

Rationale

Why is aspiration significant? Why should we foster and develop it at this age?

When it comes to educational attainment and career planning, secondary school students can receive guidance in planning their future pathways. However, if by this time students have low levels of aspiration to pursue their chosen pathway, they are less likely to achieve it. Research shows that between the ages of 9-13 children begin to eliminate potential career and education opportunities based upon a number of factors.

These factors include:

- Availability of transition support and assistance
- Socio-economic status
- Parental and family views regarding education
- Knowledge of career opportunities
- Schooling experiences and entertainment
- Peer influences regarding education
- Community attitude regarding education
- Personal views regarding the value and benefits of education

Therefore, we recognise the importance of intervening at this age through our Dream Seeds program of nurturing and developing students' sense of aspiration.

Definition

What is aspiration? How to explain aspiration to your students.

Aspiration involves having a will to succeed and a desire to achieve. It involves having hopes and dreams for the future and striving to be your best self.

Some people think of aspiration as 'reaching for the stars' or 'dreaming big'. Aspiration is a vision for what we want to achieve in the future. Whether students dream to be a certain occupation or aspire to possess a certain quality such as being a good listener, it is important for them to have aspirations for their future development.

Integrating aspiration into your classroom

Aspiration is closely linked to goal setting and dreaming. When planning on integrating aspiration into your classroom, think about the ways you can encourage students to think about their goals, the plans they may need to achieve these goals and the importance of celebrating the achievement of goals.

1. Dialogue: promoting resilient thinking and language.

- Growth mindset dialogue – “yet” is a powerful word-tool for students to use. By promoting a growth mindset, the likelihood of students eliminating opportunities for themselves can be reduced.
- Conversations that address the following questions. Understanding the answers to these questions can provide students with guidance with their aspirations.
 - What are you good at?
 - What are your interests?
 - What do you value?
- Individual discussions with students surrounding goals.
 - Students can set learning goals, but also interest-based goals external to school. Any form of goal can be an opportunity to discuss aspiration with students. If a student has a goal with their gymnastics club for an upcoming competition, use this as an opportunity to talk about what they are doing to achieve their goals, check in with their progress and celebrate their success with them.

2. Creating a culture of aspiration: making aspiration a known value of within your classroom.

- Grit - “the combination of perseverance and passion in achieving a goal.”
 - Grit is a powerful tool that can help build greater aspiration in students. Encourage your students to be “gritty” with their goals! Watch [Angela Lee Duckworth’s TED Talk about grit here.](#)
- Support network – who is in your circle?
 - It is important for students to be aware of their support networks. One good way for them to discover this is to draw a circle and write/draw all the important people in their life in that circle. Explaining to students that having these people in their lives are helpful in achieving their dreams and goals as they can support you in doing so.

- Resilience diary
 - Provide students with a resilience diary, the purpose of this diary is explained in the Resilience Teacher Resource. A diary is an effective way to communicate privately with students and can also be used to build aspiration. Provide students with aspiration-based prompts such as “I want to be...” or “In the future, I see myself...” and respond to students in the diary to help build aspiration.
- Goal setting and recognition
 - Incorporate goal setting tasks into your classroom. These can be individual, and class based. Monitor the achievement of goals and celebrate successful achievement of goals in the classroom.
- Past student talks
 - Where possible invite past students who are now in secondary school to give a talk to your students (this can be done via video). Get students to reflect upon the talk, what did they learn?
- Guest speakers from local community
 - Where possible invite members of the community from different areas to give a talk to your students about their journey and aspirations (this can be done via video). Get students to reflect upon the talk, what did they learn? What can they take away to help them achieve their aspirations?

3. Curriculum opportunities: areas within the curriculum that aspiration can be linked to plan intentional lessons.

- Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)
- Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)
 - *Self-awareness and management* – understanding personal strengths and emotions to develop resilience, build confidence and adaptability to develop resilience
 - *Social awareness and management* – understanding others’ strengths and emotions to form connections with others
 - *Relationship skills* – creating a support network that creates an aspiration-based community around each individual

For further content descriptors visit the [Victoria Curriculum website](#).

4. Maintaining the conversation: making conversations about aspiration a normal part of your classroom.

- Get each student to create their own goals. You can use our goal setting resource here [insert hyperlink].
- Create a visible goal or dream space in the classroom, encourage students to reflect on it weekly (or another achievable time frame).

5. Teach by example: role modelling aspiration for your students

- Share your story about your aspirations. How did you become a teacher? Was it your dream? How did you get there? What did you have to do to achieve it? Have you achieved other dreams? What were they? How?
- Contribute to the class Dream Tree and have your own Dream Leaf *insert link to Dream Tree activity*

Set goals with students – demonstrate goal setting with your students and set your own goals. Share your progress and achievement.

Prepared by Annika Miesen, July 2020