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Building Bridges to Belonging: Mindsets that Reduce Stereotype Threat and Increase Participation, Achievement, and Learning in STEM

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Ability-impugning stereotypes have been implicated in race and gender gaps in students' STEM achievement, aspirations, and learning, a phenomenon known as stereotype threat. Research-based interventions to help students overcome the impact of stereotype threat include shaping their mindsets about learning and achievement. In particular, combating the culture of talent in STEM by encouraging students to view intelligence as a malleable quality rather than a fixed trait has been shown to reduce race and gender gaps in achievement. Furthermore, fostering students' sense of belonging—their feelings of being an accepted member of an academic community whose contributions are valued—has been linked to increased achievement and motivation, especially when those feelings of belonging are based on effort and engagement rather than underlying ability.