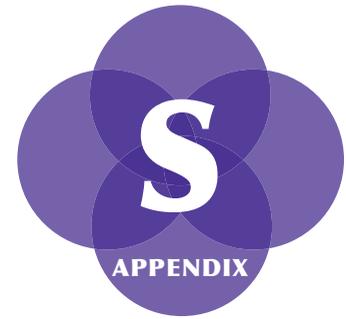


# ABILITY TO ACHIEVEMENT



- Purpose** The purpose of this activity is to engage teachers in discussions with colleagues about how to improve learning for all students in the classroom.
- Target Audience** Teachers, tutors, coaches, etc.
- Time** One to one and one-half hours.
- Materials** Self-stick dots, chart paper, or you could use a couple of computers and projectors.

## Overview

Teachers often state that some students do not have the ability to achieve, and that the teachers have to work extremely hard to move those students' learning forward.

This activity helps teachers come to grips with their perceptions of students' abilities, then collaboratively consider ways to improve students' achievement.

### Definitions:

*Ability:* Perceived aptitude.

*Achievement:* Evidence of attainment of knowledge.

## Process Protocol

**Step 1.** Before the meeting day, by grade levels or subject areas, have teachers choose a subject area, write the names of their students on self-stick dots, and then place the dots in one of the ability achievement quadrants, with respect to teachers' opinions of each student's ability to do the work and to achieve. Teachers might line up the dots for their class, color code the dots by gender or proficiency levels on an achievement measure, or any other meaningful way.

<i>Mathematics</i>	
<i>Ability +</i>	
List the names of the students you feel <b>have the ability to achieve</b> and do <i>not</i> achieve.	List the names of the students you feel <b>have the ability to achieve</b> and <i>do</i> achieve.
<i>Achievement -</i>	<i>Achievement +</i>
List the names of the students you feel <b>do not have the ability to achieve</b> and do <i>not</i> achieve.	List the names of the students you feel <b>do not have the ability to achieve</b> , but <i>do</i> achieve.
<i>Ability -</i>	

## Process Protocol

**Step 2.** During the meeting, have teachers discuss and list the common characteristics of the students who fall into each of these quadrants. If possible, add past proficiency levels next to the names of students. An example appears below.

	<i>Ability +</i>
<p>Does not do homework. Turns in poor quality work. Missing basic skills. Bored with school. Poor study habits. Attitude is defensive, negative. Distracts others. Lack of consistent parental support. No experience with self-responsibility for learning. “Not cool” with peers. Low self-esteem.</p>	<p>Goal oriented. Good study habits; has career/college in mind. Has good parent support and high expectations. Knows what is expected of her/him. Loves to learn. Positive attitude. Willing to help others.</p>
<i>Achievement -</i>	<i>Achievement +</i>
<p>Low IQ—no support from parents; parents don't want interventions. Has a “does not care” attitude. Always has excuses for not having the work done, or not having materials to do the work. Does not do homework. Seeks attention for inappropriate behaviors. Does not know how to read. Excessive Absences. Discouraged. Fear of failure.</p>	<p>Parental support and encouragement. RtI is working. Lacks basic skills. Repeatedly seeking teacher approval. Poor organizational skills. Does not show higher-level thinking. Achieves with one-on one assistance. Does not have a true picture of ability. Gaps in learning.</p>
	<i>Ability -</i>

**Process Protocol (Continued)**

**Step 3.** Brainstorm what processes need to be in place in order to help all students achieve. Consider “What can we do in every quadrant to move these students forward.” If possible, have the longitudinal individual student growth profile available for each child during this discussion.

<i>Ability +</i>	
<p>We can—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find out students' interests and make sure the lessons incorporate their interests.</li> <li>• Find out what the basic skills gaps are.</li> <li>• Provide one-on-one support to get skills up to par.</li> <li>• Help students develop study skills and help them get in the practice of doing homework during the school day.</li> <li>• Demonstrate value of homework—ensure that it is not “busy” work.</li> </ul>	<p>We need to—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep challenging the students.</li> <li>• Get these students to help other students who are having difficulty.</li> <li>• Have these students model and describe how they study.</li> <li>• Have these students talk and write about careers they want to pursue.</li> </ul>
<i>Achievement -</i>	<i>Achievement +</i>
<p>We can—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find out students' interests and make sure the lessons incorporate their interests.</li> <li>• Convince parents of the value of interventions.</li> <li>• Find out what the basic skills gaps are.</li> <li>• Provide one-on-one support to get skills up to par.</li> <li>• Help students develop study skills while helping them get in the practice of doing homework during the school day.</li> <li>• Make sure the interventions we use are meeting the learning needs of the students.</li> </ul>	<p>We need to—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep challenging the students.</li> <li>• Have these students model and describe how they study.</li> <li>• Make sure they interact with the high ability students.</li> </ul>
<i>Ability -</i>	

**Step 4.** Determine what needs to be done schoolwide to move all students to the highest quadrant.

*For example:* the teachers in the school, above, determined that they need to clarify their RtI process, and improve their diagnostic assessments so they can have the structures in place to close basic skills gaps for all students.

### Comments to the Facilitator

Done well, this activity will help teachers see what processes need to change to get different results. It will also, hopefully, change some belief systems about student abilities. Perceived abilities might be clouding the teachers' interactions with students and, therefore, students' achievement levels.

As can be seen in the picture below, the axes can be changed for ability/achievement to ability/motivation or any other descriptions that fit your school's issues.

Secondary teachers might want to start with one class.

