Introducing Effort Tracking

Education isn't black and white, but one thing on which we can agree is that we want *all* our students to do their *individual* best at a given time and to reach their full academic *potential*. However, progress, success and failure at school, are gauged by academic achievement measures and reported through academic grades. These indicators of success reward aptitude rather than highlighting whether a student is trying their best.

Students who are naturally high-academic fliers experience success with little or no effort, whereas those who struggle may never experience success despite all their efforts. This reinforces fixed mindsets about ability in both types of student and is potentially damaging to the academic growth of *all* but the most academically buoyant students.

Outcomes of Learning

Examinations, tests, and academic results measure all students with the same *'yard-stick'* and take no account of their individual potential. Comparing relative achievement between students can be misleading for parents, teachers and even students, as it does not give a full picture of *real* progress and growth.

Research (efforttracking.com/research) shows what we empirically know as teachers, that comparing relative achievement:

- *reinforces fixed-mindsets* in students *and* teachers about a student's ability
- *stereotypes* high and low achieving students
- advantages *some* students over others (especially those with supportive home backgrounds)
- *disadvantages students* without support networks
- can lead to *problematic behaviour* (e.g. bored/disruptive) in the classroom.

> *"Effort tracking is important as it acknowledges those students who try very hard but do not achieve a high academic result"*
> *Teacher/ Year 10 Pastoral Tutor*

Higher achieving students are often identified as: *bright*, *intelligent,* or *gifted*, implying that they don't have to try hard to get good grades (even if they *are* actually making their best possible efforts).

Very few lower achieving students find negative achievement grades or comments encouraging or motivating. Most of these students give up, and often identify themselves as *slow*, *untalented* or *stupid*. The few remarkable students who persist, are rarely rewarded or acknowledged as successful by school systems despite their efforts.

Changing the Focus towards the *Processes* of Learning

Building on the important work of Dweck, Duckworth, Hattie, Seligman and others, Effort Tracking focuses on shifting schools' cultural *success-focus* from *academic achievement* alone, towards more nurturing indicators of long-term *growth through effort*. A focus on effort, reduces the stress and anxiety felt by many students from the pressures of high-stakes tests and examinations and decreases the *don't try, can't fail* mindset, prevalent in many students' thinking.

But how do you Measure Effort?

Effort Tracking as a methodology (the *Effort Tracking System*), breaks-up student **academic effort** into three dimensions:

- Academic **Diligence** (*Operative* or *Action-based* Effort)
- Classroom **Engagement** (*Cognitive* or *Brain-based* Effort)
- Socially-Responsible **Behaviour** (*Social-Emotional* or *Person-based* Effort)

Each effort dimension has its own rubric and grading levels:

Importantly, Effort Tracking includes *both teacher and student perspectives* of these dimensions. Individual grades are aggregated across all subjects to establish a higher-order *Effort Score* for each student, indicating to what extent a student is *doing their best* or *pressing on the gas pedal* at a particular time. Students track their effort with engaging, interactive dashboards, using their data to help align perceptions of diligence, engagement, and behaviour with their teachers.
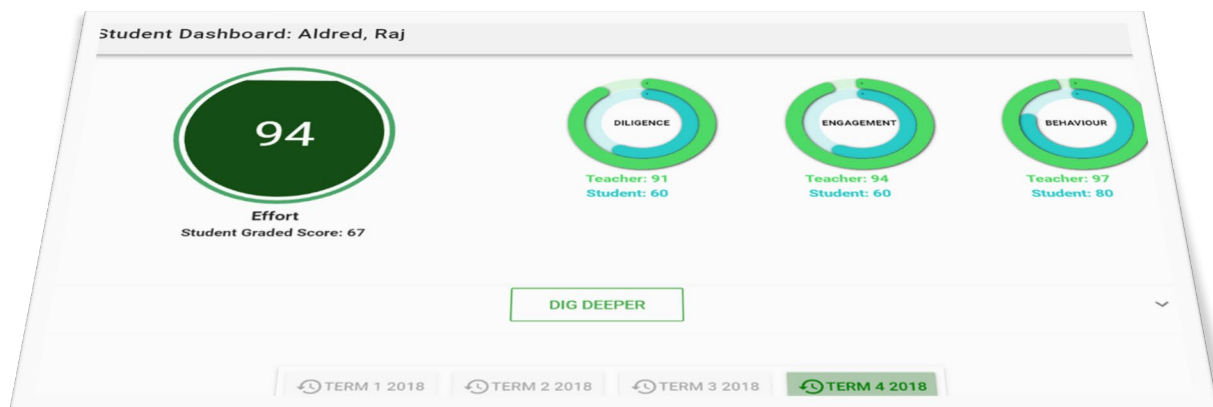
"It gives me confidence and reassurance … to make sure I understand how to improve and be on the same page as my teachers"

Year 9 Girl

Data-Driven Conversations

Effort Scores are used to frame *forward-looking*, *student-led*, *goal-setting* conversations between students and teachers at the beginning of each new term. These *coaching conversations*, allow students to reflect on differences in student and teacher perceptions of effort from the previous term, help to set measurable goals for the term ahead, and develop shared expectations of classroom behaviours and approaches to learning.

The Positive Effects of Effort Tracking:

The Effort Tracking system:

- Highlights *clear, data-backed insights* into student growth and efficacy
- Provides a reliable mechanism to recognise and *encourage all students'* efforts
- *Motivates* and nurtures low-achieving students
- *Identifies* high achieving students who are not being challenged
- Fosters *growth-mindsets* in students and teachers
- Helps *align* teacher and student expectations
- Develops a systemic *focus* on the *processes of learning*
- Builds *positive educational* values and wellbeing
- *Promotes* better academic results.

School Implementation Framework

The Effort Tracking Implementation Framework has been developed to help and support schools to implement a school-wide Effort Tracking program. It is divided into three phases: 1. *Planning*, 2. *Pilot Program* and 3. *Full-scale Implementation.* It highlights all stages and details all considerations required, to successfully implement Effort Tracking in your school.

Further information

Additional information about Effort Tracking can be found on our website at www.efforttracking.com or by contacting us at admin@efforttracking.com.