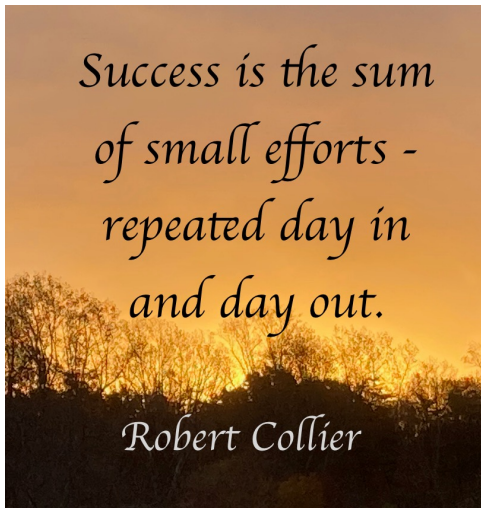
I wanted to learn English for my work and to speak with other people in stores in English. I wanted to be able to understand the teachers at my son's school. A friend told me about a program at Jefferson School. It was called Literacy Volunteers. ♦





# Strategies for Building Self-Efficacy

## 3. Positive Support:



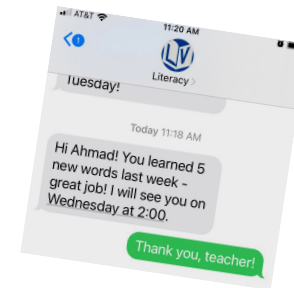
Share  
inspirational  
messages

Text  
encouragement

Let them see  
their success

# Building Self-Efficacy

1. Mastery Experiences
2. Vicarious Experiences
3. Positive Support



Setting,  
monitoring  
& meeting  
goals

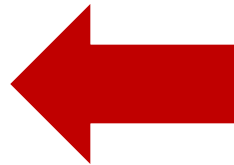
Self-  
efficacy



# NCSALL

## Key Supports:

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## Key Supports:

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## Affective needs:

1. Agency
2. Sense of belonging and community
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5. Relevance
6. Competence



## Seeing progress toward reaching goals

1. Actively monitoring progress
2. Receiving effective feedback
3. Attributing success to effort

# Seeing progress toward reaching goals

## 1. Actively monitoring their own progress



Self-determination

MONTH \_\_\_\_\_ YEAR \_\_\_\_\_

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY

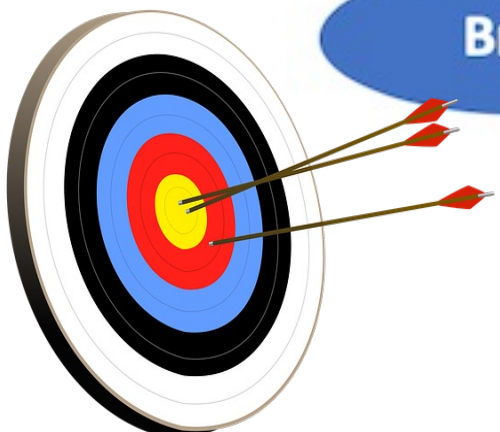
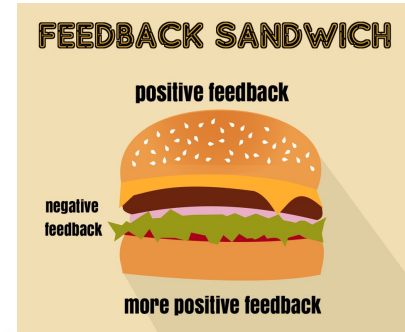
Book Title and Number of Pages	Date	Stars	Write comments or interesting quotes you found. Then write why you chose them.



K	W	L

# Seeing progress toward reaching goals

## 2. Receiving Effective Feedback



“  
Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new.  
Albert Einstein

Seeing progress toward  
reaching goals

### 3. Attributing success to effort



*“A learner who experiences success at a task will be more likely to persist if progress is attributed to something internal and controllable.”*

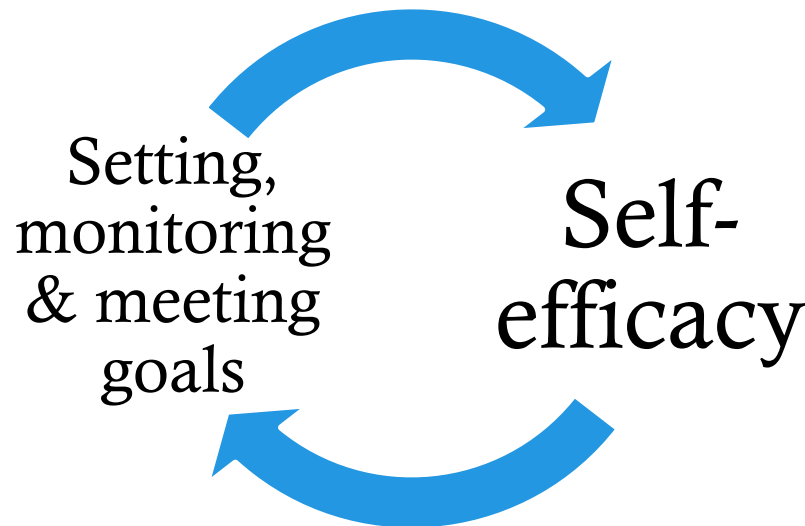
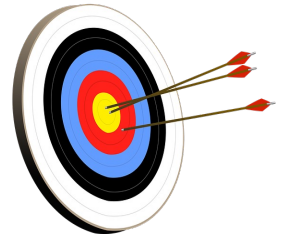
*- Improving Adult Literacy Instruction*



# Seeing progress toward reaching goals



1. Actively monitoring progress
2. Receiving effective feedback
3. Attributing success to effort







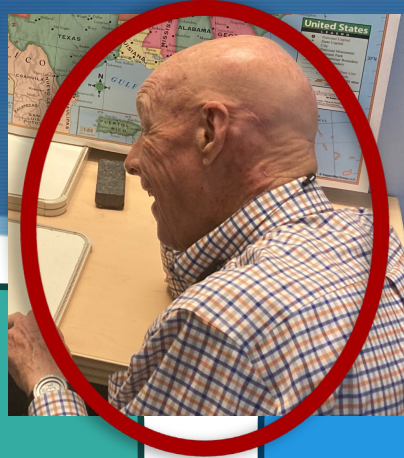
**Benefits**

**Costs**



**Motivation**: the desire to do something

**Persistence**: continued effort to do it,  
in spite of difficulty



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## Affective Needs:

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5. Relevance
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What can I try with my student this week to help them build persistence?



# Sources

- **ProLiteracy Research Brief, Nov 2020 - Perspectives on Persistence: A Review of the Research**  
[https://www.proliteracy.org/Portals/0/pdf/Research/Briefs/ProLiteracy-Research-Brief-05\\_Persistence-2020-11.pdf](https://www.proliteracy.org/Portals/0/pdf/Research/Briefs/ProLiteracy-Research-Brief-05_Persistence-2020-11.pdf) & accompanying webinar: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=40-26u0LTU>
- **ProLiteracy Research Brief, January 2022 - Motivation and Adult Learners**  
<https://www.proliteracy.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/2022-01-PRG-ResearchBrief2-Motivation-1694.pdf>
- **Making it Worth the Stay: Findings from the New England Adult Learner Persistence Project**  
<https://nelrc.org/persist/pdfs/Making%20it%20worth%20the%20stay.pdf>
- **ProLiteracy Courses:**
  - Adult Student Persistence: An Overview
  - Adult Student Persistence: Retention Through Demonstrated Success[https://proliteracy.csod.com/catalog/CustomPage.aspx?id=221002014&tab\\_page\\_id=221002014&tab\\_id=221002018](https://proliteracy.csod.com/catalog/CustomPage.aspx?id=221002014&tab_page_id=221002014&tab_id=221002018)
- **Improving Adult Literacy Instruction: Options for Practice & Research. Chapter 5: Motivation, Engagement, and Persistence**  
<https://nap.nationalacademies.org/read/13242/chapter/7#132>
- **Psychology Today**, various articles
  - <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-athletes-way/202107/the-neuroscience-motivation-and-persistence>
  - <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/motivation>
  - <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/fostering-freedom/201910/how-generate-momentum>

# Follow Up

- ◆ I will email you a summary sheet, the slides, the link to the video recording and a link for the workshop evaluation.
- ◆ If you want to get a jump start on the evaluation:



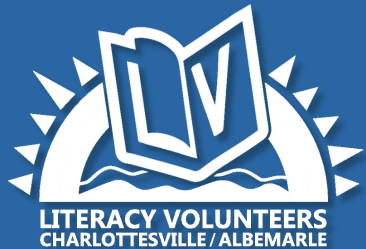
# Community Partner Presentation: UVA Health Sciences Library



Claude Moore  
Health Sciences Library

Kimberley R. Barker, MLIS

Librarian for Belonging & Community Engagement  
krb3k@virginia.edu



Literacy Volunteers Tutor Workshop  
Thursday, February 22, 2024





