



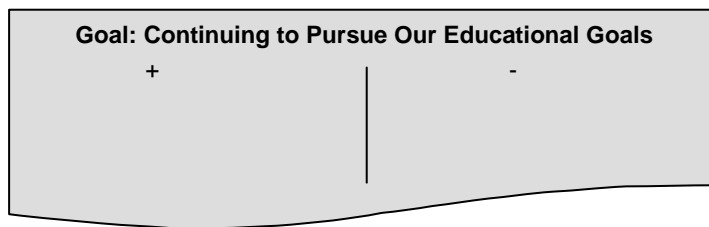
Brainstorming and Prioritizing

This activity is helpful in guiding a group to think about the forces that hinder and help them to achieve a goal.

(Note: To adapt for use with an individual, skip Steps 7-12.)

Step 1: Ask the group to think about the goal of continuing to pursue their educational goals.

Step 2: Write the goal on the top of a sheet of newsprint. Then, draw a vertical line down the middle of the newsprint, with a + (positive sign) over the left-hand column and a – (negative sign) over the right hand column, as shown below:



Step 3: Ask students to first brainstorm all the things that make it hard for them to continue to pursue their educational goals. Write them on the right side of the newsprint. Use the question: *Who or what gets in the way of continuing to come to these classes?*

Step 4: Then ask students to brainstorm all the things that help them to attend class or to continue to pursue their education goals. Use the question: *Who or what helps or supports you to continue to stay in these classes?* Write these responses on the left side of the newsprint.

Step 5: Ask the students to look at the newsprint and talk about what they see. For example, *are there more negative than positive forces? Where do the forces come from (e.g., from the class, from your life, etc.)?*

- Step 6:** Give each student an index card or a blank piece of paper. Ask each student to write down the answer to this question: *What two forces from the list do you most want us to work on in class?* Point out that they can take their forces from the positive force list (forces they would want to work on strengthening/increasing), from the negative force list (forces they would want to work on weakening/decreasing), or from a combination of the two.
- Step 7:** Ask students to get into pairs and discuss their two forces, coming to agreement about the two forces they feel are most important to work on in class. One person in each pair should write their new list of two forces on another piece of paper or card.
- Step 8:** Have two pairs join to form a group of four. Have each pair share its list of two items with the other pair. The group of four now has several minutes to come up with a new list of two forces upon which all four can agree. Ask a volunteer to write their new list of two forces, representing their “consensus,” on a piece of newsprint to hang in front of the class.
- Step 9:** Then ask a member from each group to post their newsprint and read the two forces the group listed. Instruct the whole class to examine the newsprints, looking for similarities, and ask: *Are there any forces that appear on everyone’s list?* If so, write these on a fresh sheet of newsprint (which will represent the whole class consensus).
- Step 10:** Continue until all of the items listed on more than one newsprint are rewritten on the fresh newsprint. Then ask the class to consider which items still remaining on the original newsprints are important enough to include on the fresh newsprint. When completed, the fresh newsprint represents a list of all the forces that the class wants to work on in the coming semester or year.
- Step 11:** If, at this point, there are only two forces listed on the “consensus newsprint,” skip to Step 12. If there are more

than two forces, give out two dot stickers to each student. Ask each student to come up to the newsprint and place his/her two dots on the forces that s/he feels are the most important to work on in class.

Step 12: The class has now whittled their forces down to the two which they most want to work on and address in class. The next step is to brainstorm with the class the various ways in which the class can work together to address these forces.



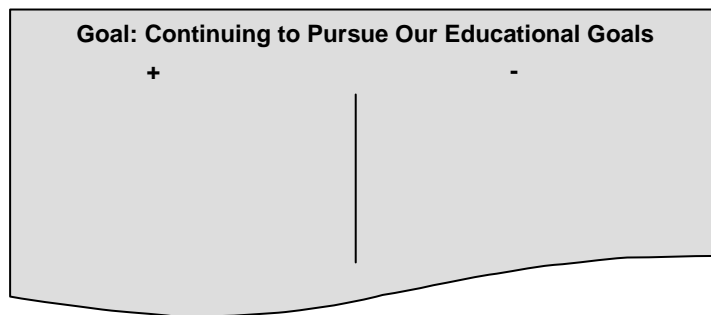
Acting It Out

This activity is a way to bring students' experiences with a particular issue to life and set the stage to analyze those experiences.

(Note: The acting out portion of this activity is better suited for use in a class of four or more students rather than for a one-on-one teaching situation.)

Step 1: Ask the group to think about the goal of continuing to pursue their educational goals.

Step 2: Write the goal on the top of a sheet of newsprint. Then, draw a vertical line down the middle of the newsprint, with a + (positive sign) over the left-hand column and a - (negative sign) over the right hand column, as shown below:



Step 3: Ask students to first brainstorm all the things that make it hard for them to continue to pursue their educational goals, to stay in the program. Write them on the right side of the newsprint. Use the question: *Who or what gets in the way of continuing to come to these classes?*

Step 4: Then ask students to brainstorm all the things that help them to attend class or to continue to pursue their education goals. Use the question: *Who or what helps or supports you to continue to stay in these classes?* Write these responses on the left side of the newsprint.

Step 5: Ask each student to copy one of the forces on an individual strip of paper with positive forces on one color and negative forces on another color. Spread out the strips with the positive forces along one side of a table and the strips with negative forces along the other side.

Step 6: Then explain what will happen during the activity and the roles that people will need to fill.

- Students will act out the forces they have just generated.
- One person will play the role of the representative student and this person will listen quietly.
- The rest of the group will divide into two smaller groups: the positives and the negatives.
- Each person can choose which group s/he would like to be in, but the final two groups should have approximately the same number of people as the number of strips of paper representing positive or negative forces.
- The “positives” go to the side of the table with the positive forces, and the “negatives” go to the side with the negative forces.
- The representative student sits at the head of the table.

Step 7: Once everyone is in the right place, ask students to choose the strips of paper with the forces that stand out for them, trying to evenly distribute all the forces among the students until all the paper strips are taken.

Step 8: Ask students to spontaneously act out one force at a time, going back and forth between positive and negative forces, trying to build on what was said before them, until all the forces are voiced. The representative student’s job is to sit quietly and listen to all the forces as if they are voices within him or herself.

Explain that they are all acting out roles, and that what they say does not necessarily represent their own views. They are to try to understand and bring to life the forces

they have chosen and should feel free to add words and feeling to their role.

- Step 9:** Once all the forces have been acted out, ask the representative student what comments or reactions s/he has and what s/he feels. Be sure to give this student the opportunity to speak first about his/her experience; then ask the rest of the group what it was like to act out the forces.
- Step 10:** Then facilitate a discussion with the whole group, asking guiding questions that encourage the students to reflect on: (1) insights they gained about the issue, and (2) questions they now have.
- Step 11:** Give each student an index card or a blank piece of paper. Ask each student to write down the answer to this question: *What two forces from the list do you most want us to work on in class?* Point out that they can take their forces from the positive force list (forces they would want to work on strengthening/increasing), from the negative force list (forces they would want to work on weakening/decreasing), or from a combination of the two.
- Step 12:** Ask students to get into pairs and discuss their two forces, coming to agreement about the two forces they feel are most important to work on in class. One person in each pair should write their new list of two forces on another piece of paper or card.
- Step 13:** Have two pairs join to form a group of four. Have each pair share its list of two items with the other pair. The group of four now has several minutes to come up with a new list of two forces upon which all four can agree. Ask a volunteer to write their new list of two forces, representing their “consensus,” on a piece of newsprint to hang in front of the class.
- Step 14:** Then ask a member from each group to post their newsprint and read the two forces the group listed. Instruct the whole class to examine the newsprints, looking for similarities, and ask: *Are there any forces that*

appear on everyone's list? If so, write these on a fresh sheet of newsprint (which will represent the whole class consensus).

- Step 15:** Continue until all of the items listed on more than one newsprint are rewritten on the fresh newsprint. Then ask the class to consider which items still remaining on the original newsprints are important enough to include on the fresh newsprint. When completed, the fresh newsprint represents a list of all the forces that the class wants to work on in the coming semester or year.
- Step 16:** If at this point, there are only two forces listed on the "consensus newsprint," skip to Step 17. If there are more than two forces, give out two dot stickers to each student. Ask each student to come up to the newsprint and place his/her two dots on the forces s/he feels are the most important to work on in class.
- Step 17:** The class has now whittled their forces down to the two which they most want to work on and address in class. The next step is to brainstorm with the class the various ways in which the class can work together to address these forces.



Classroom Discussion

This activity is one way to organize a discussion and then use the fruits of that discussion as a way to address persistence.

(Note: To adapt this activity to a one-on-one teaching situation, pose the questions in Step 1 to a student in a dialogue journal. Then respond to the student's answers to these questions in the journal. Together, you and the student can explore ways to help increase persistence that fit that student's particular context.)

Step 1: Use the following questions addressing student motivation, retention, and persistence to guide the discussion. Write the questions on newsprint to hang at the front of the room.

What Brings You Here?

- What makes it easy for you to come to this program?
- What makes it hard for you to come to this program?
- What keeps you interested while you are here?
- What would make it more interesting?
- Imagine that for some reason you decide to stop coming to this program. How do you think you would feel?
- Do you think you would return to this or another program at some point? Why or why not?
- What, if anything, would help you to return?

Step 2: Set ground rules as a group if these have not already been done. Ask students what they need to feel safe talking in pairs or a group. Write down the ground rules and post them.

Step 3: Ask students to work in pairs. Give each student a handout with questions that mirror those on the newsprint. Ask that one student in each pair be the

recorder who will later report back to the whole group key points in their discussion.

- Step 4:** Give the pairs 15 minutes to discuss the questions and record their answers. For classes with very low literacy skills, students can simply discuss the questions and not record their thoughts.
- Step 5:** After 15 minutes, ask the recorder in each pair to report their discussion to the whole group. Record on newsprint their responses to the questions: *What makes it easy for you to come to this program? What makes it hard for you to come to this program? What keeps you interested while you are here? What would make it more interesting?* This will be your record of the conversation.
- Step 6:** After hearing from all the pairs, open up the discussion to the group at large. Ask them such questions as: *Are there other things that people would want to add? What similarities and differences do you see? Are there things that surprise you? What questions do you now have?*
- Step 7:** Then ask students to look at the issues raised on each of the newsprints. Point out that they have written about forces that both help them to continue coming to class and forces that hinder them or get in the way of their coming to class. Ask them the question: *Of all the points written on these newsprints, which two points do you want to work on in class?* (Some possible answers would name something that the class could work on to strengthen or increase the positive forces, something the class could work on to weaken or decrease the negative forces, or an idea for how to make the class more interesting.)
- Step 8:** Put up a fresh piece of newsprint. Ask each student to come up and write two forces from the discussion that they most want the class to work on together. Tell them that if someone else has already written a point that they agree with, they can simply make a check mark next to that point on the newsprint. Continue until each student has written his/her two forces on the newsprint.

- Step 9:** Give each student two dot stickers. Ask each student to read through the list on the newsprint and decide which two areas s/he would like the class to work on together. Tell them to place their dots next to those items.
- Step 10:** The class has now whittled their forces down to the two which they most want to work on and address in class. The next step is to brainstorm with the class the various ways in which the class can work together to address these forces (strengthen the positive; weaken the negative).



Snowball Consensus

This activity guides a group to develop a list of ideas or course of action with which all can agree.

- Step 1:** Pose a question to the whole group related to the ideas wanted: *What are the two forces that most help you in continuing to pursue your educational goals, and what are the two forces that most hinder you?* (It's best to give people a specific number of ideas to state, e.g., what *two* forces...)
- Step 2:** Have students get into pairs and discuss these questions, coming to agreement about the two helping and two hindering forces that affect both of their lives. Have one of them write these four forces on a piece of paper.
- Step 3:** Have two pairs join to form a group of four. Have each pair share its list of four items with the other pair. The group of four now has several minutes to come up with a new list of two helping and two hindering forces upon which all four can agree. One of them should now write their new list of four forces, representing their consensus, on a sheet of newsprint, divided like this:

Most Important Forces That . . .	
Help us continue:	Make it hard to continue:
1.	1.
2.	2.

- Step 4:** Have groups post their newsprints on the wall and take turns reading aloud the helping and hindering forces listed on their newsprint. Then ask the whole class to look at the newsprints for similarities, asking: *Are there any helping or hindering forces that appear on everyone's list?* If so, then write these on a fresh newsprint sheet (which will represent the whole class consensus).

- Step 5:** Continue until all of the items listed on more than one newsprint are rewritten on the fresh newsprint. Then ask the class to consider which items still remaining on the original newsprints are important enough to include on the fresh newsprint. When completed, the fresh newsprint represents the whole group's consensus about the most important forces, supporting and hindering, that affect students continuing their learning.
- Step 6:** The next step is to brainstorm with the class the various ways in which the class can work together to address these forces (strengthen the positive, weaken the negative).



Affinity Diagramming

This activity guides a group to develop a list of categories or key ideas.

(Note: This activity works well with smaller groups of up to six in size.)

- Step 1:** Give each individual in the class a number of small (3" x 3") sticky notes. People can either work individually or in pairs (especially if reading skills are low). Ask each individual or pair to list a number of forces that help them or hinder them in continuing to pursue their educational goals, writing each force separately on a sticky note. They should indicate with a + (positive sign) those forces that help and a - (negative sign) those forces that make it harder.
- Step 2:** Divide people into small groups of four to six. For each group, place a large sheet of newsprint in the middle of the table or on the wall. Ask the members of each group to stick their sticky notes on their newsprint, in no particular order.
- Step 3:** When all sticky notes are on the newsprint, ask each small group to take 10 minutes to read the sticky notes and rearrange them according to ones that are similar. (Note: Sticky notes can be read aloud by one member of the group to others with less reading skill.) At first, they could clump all the positives together and all the negatives together. Then they could try to find sticky notes that go together by content (e.g., all the sticky notes that have to do with transportation). They can do this by simply pulling up and re-placing the sticky note near others that are similar in nature. Duplicate sticky notes can be pasted on top of one another.
- Step 4:** After the sticky notes have been placed near each other in several bunches, ask students to draw a line around each

set of sticky notes so that the separate bunches of sticky notes that are alike are clearly outlined. Then ask each group to choose a name or title for each bunch of like sticky notes and label the categories on their newsprint.

- Step 5:** Ask each small group to put up their newsprint on the wall so that everyone can see the newsprints from all the groups. Ask a reporter from each group to read aloud the category names from his/her newsprint. Ask the whole class what categories they see that are similar across all the newsprints. Facilitate a discussion about what this means to the students: *Do these categories represent the forces that help or hinder them in continuing to pursue their educational goals? What does this mean to them?*
- Step 6:** Ask each student to think about which two categories s/he would most want to work on together as a class in order to make it easier to continue to come to class. Give each student two dot stickers. Ask them to come up to the newsprints and “vote” on the two categories they would most want the class to address together.
- Step 7:** In future classes, use the two prioritized categories as guides to the curriculum. Brainstorm with students ways the class can address these categories as a group in order to increase student persistence (strengthen the positive, weaken the negative).



Student-to-Student Interviews

This activity is helpful for gathering information with and from students, especially those who are uncomfortable talking in a large group. It may take some practice and guidance for students to be able to interview each other.

Step 1: Explain that you will model an interview with a volunteer from the class. You will be the interviewer and the student will be the one interviewed. The questions which you model should be the same ones the students will be given when they do interviews with each other.

Use the following questions that address student motivation, retention, and persistence. (Note: If students are new to the program, these questions can be modified to ask about prior learning experiences.)

- *What made it easy for you to come to this program?*
- *What made it hard for you to come to this program?*
- *What keeps you interested while you are here?*
- *What would make it more interesting?*
- *Imagine that for some reason you decide to stop coming to this program. How do you think you would feel?*
- *Do you think you would return to this or another program at some point? Why or why not?*
- *What, if anything, would help you to return?*

Step 2: Conduct the interview, being careful to use good interview techniques (see the list below). Ask students to take notes or remember what they observe.

Step 3: Process the activity. Ask students what they observed and what questions they have about interviewing. Pose the question: *What makes a good interview?*

Step 4: Record students' responses on a newsprint titled, "Tips for Good Interviewing." Following are some tips to include if they don't come up during the discussion.

Tips for Good Interviewing

- Listen carefully.
- Take notes to help you remember what the other person says. (If the class is at a low writing level, ask them to report on what they remember.)
- Allow the person being interviewed plenty of time to speak.
- Don't share your own ideas and experience. An interview is not a discussion.
- Both the interviewer and interviewee will have a time to speak.
- Encourage the other person to talk by asking him/her to explain things s/he says.
- Repeat what the other person says to be sure you understood it correctly. This will also help you remember what s/he said.
- Show that you are interested. Make eye contact.

Step 5: Give each pair one set of the interview questions. Allow 20 minutes for the interviews, ten minutes for each person. Monitor the time to let the first interviewer know that in just a few minutes it will be the other person's turn.

Step 6: Ask each pair to report out. Each person will report on what was learned from the person s/he interviewed. As the learners report out, the teacher should record the responses to the following questions on newsprint: *What made it easy for you to come to this program? What made it hard for you to come to this program?* The newsprint will represent the entire group's responses.

Step 7: Talk about both the process of interviewing and the questions themselves.

Were there any surprises in the interview process?

Which role – interviewer or interviewee – did people enjoy more? Why?

What similarities and differences do you see in each other's responses?

What questions do you now have?

What would you like to know more about?

Step 8: Then, together look at the answers on the newsprint questions: *What made it easy for you to come to this program? What made it hard for you to come to this program? What keeps you interested? What would make it more interesting? What*

would help you return? Ask each learner to think about which two items on the newsprints they want the class to work on in order to increase their chances of staying in the program. Point out that they can choose one answer from each of the questions, or they can choose both of their answers from one of the questions. Give learners two dot stickers and ask them to come up to the newsprints and place their dots next to the two they have chosen. After everyone has “voted,” count up to see which ones receive the most votes.

Step 9: Brainstorm with learners possible next steps for addressing the issues that received the most votes.