

## Advocacy

# Helping Students Manage Inequity

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**Title:** Helping Students Manage Inequity

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### Description:

Telling a student, “if you work hard enough, you will be successful” can be great advice, only if the student has access and opportunities to engage with the learning materials. For example, a student without books at home, will find it difficult to read when out of school. Help students manage inequities in their learning by assisting them with advocating for themselves.

### Learning Objectives:

Upon completion of this module, you will be able to:

- Recognize when a student is experiencing inequity related to their learning.
- Apply strategies to help students manage inequities related to their learning by assisting students to advocate for themselves.

### Tutor's Experience Level:

How would you describe your tutoring experience and skills?

Beginner tutor- 1 (no experience)

Expert tutor- 5

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### Scenario 1:

Before we get started, please answer the following questions to help assess your existing knowledge.

Jeremiah, a student you've been tutoring in math for the past several months, arrives at the tutoring session visibly upset. The student sits down at your station and immediately begins to voice his frustration. “Today I received my math midterm grade and my teacher deducted ten percentage points because I did not complete the online homework assignments,” states Jeremiah. He continues, “I explained to my teacher I do not have internet at home and the math homework website does not work on my cell phone, but she doesn't care! Now I am failing the class! My parents are going to be so disappointed in me.”

[\[image link\]](#)



[Predict/Decide- Open Response, asking them to predict or decide what is the recommended tutor response in this situation]

1. What exactly would you say OR how exactly would you respond in order to help Jeremiah manage the inequity related to his learning by assisting him to advocate for himself?

[Predict/Decide - MCQ]

2. Which of the following strategies below do you think would best support Jeremiah by assisting him with advocating for himself?

I would say to the student:

- A. "Wow! Jeremiah I can understand why you are so upset. What your teacher did is unfair, but I am sure your parents will understand. If you explain to your parents why you could not complete the homework, I am sure they will not be disappointed in you. "
- B. "Jeremiah, how can I help you bring your math grade up so that you can pass the class? There will always be excuses for why assignments are not finished, you need to keep working and, sometimes, try harder than others to get your work done."
- C. "Jeremiah, let's create a plan to resolve this problem. Before we begin today, let's discuss how you can tell your teacher you do not have internet at home and your frustration with not having access to the material. We can work together and fix this."
- D. "Jeremiah, you will always have teachers who do not want to see you succeed. You just have to work extra hard to prove to them wrong. You can do it! Let's jump into today's session and prepare for the exam you have next week, so you can improve your grade in the class."

[Explain- Open]

3. Why do you think the approach you selected in the previous question will best support Jeremiah by assisting him with advocating for himself?

[Explain- MCQ]

4. Which of the following statements aligns with the rationale you chose and explained in the previous two questions.

- A. By providing the student with resources and strategies to advocate for himself you are empowering the student to address his challenges in ways that will lead to positive outcomes.
- B. By empathizing with the students, you are building trust and authentic connection. In addition, by helping the student discuss how he is going to approach his parents, the tutor is focusing on relationship building.
- C. When you encourage a student to persist and improve his math skills, you are helping the student develop a growth mindset. It is important that students maintain a growth mindset, even in the face of adversity.

- D. By stressing the importance of hard work and maintaining effort, you are instilling a “no excuses” approach to tutoring. It is important that tutors do not let student makes excuses when they do not get their assignments completed.
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[Observe] - (Give desired, recommended response, according to research with explanation)  
**Research Recommendation(s), Research says...**

When supporting students navigating structural inequality in education it is imperative not to offer *false hope* that is superficial and does not lead to change. Telling a student to just keep working hard and you will be successful in school, may be ineffective if the student does not have access to the tools and resources they need, resulting in *false hope*. For example, if a student does not have reliable internet at home and cannot access homework material, telling a student to “work hard” will not help them be successful in completing their homework assignments.

Instead, tutors should apply the strategy of assisting students in identifying the inequity and advocating for themselves. By helping students address the problems they experience, particularly culturally and linguistically diverse students, such as English language learners, tutors can help narrow opportunity gaps in education (Hammond, 2015). Studies show superficial hope, such as saying “keep working hard” to a student who does not have internet to access his homework, does not lead to sustainable change for students. Thus, assisting a student to identify the inequity and advocate for themselves, also called providing critical hope, is the best approach.

For this reason, on [Q2], the statement listed below is the most desired response or correct answer:

A. By providing the student with resources and strategies to advocate for himself you are empowering the student to address his challenges in ways that will lead to positive outcomes.

The above strategy provides the student with resources to advocate for himself and it develops empowerment, helping the student navigate structural inequality in ways that have the potential to lead to meaningful change. Providing *critical hope* is a strategy educators, including tutors, can use in order to develop a relationship with a student and equip the student with resources and tools to overcome inequality within the educational system (Hammond, 2015).

It is important to note that not learning inequities can be remedied by providing guidance to a student on advocating for themselves. As a tutor, it is important to practice appropriate judgment on when a tutor, or other adult, needs to intervene to ensure student safety and equity in learning.

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[Explain- Open]

5. In your own words, please explain why it is important to provide support and assist a student with identifying the inequity and advocating for themselves?

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6. How much do you agree or disagree with the expert belief of using *critical hope* to empower students facing inequities?

Strongly disagree-1

Somewhat disagree-2

No opinion-3

Somewhat agree-4

Strongly agree-5

7. Explain why you agree or disagree.

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[Explain- Multiple Choice]

8. How does *critical hope* help students navigate inequality in education?

A. *Critical hope* offers students tools and resources to change their circumstances and address problems, empowering them to advocate for themselves.

B. *Critical hope* helps students channel their frustration into understanding and allows them to feel they have a voice.

C. *Critical hope* helps tutors develop relationships with students, by assisting students with advocating for themselves.

D. Unlike false hope, *critical hope* is a better way to build relationships with students as a mentor.

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**Research Recommendation**

Studies show that *critical hope* is a strategy educators, including tutors, can use in order to develop a relationship with a student and equip the student with resources and tools to address inequality within the education system (Hammond, 2015).

Therefore, the correct answer to (8) is below:

A. *Critical hope* offers students tools and resources to change their circumstances and address problems, empowering them to advocate for themselves.

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## Scenario 2: [Same a pre-instruction]

One of your students, Alexis, is experiencing success learning her multiplication facts during your tutoring sessions. However, you notice that the student performs poorly on the timed, multiplication quizzes in her math class. You say to Alexis, “you know your multiplication facts really well when we review them together, what happens during quiz time in the classroom?” Alexis shares that the teacher gives oral quizzes, and she is often unable to hear what the teacher is saying because she sits in the back of the classroom next to the noisy heater. She goes on to explain that when she raises her hand to ask the teacher to repeat the question, the teacher tells her to wait until the quiz is over, then never answers her question.



[\[image link\]](#)

### [Predict/Decide- Open Response]

9. What exactly would you say OR how exactly would you respond in order to help Alexis manage the inequity related to her learning by assisting her to advocate for herself?

### [Predict/Decide - MCQ]

10. Which of the following strategies below do you think would best support Alexis by assisting her with advocating for herself?

I would say to the student:

- A. “Alexis, that does not sound like something your teacher would do. You should be careful how you speak about adults. Are you sure this is happening? I bet you are mistaken.”
- B. “Alexis, have you shared this problem with your dad? I am sure he would be able to get your seat moved in class. Please talk to your dad tonight so he is aware that this is happening during class.”
- C. “Alexis, what are some ways you might pay closer attention so you can hear the problems during the quiz? I bet when the weather warms up, the heater will not be so noisy. Let’s focus on the math session today and strategies to better focus during class!”
- D. “Alexis, have you tried talking to your teacher about the fact that you are unable to hear during the quiz? Let’s practice how you can talk with her and come up with a solution so that this issue does not continue. Pretend like I am your teacher, what would you say to me?”

[Explain- Open]

11. Why do you think the approach you selected in the previous question will best support Alexis by assisting her with advocating for herself?

[Explain- MCQ]

12. Which of the following statements aligns with the rationale you chose and explained in the previous two questions.

- A. By providing tools to empower the student, you can help them remedy the problem on their own. This often creates positive outcomes and gives students voice and a role in their own learning.
  - B. If the student's caregiver is aware of the situation they can help her resolve the issue. Parents and caregivers should help students facing educational equities and unequal access to learning opportunities.
  - C. Sometimes students exaggerate the truth to make excuses for poor academic performance. As a tutor it is important that you are aware of students avoiding responsibilities and doing their school work.
  - D. Providing the students with strategies to pay closer attention so she can hear the problems during oral quizzes will empower the student to perform better in the future.
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### Conclusion

Experts believe that the best approach to developing *critical hope*, or empowering students to help themselves, is by providing resources and strategies that will allow the student to address the problem and advocate effectively for themselves (Hammond, 2015). Therefore, the correct response is:

- E. Alexis, have you tried talking to your teacher about the fact that you are unable to hear during the quiz? Let's practice how you can talk with her and come up with a solution so that this issue does not continue. Pretend like I am your teacher, what would you say to me?

This approach empowers Alexis with the language and confidence to have a conversation with her teacher and resolve the issue by advocating for herself. In summary, this lesson provided examples of ways to apply the strategy of developing *critical hope* in students as a relationship building technique for tutors. Research supports that tutors should be realistic in helping their students navigate inequality in education by supporting them with actionable tools and strategies to bridge opportunity gaps.

## Further Reading:

For more information regarding how to support a growth mindset, check out the resources below:

Book: Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain by Zaretta Hammond

Video: [Jeff Duncan-Andrade - Growing Roses in Concrete](#)  
TEDxGoldenGateED

Article: Cultivating Critical Hope: The Too Often Forgotten Dimension of Critical Leadership Development by Devita Bishundat, Daviree Velázquez Phillip, Willie Gore

## References:

Hammond, Z. L. (2015). Culturally responsive teaching and the brain. Corwin Press.

Duncan-Andrade, J. (2009). Note to educators: Hope required when growing roses in concrete. *Harvard Education Review*, 79(2), 181-194.

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## Feedback

Indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

The lesson was easy to understand.

Strongly disagree-1

Somewhat disagree-2

No opinion-3

Somewhat agree-4

Strongly agree-5

I'm confident I can apply what I learned.

Strongly disagree-1

Somewhat disagree-2

No opinion-3

Somewhat agree-4

Strongly agree-5

Please provide any feedback or comments related to this training module.

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