SHP Counselors and Scholars enjoying the June Expo

STARR HILL PATHWAYS
Self-Efficacy Research Brief

Our research team works to show how career readiness programs like Starr Hill Pathways help students. It's our job to learn how Starr Hill Pathways impacts our students' future successes! We collaborate with program staff, schools, and the university to study the key skills that middle and high school students need to succeed. We believe it's important to share what we've learned with our community.

The goal of this brief is to make sure people can access the information we've gathered — what research already tells us and what we're looking for in our program. We hope that by sharing this we can spark important conversations between families, teachers, counselors, and community partners.

This brief focuses on Self-Efficacy for middle schoolers. We hope it explains these ideas, shares details from our study, and gives readers ways to help middle schoolers build their career confidence.

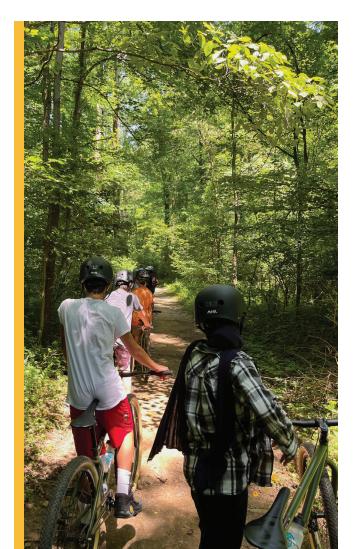UNIVERSITY _of_ VIRGINIA | Center for Community Partnerships

SELF-EFFICACY

Self-efficacy is the belief that a person can do what it takes to reach their goals. In other words, students with strong self-efficacy believe they can take action to change their future. For example, a student with strong self-efficacy believes that with enough studying and preparation, they can do well on a hard test. There are different kinds of self-efficacy depending on the goals students have. At Starr Hill Pathways, we focus on two types: career self-efficacy and academic self-efficacy.

- Career self-efficacy: a person believes they can work hard to reach their career goals
- Academic self-efficacy: a person believes they can do what's needed to succeed in school

We focus on improving our students' self-efficacy because of the benefits this skill can provide. For middle school students, having a higher career self-efficacy means that students will be more engaged, motivated, and persistent in pursuing their future goals. They are likely to have higher self-esteem and more likely to finish college. This is especially important for students who experience achievement gaps, as higher self-efficacy can also lead to increased academic success.

WHAT WE STUDY

The research team works with local school districts to collect data on the career self-efficacy of 6th, 7th, and 8th graders. We use the Middle School Self-Efficacy Scale to ask our middle schoolers how they feel about statements like:

- "I can determine what occupation would be best for me"
- "I can decide what schooling I will need to achieve my career goal"
- "I can resist attempts of parents or friends to push me into a career I believe is not for me"

In 10th grade, students in Starr Hill Pathways and the local district take the Vocational/Educational Self-Efficacy Scale (VESES) survey. This helps us understand how students feel about their future education and career paths. Students are asked how confident they feel about tasks like:

- Knowing what to expect in a job interview
- Successfully completing a college degree
- Demonstrating positive work habits to an employer

With this information, we can learn where Starr Hill Scholars start the program and how they grow in their self-efficacy over time. We also share our analyses with schools to support ALL students in building their self-efficacy.

Above: SHP Scholar presenting work at the June Expo
Left: Mountain Biking during recreation time

SHP Scholars visiting the National Museum of African American History and Culture

STRATEGIES FOR INCREASING SELF-EFFICACY

Youth confidence grows when students discover purpose beyond themselves. This is especially true for marginalized students. Self-Efficacy improves when students can:

- Affirm their strengths through mastery experiences

  Do students recognize their strengths? Can these strengths be connected to possible career and academic paths for their future?

- Regulate their emotions and foster a positive mindset

  How are the emotions that a student is feeling connected to their overall self-esteem and growth mindset?

- Look towards the future with goal-oriented thinking

  What do you want in your future? What are the steps you can take to get there?

- See models of their future paths through mentorship and representation

  Who are your role models or mentors?

OUR COMMUNITY

Career and academic self-efficacy is especially important for vulnerable students, but it's not just for Starr Hill Pathways Scholars. We want ALL middle school students to feel like they can accomplish what they need to succeed in their future careers.

We all have a part to play in building this important skillset in our youth. We hope our research gives families, counselors, teachers, mentors, tutors, researchers, and neighbors helpful ideas for supporting young people in building self-efficacy. Research shows that this can improve students' academic performance, boost their self-esteem, and, most importantly, help them create a successful future that's right for them as individuals.

WHO WE ARE

Starr Hill Pathways research is led by a team of individuals at Center for Community Partnerships at UVA, the School of Education and Human Development at UVA, and researchers at Albemarle County Public Schools and Charlottesville City Schools.

Below are key members of the research team:

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