
“I did the ‘highway to graduation’ visualization with my students recently, and I was particularly moved by one student, a bright young man who is having a difficult time. His mother recently had a baby, and he has taken on a significant role in caring for the infant, when he is not in school. This young man is a gifted athlete but is not participating in sports at the moment because he is unable to obtain transportation to and from practice. He also has not been doing his schoolwork. He has never been a ‘worker bee,’ but in the past he always did the minimum to get by. He is now not even doing this.

He did not receive a scholarship to our high school and mentioned that he wanted to attend his local public school because he knows he will not be required to work. This really made me sad. I talked with him, and I tried to encourage him. I let him know that I believe in him, and I know he would do well anywhere because he is smart and beyond capable. Unfortunately, this just seemed to bounce right off of him. However, when he visualized the house he could purchase when he completed his degree, I saw a flash of hope. He wants to live in a neighborhood with houses, not apartment buildings. He visualized his brothers and his mom living with him, and he wants everyone to have their own bedroom. He wants to feel in control, not worried. He was able to connect a sense of control to becoming an attorney.

I tried to capitalize on this new found motivation/inspiration. I told him I believed he would be a fantastic attorney. We talked about the college he would attend. College would just be one step along the path toward becoming an attorney and purchasing his home. He wants to attend a college with a good basketball program, so that he can study to become a professional while playing his favorite sport. We talked about the work we are doing now in the eighth grade and how our studies now are just one step along the road to realizing his dream.

In the time since we did the visualization activity, he has been putting forth more effort. He turned an assignment in to me yesterday—his first completed assignment in weeks. I am encouraged by this response. I will continue to help by relating his current work to his visualization. As suggested in the workbook, I may give him an appropriate tangible item to denote his progress, perhaps a ball cap from his favorite team. Then I will give him pins to attach to the ball cap as he achieves milestones, such as successfully completing eighth grade, doing well on his first exam in high school, etc.

The ‘highway to graduation’ visualization is a wonderful activity. Students seem to be able to think more concretely about graduation, and the road leading to graduation, in a more positive light by connecting it to a concrete dream.”

–Candace Schaffner
Teacher
