Cultivate
Promoting Positive Learning Environments that Improve Academic Performance

While we have always known that the same student can get different grades in different classes—an A in math versus a C in history—research now shows that these differences in performance across classrooms cannot simply be attributed to student aptitudes and interests.

New research shows the learning environments educators create can have a strong influence on students’ Academic Mindsets and Learning Strategies, and, ultimately, performance. The experiences students have in their classrooms have the power to alter how they perceive themselves as learners and the effort they put into their work, which is reflected in their grades. Data collected from thousands of students consistently show students with strong Academic Mindsets and Learning Strategies earn more As and fewer Fs than those with weaker Academic Mindsets and Learning Strategies.

Based on this research, UChicago Impact partnered with the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research to develop Cultivate, a survey and framework designed to support educators in creating the kind of learning environments that can change what students believe and, thus, how they perform.

The Cultivate Survey and Framework
The Cultivate Survey illuminates how teaching practices—from how quickly assignments are graded and returned to how students are greeted—influence students’ Academic Mindsets and Learning Strategies, and, in turn, grades. It provides educators with insight into 6th-12th grade students’ perceptions of their own Academic Mindsets and Learning Strategies—the sense of belonging they feel, the way they approach their work, and how they see themselves as learners.

Cultivate also provides actionable insight into students’ perceptions of their learning environments—the Classroom Conditions that matter most for cultivating the strong academic mindsets and learning strategies that fuel strong academic performance.
Understand how students’ perceptions of their learning environments affect their Academic Mindsets and Learning Strategies:

Through the Cultivate survey and reporting site, educators can see how students’ perceptions of various Classroom Conditions, such as the learning goals teachers establish, classwork they assign, and level of support they provide, affect the Academic Mindsets and Learning Strategies linked to strong academic performance.

Identify patterns in student perceptions of learning environments across grade levels and subject areas:

Educators can disaggregate Cultivate survey results by grade level, subject area, or a combination of both and use this information to better understand how learning environments differ across different groups of classrooms.

Set priorities and guide efforts to create learning environments that support all students:

Cultivate presents users with a list of Prioritized Classroom Conditions ranked according to which will provide the most leverage to positively affect students’ Academic Mindsets and Learning Strategies. Each Classroom Condition is comprised of a set of actionable items that can guide efforts to build the kind of learning environments that can strengthen Academic Mindsets and Learning Strategies and, ultimately, help all students thrive.

Learn More: To learn more about the Cultivate Survey, Framework, and Reporting Site, visit uchicagoimpact.org/cultivate or contact us at cultivate@uchicago.edu.