



Enhancing your Success at Comberton Sixth Form



VESPA Mindset



Introduction

Over the last 15-20 years, much research into the psychology of success has been conducted and the findings are very interesting. Achieving the best grades possible in your A Levels or L3 BTEC studies is more than just learning the specification content. A particular set of skills and an advanced mindset is necessary. In other words, your attitude, self-beliefs about abilities and self-awareness of your own goals are essential to being an effective and successful KS5 student.

This is good news for you! Your mindset and skill set can be developed and enhanced throughout your studies and life in general. Students who achieve higher than their minimum target grades have developed these required skills and Mindset to support their success. Your abilities can be developed!



‘Expect more, get more, be more’.

VESPA: The Five Elements of Success

Vision



Do you know what you want to achieve?
Why are you studying BTEC or A Levels?
What grades do you want to achieve in your A Levels?
What career are you interested in?

Effort



How many hours of independent study do you do?
How do you compare to the most committed students in your year group?

Systems



How do you organise your learning and your time?
Do you have any study or time management methods or techniques to draw on?

Practice



How do you practice to improve your study skills?
How do you practice to improve your time management?

Attitude



How do you respond to setbacks?
How do you respond to constructive criticism?
How do you overcome setbacks or adapt your plans?

V x **E** x **S** x **P** x **A** = success (great grades)

This equation is correct to have multiplication signs rather than addition signs because it is about ALL 5 elements being present. Having all 5 elements as part of your mindset will lead to success. Missing one will greatly reduce or impair your chances of success (great grades).

Vision



It is very difficult to answer the question ‘what is your long-term goal in life?’ This is very general and abstract. However, it is a vital element to succeeding in life. To make this more meaningful you need to break it down into short term goals that will keep you on track and give you a sense of achievement.

Have you considered what sort of person you want to be when you’re 21...or when you’re 30? What experiences, training or qualifications will enable you to become this person? Here are some tips to help you realise your own vision:

Place a picture of the university you want to attend on the inside of one of your folders so you see it every time you open that folder. This will remind you of your goal and give you a focus every day!

Have positive /inspirational quotes posted in key locations that will catch your eye and give you a motivation boost to stay on track with your homework, etc.

Put a photo of your chosen career or a person you admire and would like to emulate in your own life where it will be a frequent reminder of your goals.

Can you think of other ways you can create visual reminders and prompts that would work for you? Examples might be a “mood board” or your choice of music to play at the start of the day or after a hard day at

Dream vs. Goals

Do you have dreams that you’ve talked about, but never followed up with action? Dreams that deep down you would really like to turn into goals? Are your goals push or pull? The following pages have specific activities that will support you in identifying and/or clarifying your academic or personal goals and how to achieve them.

Effort



“Nothing worth having was ever achieved without effort”.
Theodore Roosevelt

What is your level of commitment to your studies? How much work are you willing to do?

First start by thinking “how hard do your friends work?” It is common that friends tend to work as hard (or as little) as each other.

However, working hard alone does not simply lead to results. It’s *how* you work that is also vital and this links to another section in this handbook: Practice.

Effort is a little like habit. Start focusing on creating new study habits, and be prepared to stick with them for at least 30 days. Then they will become the norm and stop feeling like an imposition. Research suggests that it takes 30 days to create a new habit, this means you do need to persist. Having a realistic timetable of when you can study each subject for 5 hours across the week is the first step to enhancing your effort. Recent UK research shows that high achieving A Level students commit to 20-30 hours of independent study every week.

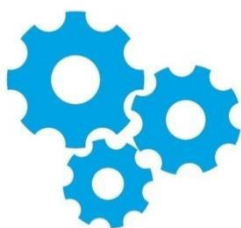
Now, you are thinking “how would I do that number of hours?” The starting point is to commit to a small increase first and keep committing week on week.

Think “3 Rs”:

Reminder: What is the trigger that will get you studying? Is this clearing your study space? Or making a drink/getting a snack, or setting an alarm to remind you to start to study?

Routine: This is the action of doing the studying, settling yourself down, putting your phone and devices away, turning off the music or TV or any other distraction and just getting on with it! You will waste productive time by putting off studying rather than accepting this is what you need to do in order to succeed. You have a unique opportunity - don’t rob yourself of valuable time.

Reward! You should feel proud of yourself if you have completed a homework task, consolidated key learning from a lesson, made a useful revision resource, etc. Do not forget to give yourself credit for all your achievements; it’s not vain if you earned it.



Systems

Systems refer to how you organise your learning and your time. In other words, what have you in place to support your learning?

- When you study, where do you put your mobile phone/tablet, etc.? Is it beside you while you work or do you place it somewhere out of view?
- Do you put it in night mode so that you don't hear alerts?
- Do you listen to music while studying?
- Where do you study?
- When are you most effective at learning; morning -afternoon or evening?

Many A Level students believe that their organisational skills are fixed, that these are linked to personality. However, like every element of mindset, these can be learned, developed & enhanced.

Systems refer to having the right resources. For KS5, this means: A4 notepads, pens in a range of colours, highlighters, big folders and several sets of dividers, all necessary textbooks.

Use technology to add apps that will provide learning opportunities for you, for example, there are numerous apps that enable you to create cue cards that you can then use anywhere, anytime because these are on your phone!

Systems are also about your organisational skills:

How do you perform now?

- 1) Do you complete all homework on time?
- 2) When confronted with a problem, do you weigh the pros and cons of various situations?
- 3) If a problem is very large, do you divide it into small parts?
- 4) Do you brainstorm possible solutions to solve problems?
- 5) When confronted with a problem, do you analyse the situation?
- 6) Do you allow yourself the luxury of sorting your notes regularly?



Practice

Practice relates to how you consolidate the learning from lessons. It also relates to the systems in the previous chapter, insofar as they can help you to establish new ways of reviewing your learning.

Revision techniques come into this element. How you learn/work is the key to good grades. Effective revision activities make your brain work hard! These include; making mind maps, cue cards, posters or other graphic organisers (visual representation of information e.g. flow chart).

Practice is about what you do once you know the task you are working towards:

- Do you know what the exam questions look like for each of your courses?
- Do you know what skills are being tested?
- And do you know which skills you're good at, and which you still need to develop?

You can improve your outcomes by using these practice techniques:

- Writing exam answers under timed conditions and getting these marked
- Using mark schemes and examiners reports
- Comparing model answers against your own work
- Creating your own exam questions
- Making a revision schedule or planner

Attitude



What is your personal attitude towards learning and your ability to learn? Do you believe that your ability to learn is fixed by your intelligence? Or do you believe that you are constantly learning about yourself through experiences? Do you bounce back after facing disappointment or failure?

Are you NAF or NACh?

Which of these people are you?

Thrive on a challenge
Determined
Willing to take risks
Enjoy being assessed
“the desire to be successful outweighs the fear of failure”



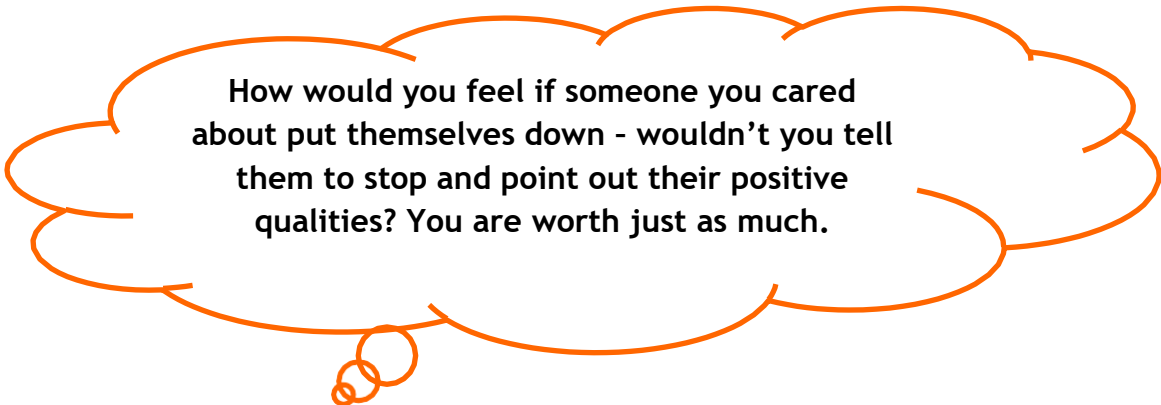
Need to Achieve = NACh

Avoid challenges
Work slowly
Avoid taking responsibility
“want to be successful, but the fear of failure outweighs the desire to succeed”



Need to Avoid Failure = NAF

Think about yourself; think about your friends - which type are you; which type are they?

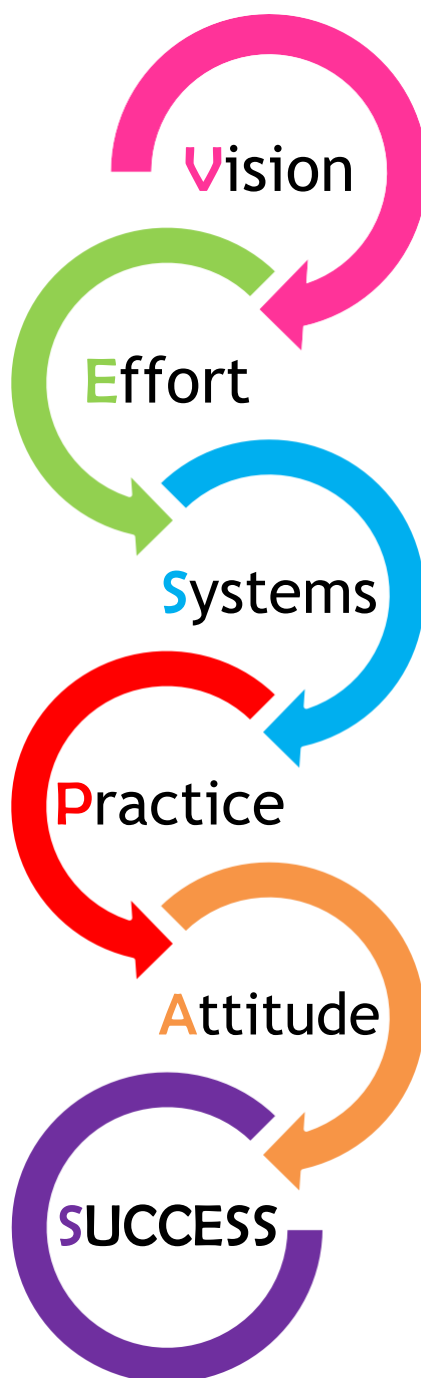


How would you feel if someone you cared about put themselves down - wouldn't you tell them to stop and point out their positive qualities? You are worth just as much.

A summary of the key messages to use as inspiration

- Effort is relative. Surround yourself with hard-working people and you'll get better grades
- If you had a job, you'd be doing a 38 hour working week. Aim to match this and your grades will leap up.
- Effort is a habit. New habits need a reminder, a routine and a reward (the three R's).
- We all have blockers - recognise and eliminate yours.

- Revision is a three step process: learn the content, develop the skills, and seek feedback.
- Know the skills you will be tested on and practice them under a variety of conditions.
- Successful students take action and practice hard.



- There is no clear link between exam results at sixteen, and success at L3 BTEC / A Level.
- Having a vision is central to success
- Dreams become goals when you take action.
- Imagine yourself successful in the future.

- A Levels/BTEC's are projects, studying them needs 'project management' skills.
- Little and often beats cramming.
- "Chunking" a task makes it less scary and more achievable.

- Successful students need to succeed more than they fear failure. Turn yourself into a NACH!
- Negativity will cost you at least a grade in each subject.
- Stay positive and strong when things go badly.
- Kill your inner critic.
- When all else fails, go for a walk.

This approach is a core part of our Sixth Form programme and we will explore these concepts over the next two years with you.