The ASPIRE Strategy is developed with grant funding from the U.S. Department of Education Strengthening Institutions Program (Title III) to increase student retention and success.
1 Organization
Organization is the ability to arrange ideas and information in a coherent and accessible structure using skills like time management, note taking and critical reading.

2 Self Assessment
Self assessment is the ability to observe, analyze and evaluate one's own abilities and performance in order to reflect, to make decisions, to enact change and to improve.

3 Communication
Communication is the ability to read, write, listen and speak fluently and effectively for diverse audiences and purposes.

4 Collaboration
Collaboration is the ability to learn and work together with other people usually to accomplish a common goal, such as the completion of a project or the creation of a product.

5 Creative Thinking
Creative thinking is the ability to look at problems or situations from different perspectives and to imagine unique solutions and ways of thinking and/or to produce or invent something new.

6 Critical Thinking
Critical thinking is the ability to identify, analyze and synthesize information to construct thoughts and beliefs and to make decisions.
What Do Students Do When They Are Organized?

Keep a calendar, prepare for class, attend class, complete assignments on time, take notes in class, take notes while reading texts, persevere, manage their time, study, do better on tests, ask good questions, form study groups, persist, set goals, write drafts, prioritize, plan.

Why Teach Organization?

Teaching students to organize equips them with the skills and tools they need for academic and professional success. Organized students feel more confident and competent, achieve more and participate at higher levels. Being organized also reduces the anxiety that many students experience when they encounter new information and new learning environments or study for and take tests. When students are organized, they are more efficient and effective and have more time and energy for learning and engaging with course content.

How Do I Teach Organization?

Teaching organization begins with creating a coherent syllabus with clear course objectives, course outcomes, student expectations and a course calendar. Clearly organizing a course gives students a model and a structure from which to build their own organizational skills. Integrating note taking, study skills and test-taking skills into the curriculum also benefits students because these aspects of organization often require guided practice to master them. It can also be helpful to give students graphic organizers, note-taking templates and test-taking timelines at the beginning of a course. Once students develop organizational skills, they can more easily access and retain knowledge and better demonstrate their learning.

How Do I Assess Organization?

Assessments of organization measure the ability of students to comprehend and remember course material, to complete course work and assignments on time, to study and to do well on tests. Assessments may include assigning students to share their notes with the class, to document their time management or study skills for a grade or to turn in drafts of an assignment to show the development of their thinking.

What Is Critical Thinking?

Critical thinking is the ability to identify, analyze and synthesize information to construct thoughts and beliefs and to make decisions.

What Do Students Do When They Are Critically Thinking?

Organize, critique, apply, problem solve, judge, reason, understand, construct, hypothesize, strategize, research, identify, collect, evaluate, integrate, analyze, synthesize, reflect, relate, participate, challenge, respond, discuss, debate, interpret, infer, clarify.

Why Teach Critical Thinking?

Teaching students to think critically enables them to actively engage in their learning, to produce knowledge and to contribute to their field of study. Integrating critical thinking into the curriculum leads to richer class discussions, increased student learning and greater satisfaction in courses for both students and teachers. Many view critical thinking as fundamental to a successful democracy because people need this skill to make good decisions about their lives and the world in which we live.

How Do I Teach Critical Thinking?

Teaching critical thinking requires defining course objectives that include application and analysis of knowledge, opportunities to explore and organize ideas and articulate individual and group thinking. To teach critical thinking, construct a classroom environment that promotes genuine inquiry and problem solving with real life issues. Include critical reading so students learn how to evaluate, make inferences and draw conclusions based on evidence from texts. Also have students consistently complete writing assignments that first require them to put their thinking on paper and then build to formal writing assignments where students critique the ideas expressed by others (e.g., classmates, published authors, bloggers) and integrate their own thoughts and beliefs.

How Do I Assess Critical Thinking?

Assessments of critical thinking measure the ability of students to clarify, analyze and evaluate information and ideas, to articulate and support their own arguments and to make decisions. Assessments that require students to solve real life problems, present their findings and share their learning with authentic audiences.

What Is Organization?

Organization is the ability to arrange ideas and information in a coherent and accessible structure using skills like time management, note taking and critical reading.
What Do Students Do When They Are Creatively Thinking?

Explore, generate, experiment, imagine, innovate, adapt, create, envision, discover, produce, design, play, associate, invent, brainstorm, mind map, conceptualize, visualize, devise, establish, predict, connect, relate.

Why Teach Creative Thinking?

Teaching students to think creatively enables them to actively engage in their learning, to discover new ways of thinking and to contribute to their field of study. Integrating creative thinking into the curriculum leads to richer class discussions, increased student learning and greater satisfaction in courses for both students and teachers. Many view creative thinking as one of the most important skills that students need to thrive in the global economy as innovation becomes more and more crucial to success.

How Do I Teach Creative Thinking?

Teaching creative thinking requires defining course objectives that include elaboration and generation of knowledge and opportunities to experiment and create presentations, portfolios, products and/or inventions. Include assignments that have more than one answer and require students to use their imagination while discovering and critiquing the works of others (e.g., texts, visual art, innovations). Have students free write, draw concept maps, simulate and experiment with new genres and technologies. To teach creative thinking, construct a classroom environment that welcomes complex questions and diverse ideas and encourages students to think originally.

How Do I Assess Creative Thinking?

Assessments of creative thinking measure the ability of students to produce new knowledge and to represent it in innovative ways. Design assessments that challenge students to show what they have learned and how they are thinking that requires them to demonstrate their originality and creativity both individually and in groups.

What Is Creative Thinking?

Creative thinking is the ability to look at problems or situations from different perspectives and to imagine unique solutions and ways of thinking and/or to produce or invent something new.

What Do Students Do When They Self Assess?

Set goals, grow, develop, struggle, decide, persist, reflect, change, learn, observe, analyze, judge, evaluate, get motivated, define criteria, achieve, persevere, improve, plan, critique, assess, succeed.

Why Teach Self Assessment?

Teaching students to assess their own work and performance motivates them to learn and to take greater responsibility for their learning. Through self assessment, students become more aware of who they are as learners, better able to identify their strengths and challenges and define academic and professional goals. When students take an active role in identifying the criteria for assessment, they invest themselves more in the learning process and outcomes and succeed at higher levels because they have a deeper understanding of their process. Through self assessment, students reinforce what they have learned and create plans for improving their performance. Self assessment also builds student confidence and efficacy and enables students to better advocate for themselves.

How Do I Teach Self Assessment?

Teaching self assessment begins by providing students with very clear criteria and expectations as they start to observe, analyze and evaluate their performance and their work. Once students become adept at using set criteria for self assessment, have them create their own criteria as a way to build self-awareness and self-management skills. Include time for reflection as part of teaching self assessment so students fully integrate what they learn each time they complete an assessment. Clarify with students that self assessment evaluates their work and performance and is not an assessment of them as individuals.

How Do I Assess Self Assessment?

Assessments of self assessment measure the ability of students to accurately analyze and evaluate their work and performance. Give students feedback through dialogue on their self assessments and have them give feedback to each other as a way to encourage conversations about learning. Provide time for students to then use the feedback to make improvements.

What Is Self Assessment?

Self assessment is the ability to observe, analyze and evaluate one’s own abilities and performance in order to reflect, to make decisions, to enact change and to improve. Examples of self assessment include having students correct their own homework or use a rubric to grade their own tests, papers or projects.

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What Do Students Do When They Are Collaborating?
Talk, share, discuss, integrate, listen, differentiate, agree, interact, communicate, investigate, commit, connect, lead, contribute, work, negotiate, engage, learn, empathize, critique, analyze, apply, disagree, think, learn, retain, write, relate.

Why Teach Collaboration?
Teaching students to collaborate strengthens their ability to relate and connect with other people from diverse backgrounds, to solve problems and to think critically and creatively. Students retain more information when they collaborate and often construct deeper knowledge than when they work individually. Collaborating also teaches students how to communicate better as they learn how to listen and express their ideas with confidence. When students collaborate with their peers and with faculty, students become more self-directed and active as learners. Once students learn to collaborate and their engagement increases, they are better able to learn and retain complex course content.

How Do I Teach Collaboration?
Teaching collaboration involves requiring students to work together informally and formally in pairs and in small groups. To teach collaboration, have students consistently talk to each other about their ideas, the course content and relevant issues. Engage students by having them collaborate in asking and answering questions and checking their understanding throughout the class using techniques like pair/share and collaborative note taking or concept mapping. Design group work that builds positive interdependence and allow students to direct their learning, resolve conflicts and develop group processes. Create assignments that challenge students to apply their learning as a group in real world situations and consider students as collaborators in building course content and teaching courses.

How Do I Assess Collaboration?
Assessments of collaboration measure the ability of students to learn and work with other people and to accomplish assigned goals. When designing group work, include both individual and group accountability and assess the group process as well as group projects and products. Have students also assess themselves and their groups as they develop their collaborative process and reflect on what is working and what is not.
What Do Students Do When They Are Communicating?
Question, survey, recite, review, read, draft, edit, rehearse, pronounce, intonate, hear, speak, listen, understand, focus, assess, evaluate, remember, recognize, acknowledge, research, argue, debate, discuss, collaborate, translate.

Why Teach Communication?
Teaching students to communicate enables them to access information, to articulate their thinking, and to become active participants in and out of the classroom. Integrating reading, writing, listening and speaking into the curriculum ensures that students have a strong, literacy-rich foundation on which to build their content knowledge. Teaching students to communicate fluently and effectively also supports them in becoming dynamic, global citizens.

How Do I Teach Communication?
Teaching communication involves requiring students to read, write, listen and speak during class so they have the opportunity to consistently practice these skills with their peers and teachers as guides. To teach communication, give students texts, visuals and tasks that accommodate different learning styles and levels so all students can participate in reading, writing, listening and speaking as they learn course content. Have students complete assignments that require them to critically read, write for diverse purposes and communicate effectively with their peers and authentic audiences.

How Do I Assess Communication?
Assessments of communication measure the ability of students to access and understand written, visual and spoken information and to write and speak appropriately for a range of audiences. Create assessments that require students to demonstrate what they have learned from reading, write using the conventions of various genres and to speak professionally. Have assignments that show them that their words and the ways in which they use them can make a difference in their lives and in the world around them.

What Is Communication?
Communication is the ability to read, write, listen and speak fluently and effectively for diverse audiences and purposes.