

Learning, Leveraged By Students



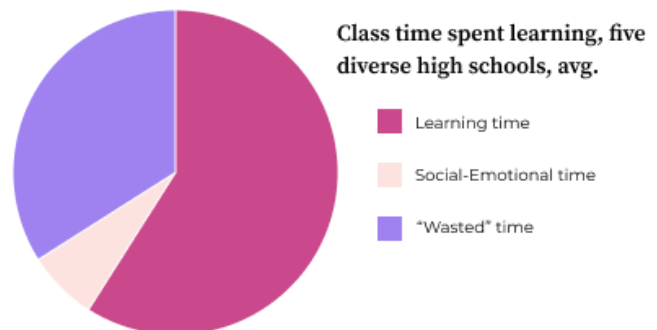
Leveraged



Giving students voice, choice, and freedom is not enough. **Let them take a little:** fostering agency helps students feel less powerless, less anxious, and **more like they belong.**

A school can't meet every student's needs, especially in under-resourced districts with overburdened educators. The One Fact Foundation has traveled nationwide, speaking 1:1 with 150+ students, teachers, and education professionals to understand how students can **identify and advocate for their needs.**

We challenged students to track learning time in class for a day: they felt **34% was wasted.** We're helping them leverage that time.



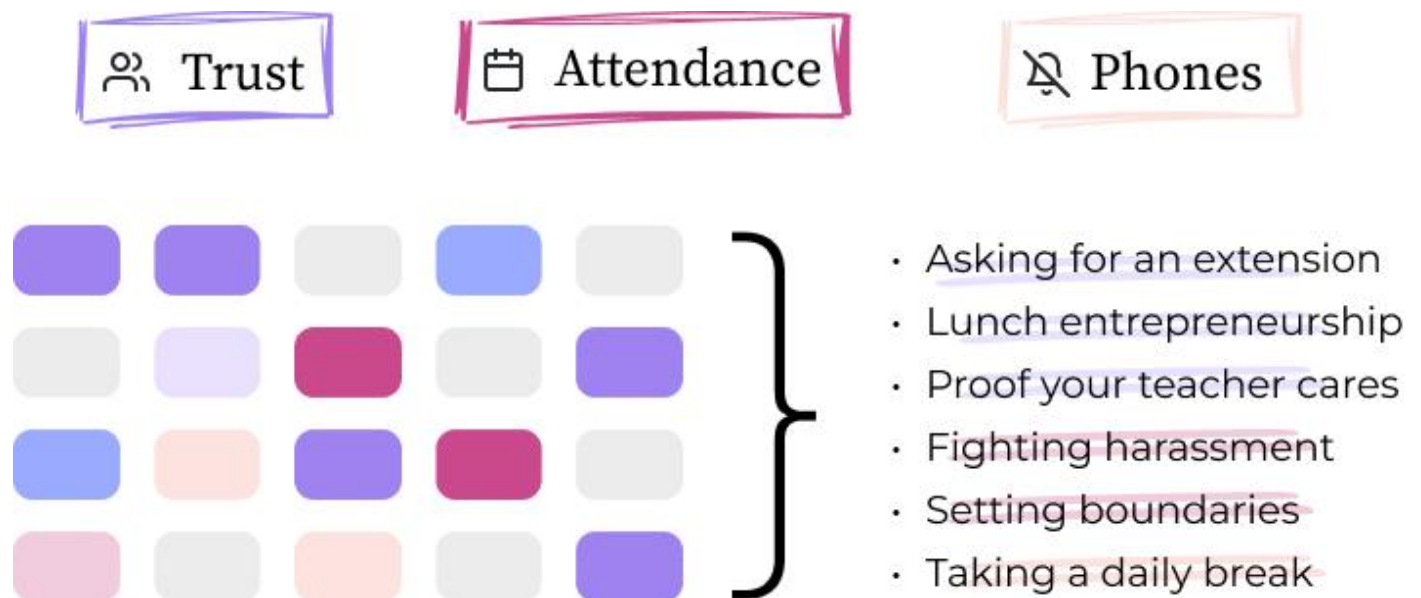
Student needs are human needs, and just as varied

Lumping diverse personal, emotional, and academic issues under broad labels (mental health, chronic absenteeism) obfuscates individual needs. **Talking to 80 students 1:1**, we didn't find two with the same challenges. Top-down change in policy and practice requires labels. Instead, **we're bringing individualized solutions directly to students.**

When students become **trust-builders, negotiators, and boundary-setters**, whether they're asking for a one-day extension or orchestrating school-wide culture shift, they can realize their potential as learners.

"I haven't slept this week. I just gotta make it to practice."

Three ways students can leverage their potential, hundreds of resources to show them how



Building trust, showing up more, and using phones less are powerful ways to kick-start success, and each is under the student's control. In **Doorstops**, our text, video, & experiential resources, we show kids how to leverage all three as bargaining chips to meet their own needs.

We spread the word through **long term partnerships with content creators** and our own social media and growth marketing initiatives.

Students are at the heart of education, but they are rarely asked for genuine feedback or given opportunities to reflect on school and their learning. We need your help to empower them: **we'll design open source, free resources in partnership with your students.** Reach out!

“[Admin] brought three students to the PD, but nobody listened to them... nobody knew why they were there.”

The Leveraged future and your school

Every program we're building grows student agency, belonging, and hope. Using Doorstops, students get individualized, research-tested strategies for self-advocacy. In our online communities, they have space to empower each other. In our hands-on, **agency-building classroom interventions**, we not only grow trust and belonging: we train students to be facilitators, running the same intervention themselves in other classes. We're organizing a summer camp where informal conversations on agency run between water skiing and rock climbing. Counselors and students will be from the same city, so they'll be able to support each other year-round. Excited about student agency? **Share, reach out, and keep reading!**

Mission

Any change to American education, a system where every top-down reform has been tried, is complicated not only by gridlocked power structures where vetoes are easy to come by and student feedback is sparse, but by three large, looming forces: toxic, school-specific cultural norms; varied student needs rooted well beyond any classroom; and low-trust relationships between students, their educators, and the school itself—a social asphyxia that can, perhaps, be alleviated by these powerless students themselves.

Norms. Needs. Trust. In an inner-city Southwest high school, a student spoke to me about wanting to transfer. She didn't feel safe at home, so she stayed with her grandmother one town over, waking up at 5:30am to get to school on time. She cut classes regularly, avoiding teachers she felt looked down on her and peers she was on bad terms with. She tells it better than I can: articulating the roadblocks to her transfer (family, hard-to-reach guidance counselors) and the reasons the district's alternative high school might not take her (low GPA, long waitlist).¹ This school has a common mix of social norms: frequent fights, lots of apathy, chronic absenteeism, and a less talked about issue—hard-to-find-ism.

Kids need to go out of their way to get help. The student-counselor ratio is always high, the social workers are in a separate building (and always on the move), or the track coach isn't in the athletics offices, no!—he's a science teacher! **And students overcome this.** At every school I go to, I see this

exceptional, but completely unrecognized skill: finding people you need, asking strange adults for help fearlessly, and getting it done. Norms. Needs. Trust.

It's not easy for every student: especially those with social anxiety.² Teachers in Three Forks, Montana, where I sat in on classes for two days, cited fear of asking for help as the main roadblock to their students' success. Students will sit at their desks rather than turn in a completed assignment; they'll avoid work they're confused about rather than communicating their confusion with a teacher.

Nationwide, students don't realize their teachers are not social workers. **Teachers don't always know how to make themselves approachable.** Students rarely hear transparent, simple statements like that, finding themselves angry at or afraid of imperfect teachers without a reason they can articulate.

The student-teacher relationship is an anachronism. It's not a friendship, it's not an employment contract, and after you graduate, you won't experience anything like it again. While teachers are trained in how to handle it, students are not, leading to disconnects like the one at Three Forks. Expliciting realities like the “teacher, not social worker” divide helps students understand the student-teacher relationship, lessens their anxiety about it, and makes it easier to ask for help — a lifelong skill.

² Social anxiety is not an umbrella category, and requires a host of different solutions. In a suburban high school in Connecticut, a new student felt ostracized because her bus was a different color. She didn't feel she belonged, but she was just shy: her peers were friendly and welcoming, but she was anxious.

¹ Why wouldn't an alternative high school want low GPA students? Long story short, this school district has thousands of students and limited resources.