

Promoting a Positive Math Identity

Module 3

Kernels of Practice to Promote Positive Math Attitudes



Classroom Practices to Promote a Positive Math Identity, Module 3 of 3

Note. These materials were produced for the Idaho State Department of Education and the Idaho Regional Mathematics Centers and were presented on August 14, 2019 at the Idaho Council of Teachers of Mathematics conference.

Fizz Buzz

- If a number contains or is divisible by 5 say “Fizz” instead of the number
- If a number contains or is divisible by 7, say “Buzz” instead of the number
- If a number contains or is divisible by both 5 and 7, say “Fizz Buzz” instead of the number



Training series progression

Module 1

The importance of math identity for math success

- Build knowledge of what math identity is and why it is important for math success

Module 2

Building the math environment (2 parts)

- Learn how to create a classroom environment that supports a positive math identity


Module 3

Kernels of practice

- Learn how to implement targeted activities that promote a positive math identity

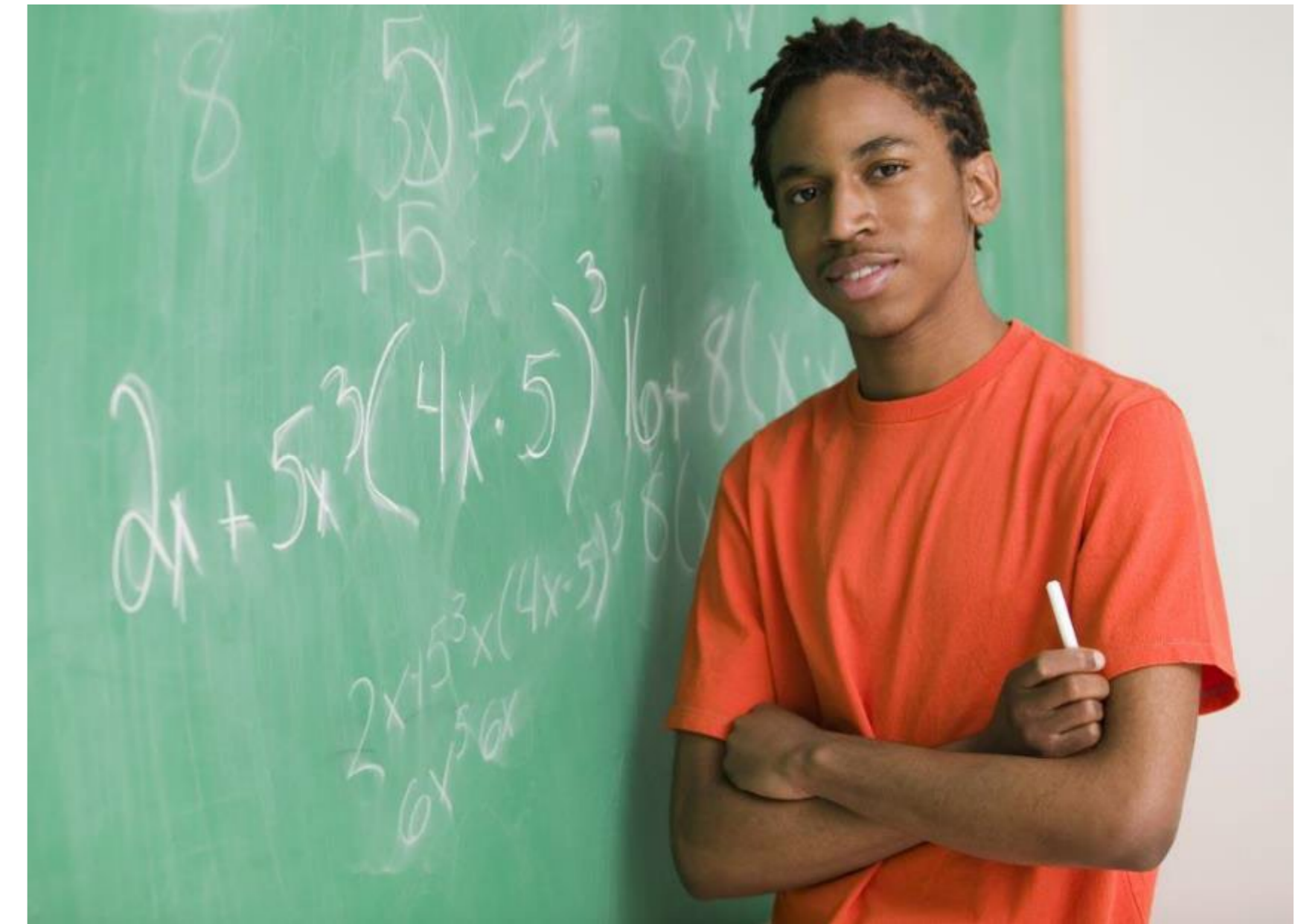
Module 3 learning objectives

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

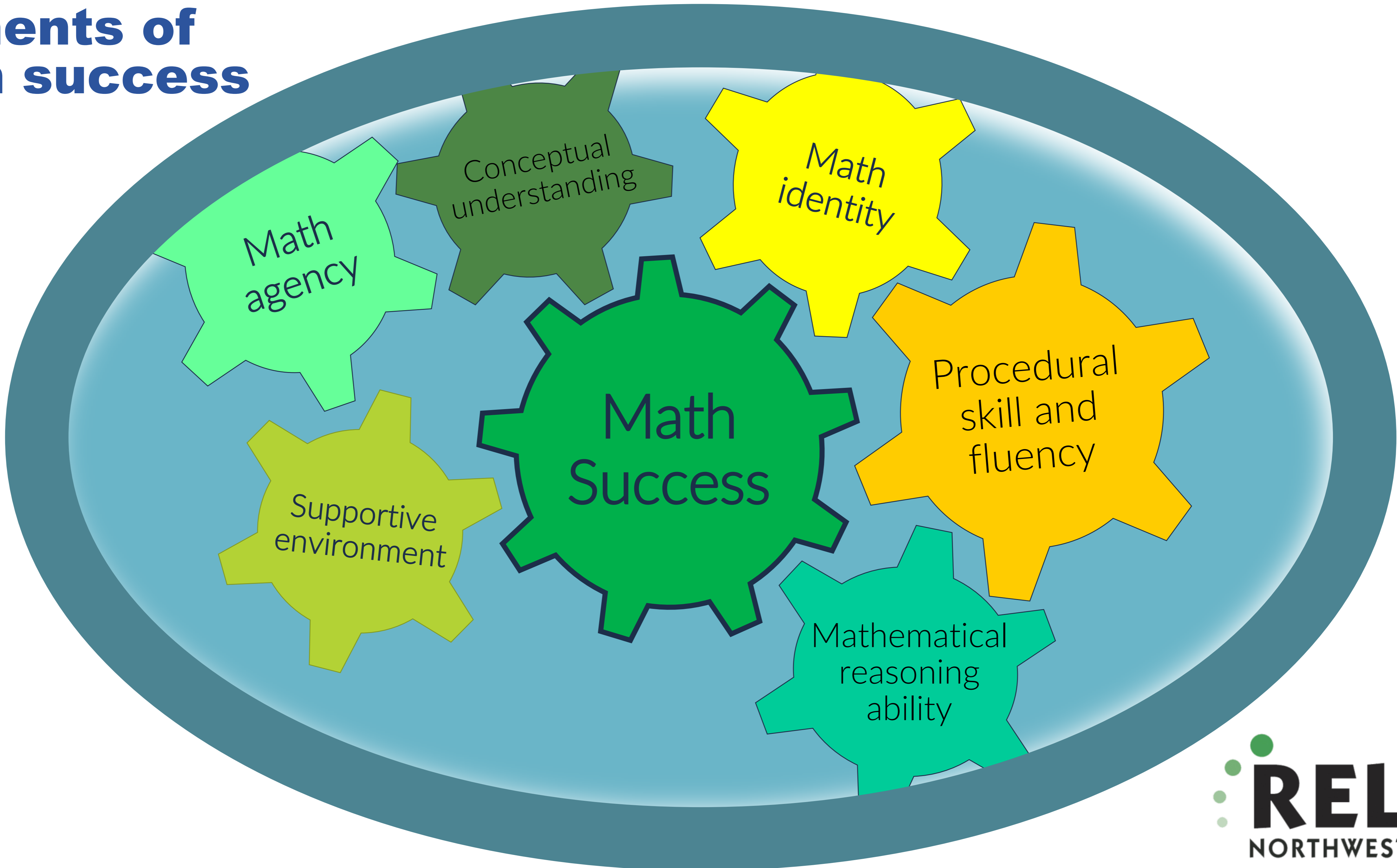
 Understand how short “kernels of practice” can be incorporated into current teaching strategies

 Implement activities to improve students' math identity in your classroom

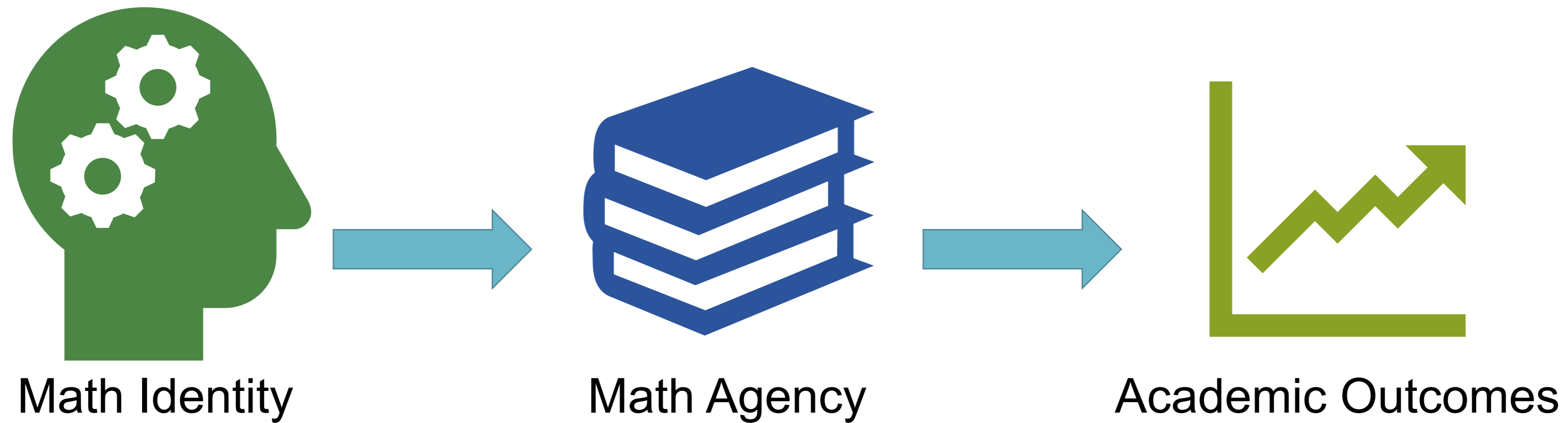
 Adapt activities presented to fit the needs of your students



Elements of math success



Math identity and agency critical for math success



Key aspects of math identity

Sense of belonging

- Feeling like an accepted, valued, and legitimate group member

Growth mindset

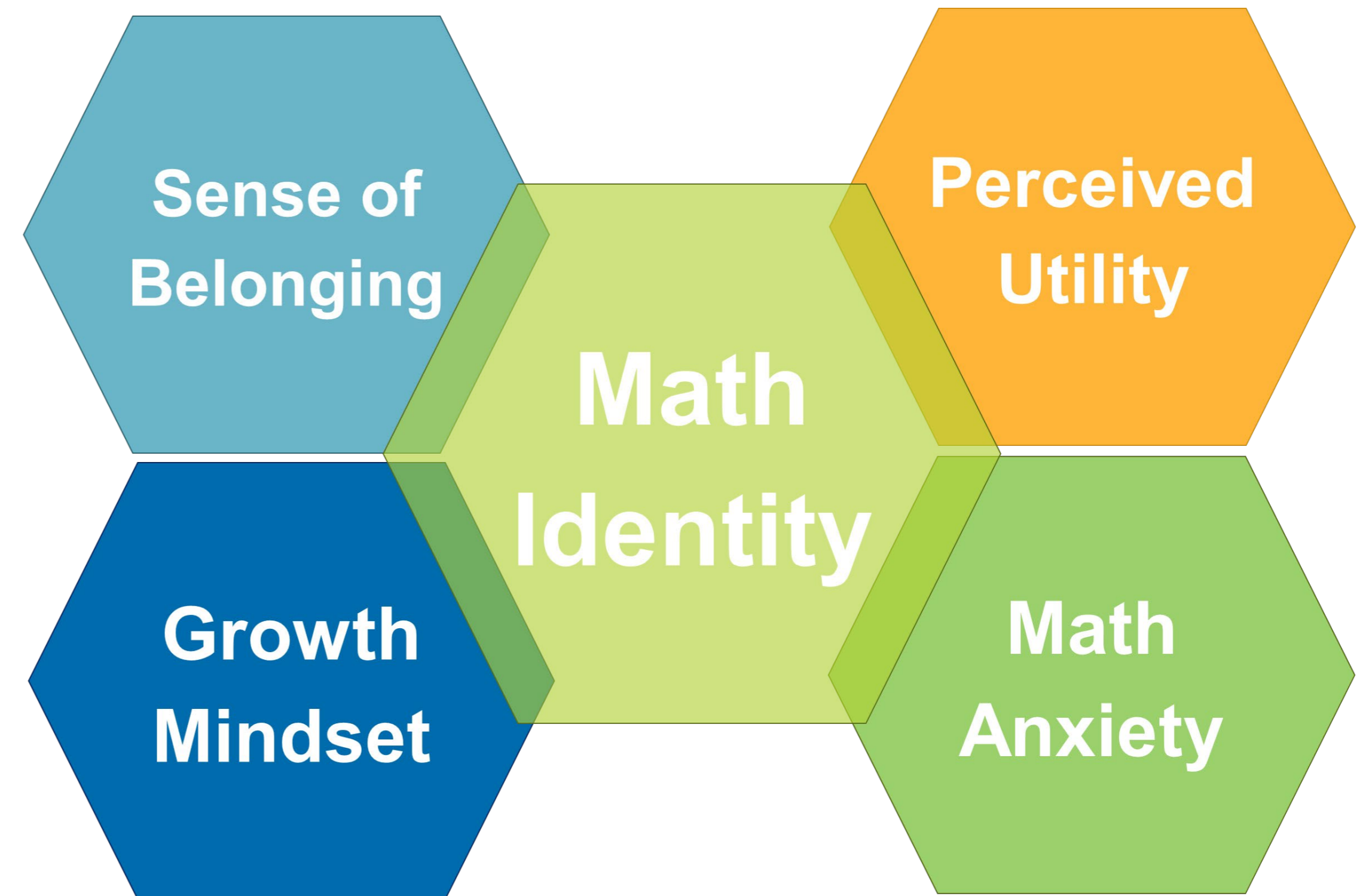
- The belief that intelligence and ability can be developed with effort, strategies, and support

Perceived utility

- Belief that math is useful, worthwhile, and relevant to life outside of school, now and in the future

Math anxiety

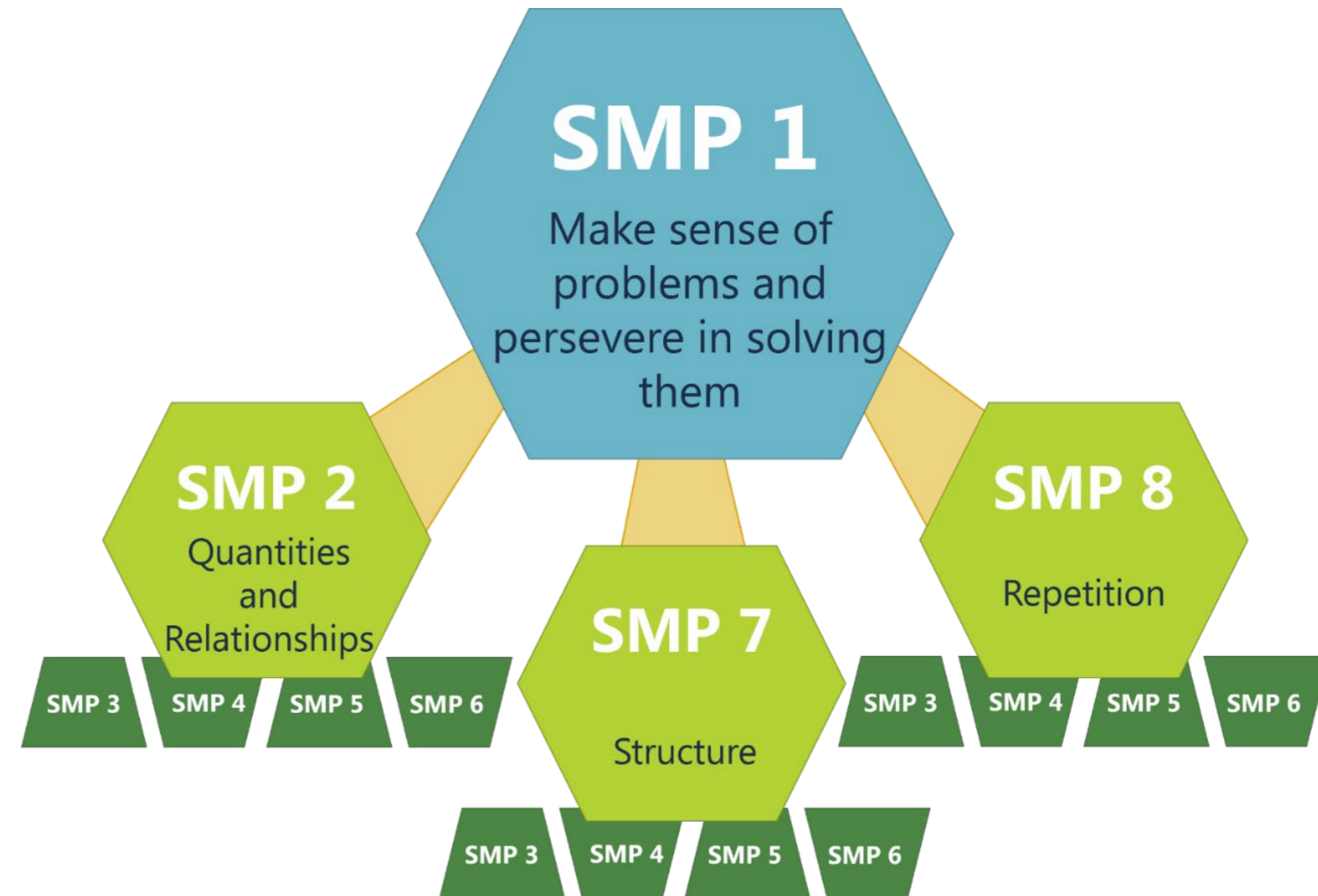
- Feeling apprehensive, tense, and fearful about situations involving math



Connections with the Standards for Math Practice

Standards for Mathematical Practice

1. Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
2. Reason abstractly and quantitatively.
3. Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.
4. Model with mathematics.
5. Use appropriate tools strategically.
6. Attend to precision.
7. Look for and make use of structure.
8. Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.



Kernels of practice



What is a psychological “intervention”?

Students perceive the same classroom environment differently based on their past experiences, beliefs, and identity. This shapes students' experiences and outcomes at school.

- Brief psychological interventions can lead to lasting improvement in student achievement.
- Interventions identify a psychological process that harms an outcome and aims to change the process.

Intervention = Kernel of Practice



How do kernels affect outcomes?

“Kernels” of practice: low-cost, targeted strategies (as opposed to comprehensive shifts in classroom practices), designed to reshape how students make sense of and view the environment or themselves

Interpersonal interventions

- Change how students see or relate to others
- Change the classroom cues and messages to be identity-affirming for all students'

Intrapersonal interventions

- Change how students see themselves
- Reframe students' negative thoughts and feelings

Summary of evidence-based kernels

Focus	Kernel	Key Aspect(s) of Math Identity Affected			
		Belonging	Growth Mindset	Perceived Utility	Math Anxiety
Interpersonal	Interest interviews	✓		✓	
	Honor mistakes		✓		✓
	Math role models	✓		✓	
Intrapersonal	Normalize uncertainty	✓	✓		
	Utility reflection			✓	
	Focused breathing				✓
	Emotion regulation				✓

Summary of evidence-based kernels: Interest interviews

Focus	Kernel	Key Aspect(s) of Math Identity Affected			
		Belonging	Growth Mindset	Perceived Utility	Math Anxiety
Interpersonal	Interest interviews	✓		✓	
	Honor mistakes		✓		✓
	Math role models	✓		✓	
Intrapersonal	Normalize uncertainty	✓	✓		
	Utility reflection			✓	
	Focused breathing				✓
	Emotion regulation				✓

Interest interviews



Dr. Crystal Jones
@drcrystaljones

there's a huge difference between "all are welcome" and "this was created with you in mind".

2:48 PM · Mar 17, 2019 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)



Image source: Jones, 2019

Interest interviews

Students perform better and learn faster when given personalized problems, especially when the problems are difficult and are for students identified as struggling in math.

Typical problem:

- A particular assembly line in an automobile company plant can produce thirteen cars every hour.

Problem based on student interests:

- A recent video blog that you posted on YouTube gets thirteen hits every hour.
- Your favorite restaurant, Steak 'n Shake, sells thirteen caramel pretzel shakes every hour.

Relevant factors

- ✓ Belonging
- Mindset
- Anxiety
- ✓ Utility

Content source: Walkington, 2013; Walkington, Sherman, & Howell, 2014

Interest interviews



Step 1. Assign interview questions for homework.

- This allows students time to think about their answers.

Step 2. Students interview each other in pairs during class.

- Ask students to record each other's answers using a phone or recorder.

Step 3. Students submit interview recordings to the teacher.

Relevant factors

- ✓ Belonging
- Mindset
- Anxiety
- ✓ Utility

Content source: Matthews, 2018; Walkington, 2013; Walkington, Sherman, & Howell, 2014

Interest interviews

You now have rich, student-generated data to use in your instruction throughout the year!

Use this data to personalize learning:

- Create powerful examples
- Facilitate discussions
- Connect math with students' lives and interests
- Foster a sense of belonging in the math classroom



Relevant factors

- ✓ Belonging
- Mindset
- Anxiety
- ✓ Utility

Content source: Matthews, 2018; Walkington, 2013; Walkington, Sherman, & Howell, 2014

Interest interviews

You now have rich, student-generated data to use in your instruction throughout the year!

**Only do it if
you plan to use
it!!**

Relevant factors

- ✓ Belonging
- Mindset
- Anxiety
- ✓ Utility



Content source: Matthews, 2018; Walkington, 2013; Walkington, Sherman, & Howell, 2014

Interest interviews

Sample interview questions

- What is your favorite thing to do in your free time?
- What's something you're saving up for or that you'd really like to buy? How much does it cost and how do you plan to save the money to buy it?
- What's something you're really good at outside of school? How do you use numbers during this activity?
- Where is a place you'd really like to visit?
- Tell me about the last time you used math in your everyday life outside of school.

Relevant factors

- ✓ Belonging
- Mindset
- Anxiety
- ✓ Utility

Content source: Matthews, 2018; Walkington, 2013; Walkington, Sherman, & Howell, 2014

Interest interviews

How could you rewrite this problem to incorporate your partner's interests?

Nathan's dog weighs 72 pounds. Nathan's dog weighs three times as much as Brian's dog. What is the combined weight of Nathan and Brian's dogs?

Relevant factors

- ✓ Belonging
- Mindset
- Anxiety
- ✓ Utility

Summary of evidence-based kernels: Honor mistakes

Focus	Kernel	Key Aspect(s) of Math Identity Affected			
		Belonging	Growth Mindset	Perceived Utility	Math Anxiety
Interpersonal	Interest interviews	✓		✓	
	Honor mistakes		✓		✓
	Math role models	✓		✓	
Intrapersonal	Normalize uncertainty	✓	✓		
	Utility reflection			✓	
	Focused breathing				✓
	Emotion regulation				✓

Honor mistakes as part of the learning process



Why honor mistakes?

A classroom culture that normalizes struggling and honors mistakes as part of the learning process may alleviate some pressure highly math-anxious students feel.



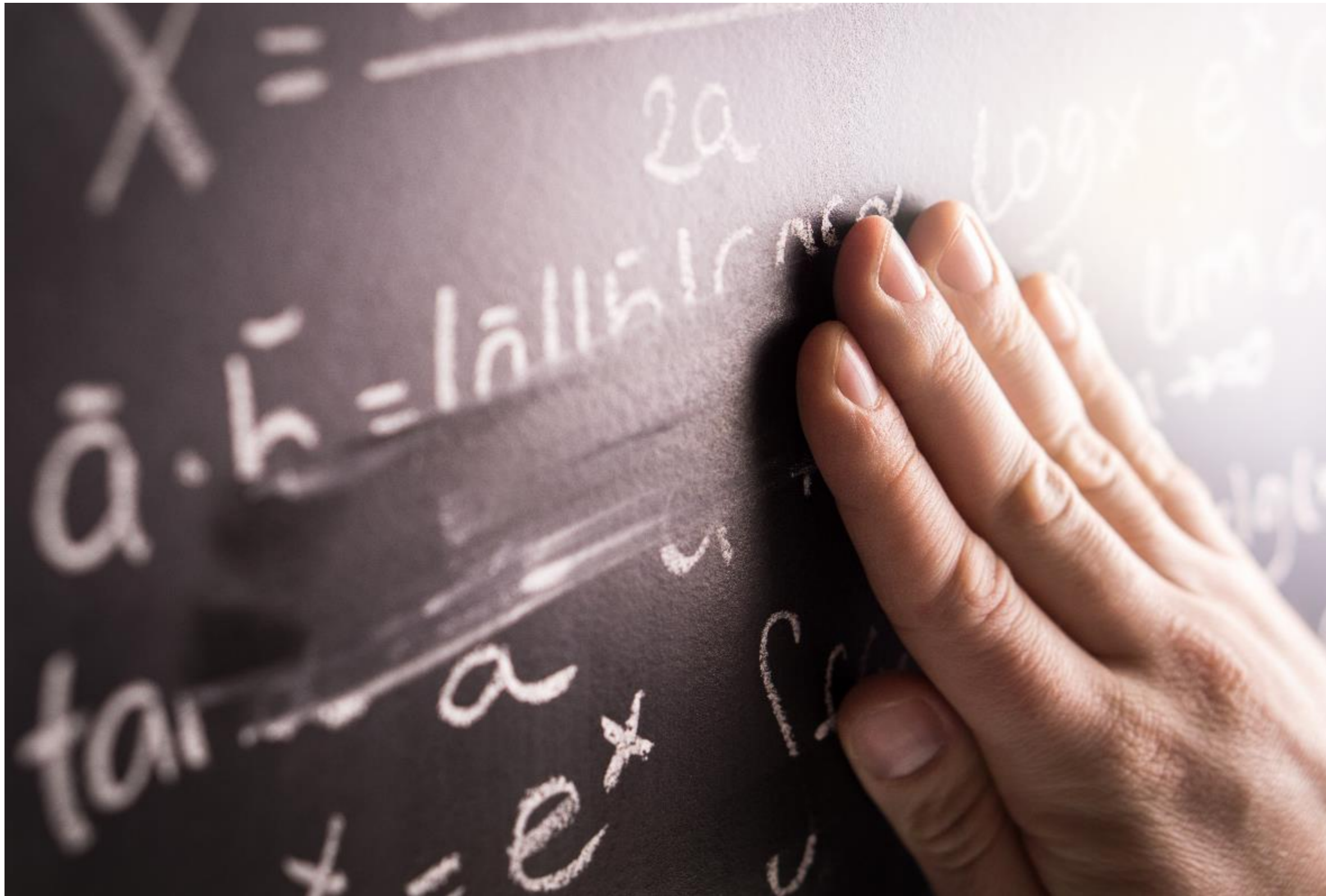
Relevant factors

- ✓ Belonging
- ✓ Mindset
- ✓ Anxiety
- Utility

Content source: Project for Education Research that Scales, 2015a

Inverted test activity

1. Give students a test/assignment completed by a fictitious student. This test will have several incorrect answers.
2. Have students correct the test. Ask them to identify the mistakes and explain how they would approach or solve the problems differently.



Relevant factors

- ✓ Belonging
- ✓ Mindset
- ✓ Anxiety
- Utility

Content source: Ransom, 2015

Mistakes Game

1. Have students complete a set of problems independently.
2. Put students into groups. Each group is assigned one problem to present to the class.
3. During the presentation, each group must make (at least) one intentional mistake in its solution.
4. The rest of the class listens to the group's presentation and tries to find the mistake(s).

My Favorite 'No'

1. Have students complete a warm-up problem at the beginning of class and write their solution on an index card.
2. Collect the index cards and sort them into yes's (correct answers) and no's (incorrect answers). As you sort, look for your favorite incorrect answer that will highlight the concept you are teaching.
3. Display your favorite incorrect answer, so everyone can see the student's work.
4. Begin by talking about what was right about the response. This way, the student whose work it is sees that there is something good in their work.
5. Then, use the mistake as an opportunity to clarify the student's misconceptions. Ask the class to identify where the student made the mistake and to explain how to fix it.

Relevant factors

- ✓ Belonging
- ✓ Mindset
- ✓ Anxiety
- Utility

Content source: Project for Education Research that Scales, 2015b



Decide and Defend: *Routines for Reasoning*



**Interpret
the Work**

Decide

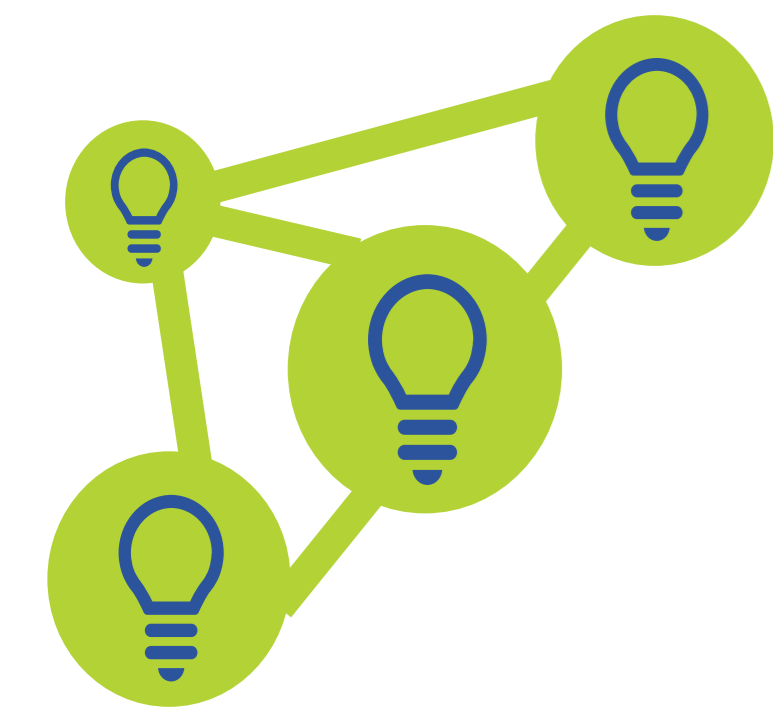
Draft

Defend

**Reflect
on
Learning**

- Relevant factors
- ✓ Belonging
 - ✓ Mindset
 - ✓ Anxiety
 - Utility

Content source: Fostering Math Practices, n.d.; Kelemanik et al., 2016



How does Decide and Defend support and build on the SMPs?



Standards for Mathematical Practice

1. Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
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3. Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.
4. Model with mathematics.
5. Use appropriate tools strategically.
6. Attend to precision.
7. Look for and make use of structure.
8. Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.

Relevant factors

- ✓ Belonging
- ✓ Mindset
- ✓ Anxiety
- Utility

Content source: Common Core State Standards Initiative, n.d.; Kelemanik et al., 2016



Group brainstorm



How could you use sentence frames or sentence starters to foster a classroom discussion around common mistakes?

Summary of evidence-based kernels: Math role models

Focus	Kernel	Key Aspect(s) of Math Identity Affected			
		Belonging	Growth Mindset	Perceived Utility	Math Anxiety
Interpersonal	Interest interviews	✓		✓	
	Honor mistakes		✓		✓
	Math role models	✓		✓	
Intrapersonal	Normalize uncertainty	✓	✓		
	Utility reflection			✓	
	Focused breathing				✓
	Emotion regulation				✓

Self-relevant role models

Daniel OtherBull grew up on the reservation. He spent most of his time playing with his friends and doing his schoolwork. Daniel went to middle school and high school on the reservation. In high school, he worked hard to earn good grades and joined many school clubs. During his last year of high school, Daniel applied to several colleges and was accepted to his top choice. Because of his good grades and involvement in school clubs, the university gave Daniel a scholarship to pay for his education. Daniel graduated from college in 4 years.

Relevant factors

- ✓ Belonging
- Mindset
- Anxiety
- Utility

Content source: Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015



Discussion



How can you adapt this activity to focus on belonging and math?



How can you adapt this activity to use with your students?

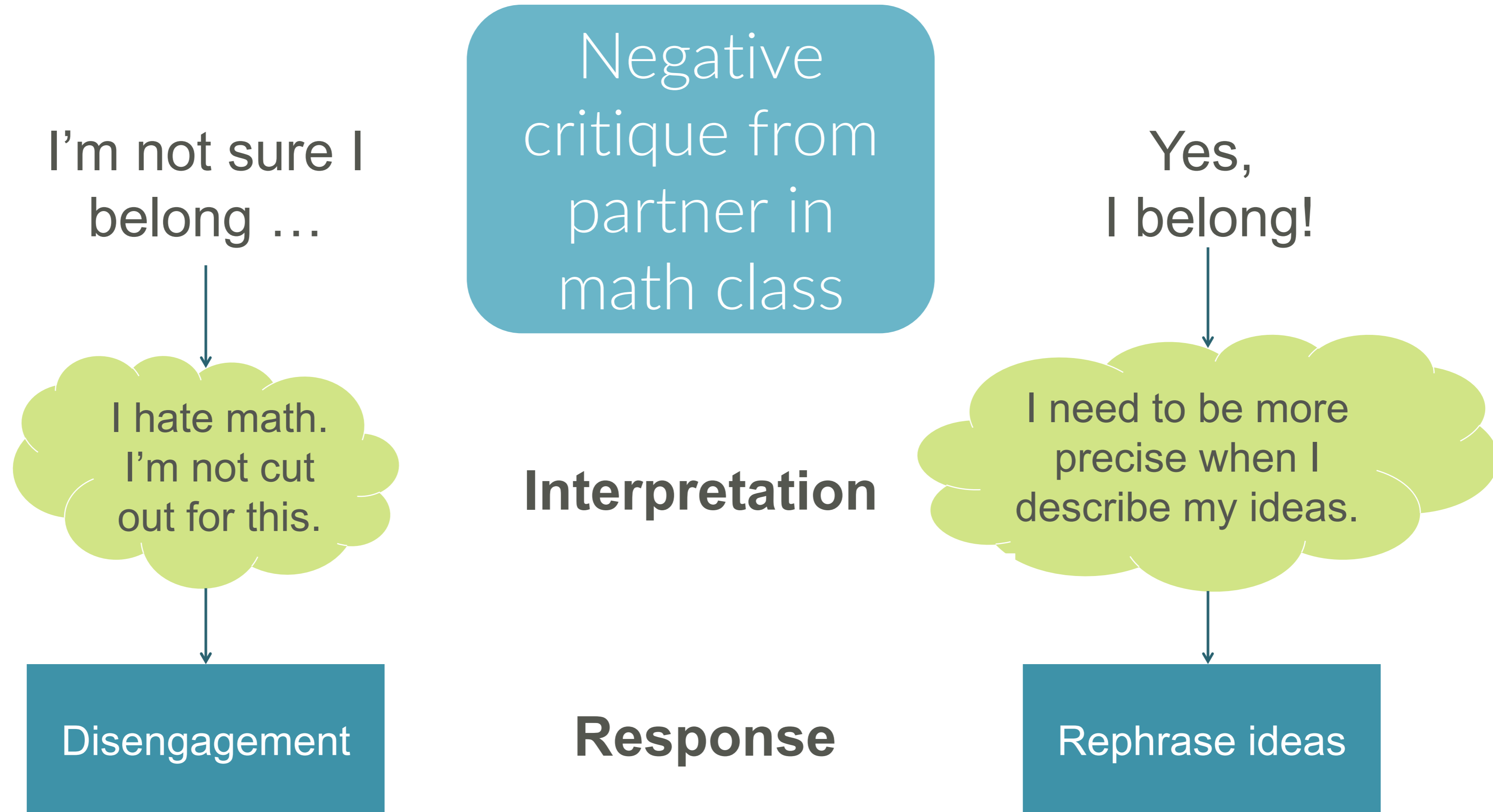


Break

Summary of evidence-based kernels: Normalize uncertainty

Focus	Kernel	Key Aspect(s) of Math Identity Affected			
		Belonging	Growth Mindset	Perceived Utility	Math Anxiety
Interpersonal	Interest interviews	✓		✓	
	Honor mistakes	✓	✓		✓
	Math role models	✓		✓	
Intrapersonal	Normalize uncertainty	✓	✓		
	Utility reflection			✓	
	Focused breathing				✓
	Emotion regulation				✓

Do I fit in intellectually?



Normalizing uncertainty activity

Help students frame setbacks and anxieties about belonging as **common** and **transitory** instead of proof that they don't belong.

I've been there, too.
It gets better.

Relevant factors

- ✓ Belonging
- ✓ Mindset
- ✓ Anxiety
- Utility

Content source: Walton & Cohen, 2007

Normalizing uncertainty activity

Reflective reading and writing exercise:

Part 1: Students hear first-person stories from more advanced students that convey that it's **typical to worry** about belonging and **normal to struggle** in school (regardless of race, gender, or other background characteristics), and that over time these concerns fade.

Authenticity is important!

Relevant factors

- ✓ Belonging
- ✓ Mindset
- ✓ Anxiety
- Utility

Content source: Walton & Cohen, 2007



Example message

When I started pre-algebra, I felt like I was in way over my head. It seemed like nothing in class was making sense at first. And I had a really hard time asking for help, because I had always done pretty well in math and I didn't want my teacher to think I was dumb. But after I got a D on the first quiz, I finally asked my friend if he wanted to study together. That really helped. I felt better when I realized he was having a hard time, too. Eventually I started to tell myself, "This is hard, but that's okay. It's meant to be!" So my advice is don't feel bad for admitting there's a lot left to learn. And don't be afraid to ask for help. You will get stuck and you will need the help.

Normalizing uncertainty activity

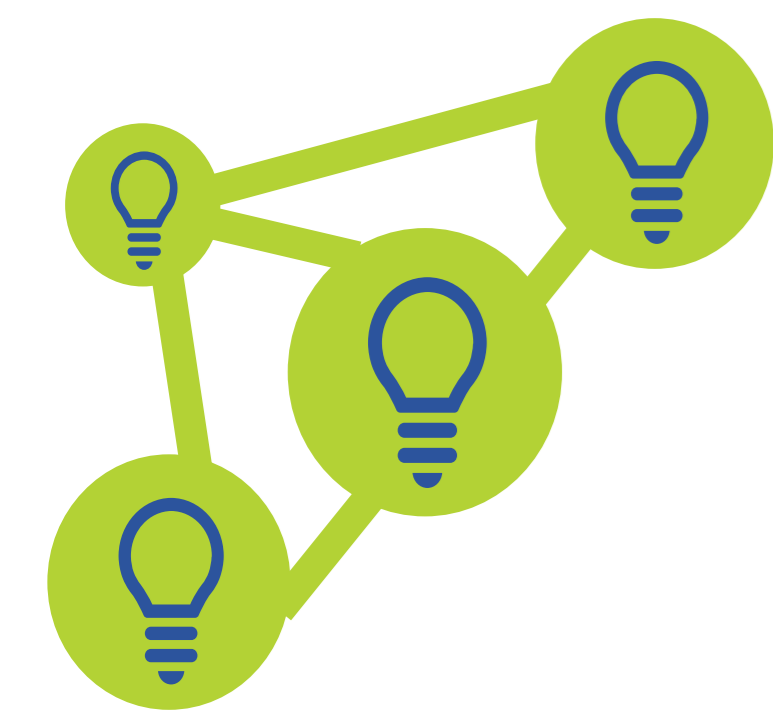
Reflective reading and writing exercise:

Part 2: Saying-is-believing: Writing exercises give students the opportunity to internalize the message.

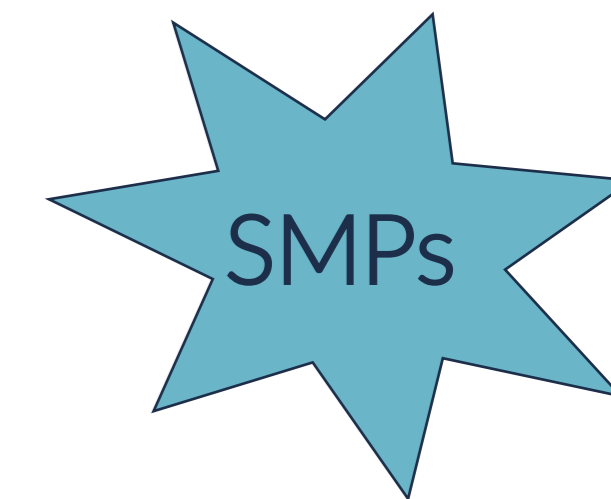
Relevant factors

- ✓ Belonging
- ✓ Mindset
- ✓ Anxiety
- Utility

Content source: Walton & Cohen, 2007



Normalizing uncertainty



Standards for Mathematical Practice

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Relevant factors

- ✓ Belonging
- ✓ Mindset
- ✓ Anxiety
- Utility

Content source: Common Core State Standards Initiative, n.d.



Discussion



What do you like about the activity?



What might you have to adapt to make it useful?

Summary of evidence-based kernels: Utility reflection

Focus	Kernel	Key Aspect(s) of Math Identity Affected			
		Belonging	Growth Mindset	Perceived Utility	Math Anxiety
Interpersonal	Interest interviews	✓		✓	
	Honor mistakes	✓	✓		✓
	Math role models	✓		✓	
Intrapersonal	Normalize uncertainty	✓	✓		
	Utility reflection			✓	
	Focused breathing				✓
	Emotion regulation				✓



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	Family Budget Planner							
2	http://www.vertex42.com/ExcelTemplates/family-budget-planner.html							
3								
4	Starting Balance	1,500						
5	Total Income	4,352	4,360	4,365	4,370	4,380	4,380	4,380
6	Total Expenses	3,925	3,925	3,910	3,905	3,895	3,890	3,920
7	NET (Income - Expenses)	427	435	455	465	485	490	460
8	Projected End Balance	1,927	2,362	2,817	3,282	3,767	4,257	4,717
9								
10		JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL
11								
12	INCOME							
13	Wages & Tips	4,200	4,200	4,200	4,200	4,200	4,200	4,200
14	Interest Income	112	120	125	130	140	140	140
15	Dividends	40	40	40	40	40	40	40
16	Gifts Received							
17	Refunds/Reimbursements							
18	Transfer From Savings							
19	Other							
20	Other							
21	Other							
22	Total INCOME	4,352	4,360	4,365	4,370	4,380	4,380	4,380
23								
24	HOME EXPENSES							
25	Mortgage/Rent	987	987	987	987	987	987	987
26	Electricity	85	85	85	85	85	90	120
27	Gas/Oil	100	100	85	80	70	60	60
28	Water/Sewer/Trash	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
29	Phone	120	120	120	120	120	120	120
30	Cable/Satellite	98	98	98	98	98	98	98
31	Internet	45	45	45	45	45	45	45

Perceived utility

When students reflect on the utility of math, they show:

- ✓ Greater utility value of math for daily life, future careers, and future life
- ✓ Increased math self-concept
- ✓ Increased effort in math
- ✓ Increased math achievement

Perceived utility activities

How can you guide students to understand how math is relevant to their lives?

- Discuss math utility with your students.
- Showcase older students who use math in their jobs.
- Incorporate hands-on activities that focus on relevant and engaging problems.

Relevant factors

- ✓ Belonging
- Mindset
- Anxiety
- ✓ Utility

Content source: Brisson et al., 2017; Gaspard et al., 2015



Math utility

SMPs

When am I ever going to use this?



Standards for Mathematical Practice

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6. Attend to precision.
7. Look for and make use of structure.
8. Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.

Relevant factors

- ✓ Belonging
- Mindset
- Anxiety
- ✓ Utility

Content source: Common Core State Standards Initiative, n.d.

Discussion



What strategies can you use to guide student reflection on math utility?

**Bring parents into
the conversation!**



Bring parents into the conversation!



- ✓ More conversations with parents about course choices, educational plans, and the importance of math and science
- ✓ More math and science courses completed
- ✓ More elective math courses
- ✓ Improved math and science ACT scores
- ✓ Increased STEM interest and career pursuits
- ✓ Increased number of college STEM courses

Relevant factors

- Belonging
- Mindset
- Anxiety
- ✓ Utility

Content source: Choices Ahead, n.d.; Harackiewicz et al., 2012; Rozek et al., 2017

Bring parents into the conversation!



- Encourage parents to communicate the utility value of STEM topics to their children
- Give parents advice on how best to communicate utility value
- Provide parents with resources and materials to aid these discussions:
 - Making Connections brochure
 - Choices Ahead weblinks:
<http://choicesahead.wceruw.org/Default.aspx>

Relevant factors

- Belonging
- Mindset
- Anxiety
- ✓ Utility

Content source: Choices Ahead, n.d.; Harackiewicz et al., 2012; Rozek et al., 2017

Bring parents into the conversation!

Design your “elevator pitch” about positive math identity

- What topics of math identity will you cover?
- What information will you include?
- How could you guide parents to reflect on their own math identity?



Summary of evidence-based kernels: Focused breathing

Focus	Kernel	Key Aspect(s) of Math Identity Affected			
		Belonging	Growth Mindset	Perceived Utility	Math Anxiety
Interpersonal	Interest interviews	✓		✓	
	Honor mistakes	✓	✓		✓
	Math role models	✓		✓	
Intrapersonal	Normalize uncertainty	✓	✓		
	Utility reflection			✓	
	Focused breathing				✓
	Emotion regulation				✓

Practice and teach mindfulness



Mindfulness is a focused awareness on the present, without judgment, to calmly attend to the present state.

Research shows that mindfulness can have benefits for both teachers and students.

Relevant factors

- Belonging
- Mindset
- ✓ Anxiety
- Utility

Content source: Brunyé et al., 2013; Khng, 2016; Shobe, Brewin, & Carmack, 2005



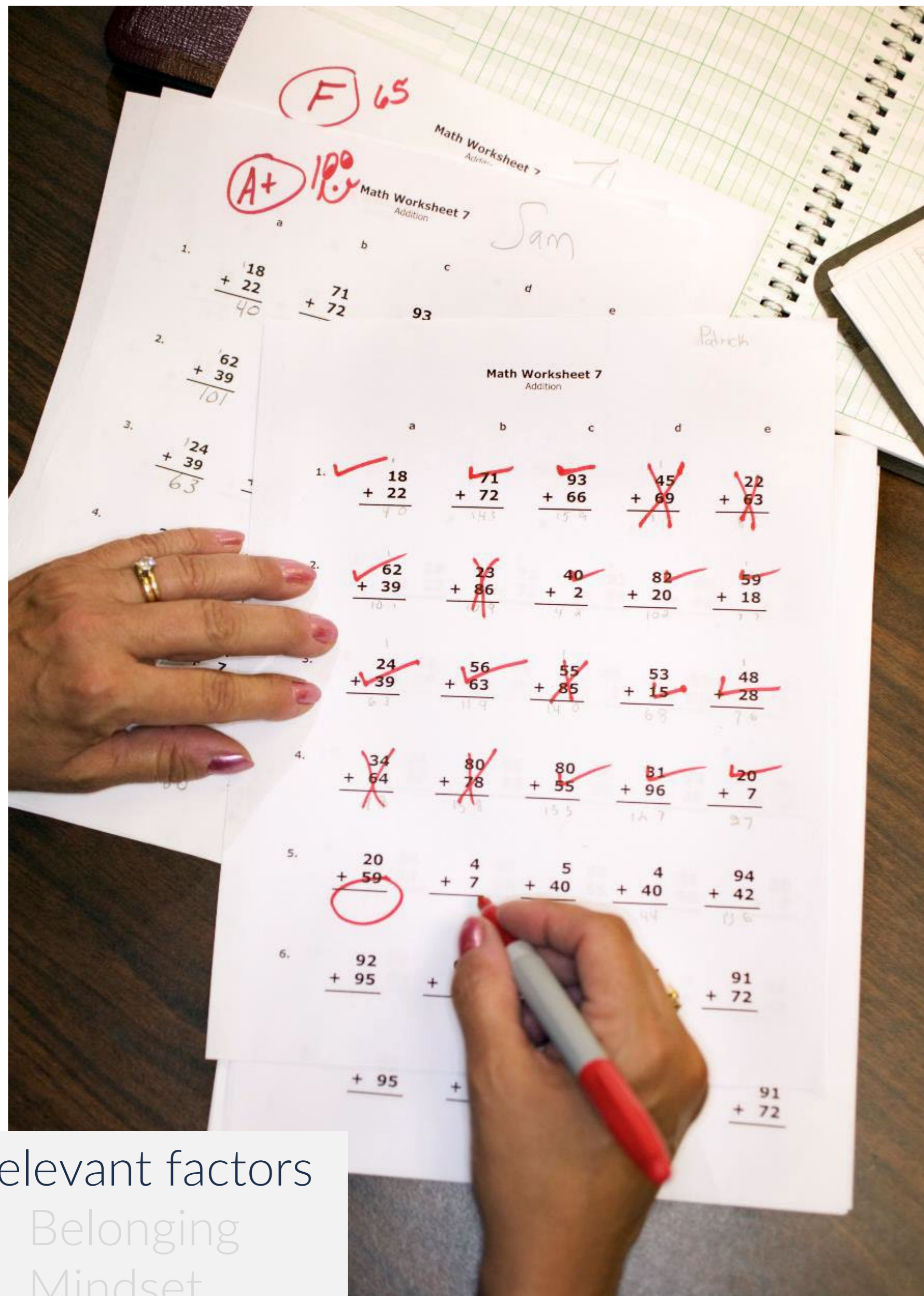
Focused breathing practice

Mindfulness in practice



Summary of evidence-based kernels: Emotion regulation

Focus	Kernel	Key Aspect(s) of Math Identity Affected			
		Belonging	Growth Mindset	Perceived Utility	Math Anxiety
Interpersonal	Interest interviews	✓		✓	
	Honor mistakes	✓	✓		✓
	Math role models	✓		✓	
Intrapersonal	Normalize uncertainty	✓	✓		
	Utility reflection			✓	
	Focused breathing				✓
	Emotion regulation				✓



Relevant factors

- Belonging
- Mindset
- ✓ Anxiety
- Utility

Emotion regulation exercises

- ✓ Improved exam performance for students from lower-income backgrounds
- ✓ Percentage of students from lower-income backgrounds who failed the course was reduced by 21 percent
- ✓ Students were more likely to re-appraise their test anxiety as adaptive at a later point in time



Content source: Jamieson, Peters, Greenwood. & Altose (2016)

Discussion



How would you incorporate focused breathing or emotion regulation into your classroom?



What other calming or mindfulness techniques have you used or seen that might be helpful for easing math anxiety?



Final reflection

- 1. Reflect on your thinking during the session on ways to apply the key concepts.*
- 2. For each identity aspect, select a kernel of practice that you think is most relevant for your classroom.*
- 3. Determine a topic/standard that would lend itself to utilizing the kernel of practice. Generate notes on how/when you may explicitly implement this kernel within your instruction.*

About REL Northwest

REL Northwest partners with practitioners and policymakers to use data and evidence to help solve educational problems that impede student success. We do this by:

- Conducting rigorous research and data analysis
- Delivering customized training, coaching, and technical support
- Providing engaging learning opportunities



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