

# **STUDENT AGENCY SURVEY USER GUIDE**





# Overview

**The AVID College and Career Readiness Framework (the AVID Framework) provides a common language and structure to articulate AVID’s theory of action for establishing equity and access to educational experiences known to accelerate college and career readiness in all students.**

By design, the AVID Framework helps inform district and school leadership in aligning goals and initiatives, identifying opportunity gaps (system inputs), and setting expectations and understanding of what it means to support every student in their community. To that end, the AVID Framework focuses on adult actions, the learning environment, and organizational structures at the school and district levels to increase equity and provide access to what students need so they can successfully engage in a future of possibility.

Student Agency is a critical component of the AVID Framework and speaks, in part, to what students need in order to graduate college- and career-ready.

# What is Student Agency?

When students believe in themselves and act intentionally to build relationships, persist through obstacles, and activate their academic, social, emotional, and professional knowledge and skills to reach their potential, they are said to possess **Student Agency** (AVID Center, 2022). In other words, students with agency do not simply believe in their ability to perform a task or behavior (self-efficacy), but in addition, they take intentional actions based on those beliefs to successfully achieve their goals and objectives.

Dr. Albert Bandura, in development of his social learning theory—and later, social cognitive theory—referred to agency as the ability to take action or, alternatively, to not take action. It is the regulation and controlling of one’s cognition, motivation, and behavior and is influenced by one’s existing self-beliefs or self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is defined as “one’s beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). Student Agency, then, encompasses both the beliefs and the actions that are influenced by those beliefs.

**Student Agency, as measured by this survey, refers to the extent to which students believe in themselves and act intentionally to build relationships, persist through obstacles, and activate their academic, social, emotional, and professional knowledge and skills to reach their potential.**

## How was the Student Agency Survey developed?

The Student Agency Survey was developed to measure student beliefs and actions necessary for success in college, career, and life.

These beliefs and actions, critical by-products of the AVID Framework, focus on building relationships, persisting through obstacles, activating academic skills, and activating social awareness skills. They represent the four subscales contained in the Student Agency Survey and were derived from reviewing the research literature on AVID's impacts on students and existing measures of student self-efficacy. Item banks were created with input and iterative feedback from experienced educators and subject matter experts.

Technical information regarding item means, scale, and subscale reliability coefficients can be obtained by contacting AVID Center at [research@avid.org](mailto:research@avid.org).

## Who should use the Student Agency Survey?

This survey should be used by district and school leaders interested in monitoring efforts intended to develop students' abilities to build healthy relationships, persist through obstacles, and apply academic and social awareness skills. Educators are encouraged to **use the Student Agency Survey as a reflective tool to calibrate classroom instruction** in strategic and intentional ways, motivate students to take ownership of their learning, and identify opportunities for growth.

# Why should schools use the Student Agency Survey?

Research has shown that self-efficacy has strong and measurable effects on student achievement (Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Ponz, 1992; Collins, 1984) and is considered one of the most influential factors affecting student outcomes (Hattie, 2017). **Educators at all levels who are interested in accelerating students' learning and monitoring their efforts in doing so should consider using the Student Agency Survey.**

Student Agency is about students self-directing their learning while teachers play a more facilitative role in the classroom. Students who don't believe they have the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful in school are less likely to engage in classroom instruction and activities. Developing agency begins with students believing in themselves and their ability to affect their learning outcomes. The Student Agency Survey helps educators monitor the extent to which students believe they are capable and can envision themselves acting intentionally to achieve their goals and objectives.

# What does the Student Agency Survey measure?

The Student Agency Survey is designed to measure beliefs and behaviors related to aspects of AVID Center's definition of Student Agency: **"Students believe in themselves and act intentionally to build relationships, persist through obstacles, and activate their academic, social, emotional, and professional knowledge and skills to reach their potential."**

More specifically, students are asked to report their level of agreement or disagreement to 17 belief statements ("I believe...") and 17 comparable behavior statements ("I'm someone who...") related to:

- Building relationships
- Persisting through obstacles
- Activating academic skills
- Activating social awareness skills

Students' responses are captured using a seven-point scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

**Sample items (with survey item numbers) from each of the four focus areas are presented below.** See Appendix A to view all of the items on the Student Agency Survey along with a brief explanation of the intent of each item.

### **Build Relationships**

Students build and maintain healthy relationships with peers and adults at their school.

- 2. I believe I can build positive relationships with other students at school.
- 19. I'm someone who builds positive relationships with other students in my classes.

### **Persist Through Obstacles**

Students set goals, stay focused, and follow through in spite of challenges and setbacks.

- 7. I believe I can stay focused on a goal even when things are hard or get in the way.
- 24. I'm someone who stays focused on a goal even when things are hard or get in the way.

### **Activate Academic Skills**

Students utilize note-taking, time management, and organization skills to accelerate their learning and achievement.

- 10. I believe I can take notes that will help me in my classes.
- 27. I'm someone who takes notes that will help me in my classes.

### **Activate Social Awareness Skills**

Students utilize communication skills, emotional awareness, and self-regulation to engage in healthy, respectful interactions when working with others.

- 16. I believe I can consider other people's feelings when working on group projects.
- 33. I'm someone who considers other people's feelings when working on group projects.



# How should the Student Agency Survey be used?

Educators at all grade levels use a variety of instructional strategies to not only engage students in the delivery of content but also to exercise and develop students' academic, collaborative, and social-emotional skills, which are fundamental for engaging life's possibilities. For example, assigning "elbow partners" or having students work in pairs allows for further exploration of the lesson content and provides a space for students to practice how to effectively collaborate, communicate, and interact socially. This, in turn, builds self-confidence in students, laying the foundation for them to take ownership of their learning and develop agency.

Fostering self-efficacy and agency in students is a developmental process. The Student Agency Survey is best used in a pre/post (September/May) format to examine growth over time. In instances where monitoring the impact of specific interventions or instructional strategies aligns with the survey content of interest, shorter pre/post intervals such as mid-year administrations may be appropriate. The survey is not intended to identify specified levels of Student Agency, but rather, to identify the extent to which a student believes in their abilities and intentionally acts on those beliefs in each of the four focus areas.

Survey subscales can be used individually; however, it is recommended that both belief and behavior items be administered. Doing so affords the educator an opportunity to monitor growth of a student's perceived level of self-efficacy, as well as how those beliefs may influence their behavior ratings.

**If you are interested in administering the Student Agency Survey on your campus or would like more information, please contact AVID Center at [avidcare@avid.org](mailto:avidcare@avid.org).**

# References

- AVID Center. (2022). *Making college and career readiness more equitable: The AVID College and Career Readiness Framework*. AVID.org. [https://www.avid.org/cms/lib/CA02000374/Centricity/Domain/9/AVID\\_College-and-Career-Readiness-Position-2022.pdf](https://www.avid.org/cms/lib/CA02000374/Centricity/Domain/9/AVID_College-and-Career-Readiness-Position-2022.pdf)
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- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. Freeman.
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- Zimmerman, B. J., Bandura, A., & Martinez-Pons, M. (1992). Self-motivation for academic attainment: The role of self-efficacy beliefs and personal goal setting. *American Educational Research Journal*, 29(3), 663-676. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312029003663>

# Appendix A

## STUDENT AGENCY SURVEY ITEM DESCRIPTIONS AND INTENT

This document is designed to provide information regarding items on AVID's Student Agency Survey. Each item is numbered as it appears on the Student Agency Survey and is given further description and rationale for inclusion. Questions regarding survey items should be sent via email to [research@avid.org](mailto:research@avid.org) or to Dr. Dennis Johnston at [djohnston@avid.org](mailto:djohnston@avid.org).

### STUDENT AGENCY SURVEY ITEMS

**Item #1.** I believe I can build positive relationships with teachers.

**Intent:** Assess the extent to which students feel they have the social awareness, skills, and confidence to engage in and maintain positive interactions with their teachers.

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**Item #2.** I believe I can build positive relationships with other students at school.

**Intent:** Assess the extent to which students feel they have the social awareness, skills, and confidence to engage in and maintain positive interactions with other students.

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**Item #3.** I believe I can ask teachers at my school for help when I need it.

**Intent:** Assess the extent to which students feel they can advocate for themselves and seek help from teachers when they are stuck or don't understand something.

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**Item #4.** I believe I can ask students in my classes for help when I need it.

**Intent:** Assess the extent to which students feel they can advocate for themselves and seek help from classmates when they are stuck or don't understand something.

Item #5. I believe I can set goals and not give up until I accomplish them.

Intent: Assess the extent to which students feel they can articulate, commit to, and achieve short- and long-term goals.

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Item #6. I believe I have the skills to keep working on problems until I get the correct answer.

Intent: Assess the extent to which students feel they have the skills needed to stay focused and manage their emotions when things are challenging and difficult.

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Item #7. I believe I can stay focused on a goal even when things are hard or get in the way.

Intent: Assess the extent to which students feel they have the skills needed to continue working toward a goal even when things are challenging and difficult.

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Item #8. I believe I have the skills to get my schoolwork done well.

Intent: Assess the extent to which students feel they have the academic skills needed to complete their work to the best of their ability.

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Item #9. I believe I can show up to class prepared to do my best work.

Intent: Assess the extent to which students feel they have the knowledge, skills, and tools (e.g., agenda, planner, binder, calendar) needed in order to come to school ready to learn.

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Item #10. I believe I can take notes that will help me in my classes.

Intent: Assess the extent to which students feel they can organize their thinking using two- and three-column notes and/or other focused note-taking strategies.

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Item #11. I believe I can organize my schoolwork (e.g., notes, homework, binders) to do better in my classes.

Intent: Assess the extent to which students feel they can use organizational tools like notes, binders, and notebooks to do well in their classes.

Item #12. I believe I can work well with others by listening and sharing ideas.

**Intent:** Assess the extent to which students feel they have the communication and collaboration skills necessary for healthy social interactions.

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Item #13. I believe I can respect different opinions and points of view.

**Intent:** Assess the extent to which students feel they have the self-confidence and emotional awareness needed in order to listen and understand a variety of perspectives and opinions.

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Item #14. I believe I can disagree with others without getting into an argument.

**Intent:** Assess the extent to which students feel they have the emotional awareness and communication skills necessary for healthy interactions.

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Item #15. I believe I can listen to people's ideas without putting anyone down.

**Intent:** Assess the extent to which students feel they have the social awareness, listening, and communication skills necessary for healthy interactions.

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Item #16. I believe I can consider other people's feelings when working on group projects.

**Intent:** Assess the extent to which students feel they have the emotional awareness and collaboration skills necessary for healthy interactions.

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Item #17. I believe I can become a better student.

**Intent:** Assess the extent to which students feel they can build their self-confidence, increase their academic skills, and do better in their classes.

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Item #18. I'm someone who builds positive relationships with teachers at my school.

**Intent:** Assess the extent to which students are socially aware and confident as they engage in and maintain positive interactions with their teachers.

Item #19. I'm someone who builds positive relationships with other students in my classes.

**Intent:** Assess the extent to which students are socially aware and confident as they engage in and maintain positive interactions with other students.

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Item #20. I'm someone who asks teachers at my school for help when I need it.

**Intent:** Assess the extent to which students advocate for themselves and seek help from teachers when they are stuck or don't understand something.

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Item #21. I'm someone who asks students in my classes for help when I need it.

**Intent:** Assess the extent to which students advocate for themselves and seek help from classmates when they are stuck or don't understand something.

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Item #22. I'm someone who sets goals and doesn't give up until I accomplish them.

**Intent:** Assess the extent to which students articulate, commit to, and achieve short- and long-term goals.

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Item #23. I'm someone who has the skills to keep working on problems until I get the correct answer.

**Intent:** Assess the extent to which students stay focused and manage their emotions when things are challenging and difficult.

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Item #24. I'm someone who stays focused on a goal even when things are hard or get in the way.

**Intent:** Assess the extent to which students continue working toward a goal even when things are challenging and difficult.

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Item #25. I'm someone who has the skills to get my schoolwork done well.

**Intent:** Assess the extent to which students use their academic skills to complete their work to the best of their ability.

Item #26. I'm someone who shows up to class prepared to do my best work.

**Intent:** Assess the extent to which students use the knowledge, skills, and tools (e.g., agenda, planner, binder, calendar) needed in order to come to school ready to learn.

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Item #27. I'm someone who takes notes that will help me in my classes.

**Intent:** Assess the extent to which students feel they can organize their thinking using two- and three-column notes and/or other focused note-taking strategies.

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Item #28. I'm someone who organizes my schoolwork (e.g., notes, homework, binders) to do better in my classes.

**Intent:** Assess the extent to which students use organizational tools like notes, binders, and notebooks to do well in their classes.

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Item #29. I'm someone who works well with others by listening and sharing ideas.

**Intent:** Assess the extent to which students use communication and collaboration skills necessary for healthy social interactions.

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Item #30. I'm someone who respects different opinions and points of view.

**Intent:** Assess the extent to which students have the self-confidence and emotional awareness needed in order to listen and understand a variety of perspectives and opinions.

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Item #31. I'm someone who doesn't get into an argument when disagreeing with others.

**Intent:** Assess the extent to which students have the emotional awareness and communication skills necessary for healthy interactions.

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Item #32. I'm someone who listens to other people's ideas without putting anyone down.

**Intent:** Assess the extent to which students have the social awareness, listening, and communication skills necessary for healthy interactions.

**Item #33.** I'm someone who considers other people's feelings when working on group projects.

**Intent:** Assess the extent to which students have the emotional awareness and collaboration skills necessary for healthy interactions.

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**Item #34.** I'm someone who works to become a better student.

**Intent:** Assess the extent to which students build their self-confidence, increase their academic skills, and do better in their classes.