Personal Purpose
Purpose is the intention to accomplish something that is both meaningful to you and important for others and the world beyond you; having a purposeful mindset—a sense of positive purpose, meaning, and direction for one’s learning, work, and life—is important for health, motivation, resilience, and a sense of fulfillment.

Key Method
Taking time to ask and think about core questions relating to personal purpose and meaning, followed by a series of explorations into possible future selves, can lead students to develop specific goals, plans, and actions to shape more purposeful and self-motivated approaches to learning and life pursuits.

Method Components
The educator designs and leads students through a goal-setting activity in which they gain experience identifying their personal goals and defining how to make incremental steps towards achieving them. This can be done individually, in small groups, or in whole-group instruction.

Suggested implementation
Developing a sense of personal purpose and direction can make learning deeper and more meaningful and increase personal motivation, resilience, and confidence. One example of an activity that can help students develop a sense of meaning and purpose is creating profiles of possible future selves. In this activity:

- Each student imagines his or her potential future life by creating a profile of a possible version of him or herself as an adult. Profiles can include what students think they will look like as adults, what a day in their future lives might be like, what job or work they will be doing, what their family might be like, and other facets of their adult lives.
- For each of his or her possible future selves, each student researches, interviews, and/or shadows, an adult whose life is similar to the future self, making a list of observations about what that adult’s life is actually like and noting the things the student most likes and doesn’t like about that life.
- For students who want to further explore what a future self could really be like, provide help for developing opportunities in the community for internships, apprenticeships, service learning, and making contact with mentors or coaches that match the student’s sense of purpose and direction. (See the Making Projects Real micro-credential.) Have these students create a portfolio of discoveries, perspectives, accomplishments, and reflections to capture their community learning experiences.
- Students research what it would take to actually become one of their desired future selves—what skills, training, education, credentials, and experience they will have to gain to realize this future self; have each student create a timeline for achieving their future self goals.

Suggested preparation
Students write or record answers to purpose-oriented questions such as:

- What’s most important to you in your life now and why?
- Do you have any long-term goals? If yes, what are they? If no, why not?
- What do you spend most of your energy doing these days, especially with your free time?
- If you were looking back on your life, how would you want to be remembered and what would you want to be remembered for?
Students share and discuss their answers to these questions in small groups; repeat the exercise at the end of the activities to see if there are any changes in students' answers and discuss those changes.

**Suggested review**
- Students repeat the initial personal purpose questioning activity to see how their answers have changed after experiencing the personal purpose activities and discuss how having a clearer sense of direction, purpose, and goals is making a difference in their everyday lives.

**Supporting Research**
A purposeful mindset—a sense of positive purpose, meaning, and direction for one's learning, work, and life—has been shown to have powerful effects on student motivation, self-direction, learning, persistence, resilience, and self-direction. Developing a sense of purpose and direction as part of a student's overall learning plan can offer great benefits to student motivation, deeper learning, future work opportunities, and a more resilient and fulfilling life.
- Damon, *The Path to Purpose: How Young People Find Their Calling in Life*, [http://www.amazon.com/The-Path-Purpose-People-Calling/dp/1416537244](http://www.amazon.com/The-Path-Purpose-People-Calling/dp/1416537244)
- Damon, *The Development of Purpose During Adolescence*, [http://web.stanford.edu/group/adolescence/cgi-bin/coa/sites/default/files/devofpurpose_0.pdf](http://web.stanford.edu/group/adolescence/cgi-bin/coa/sites/default/files/devofpurpose_0.pdf)

**Resources**
- Damon, *How Can We Encourage a Sense of Purpose and Meaning Early in Life?*, [https://www.bigquestionsonline.com/content/how-can-we-encourage-sense-purpose-and-meaning-early-life](https://www.bigquestionsonline.com/content/how-can-we-encourage-sense-purpose-and-meaning-early-life)

**Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria**
*Following are the items you must submit to earn this micro-credential and the criteria by which they will be evaluated. To earn the micro-credential, you must receive a passing evaluation for Parts 1, 3, and 4 and a “Yes” for Part 2.*

**Part 1. Overview questions**
*(200-word limit for each response)*
- **Activity Description:** What kind of project activities did you and your students engage in to become more proficient in applying a personal purpose mindset to improve learning? Please describe the learning activities and strategies you used.
  - **Passing:** Activity description is clear with sufficient detail to illustrate what the students did to gain competencies.
- **Activity Evaluation:** How do you know your students increased their proficiency by engaging in the personal purpose activities and what evidence did you collect that demonstrates these learning gains?
  - **Passing:** Activity evaluation process and evidence are clear, appropriate, and sufficient to evaluate the competencies.
Part 2. Evidence/artifacts

Please submit work examples from two students (such as links to writing, audio, images, video, and other media) that demonstrate progress toward the personal purpose competency, including such items as samples of student answers to personal purpose questions, examples of possible future selves profiles, accounts of opportunities outside of school to develop personal goals, sample timelines of goals to reach a future self, and other relevant items.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Yes”</th>
<th>“Almost”</th>
<th>“Not Yet”</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student work clearly demonstrates learning from the personal purpose strategies and discussions through:</td>
<td>Student work demonstrates learning from personal purpose strategies with changes in their responses to purpose questions at the end of activities, some examples of possible future selves work, but little evidence of a clearer sense of purpose or few examples of discussions of how changes in students’ personal purpose attitudes have helped them learn and be more resilient</td>
<td>Student work shows some examples from the personal purpose exercises, with a few examples of the possible future selves activities, but little evidence of specific developments in goals and future directions, and little or no evidence of positive effects on learning or examples of discussions of the value of a purposeful mindset</td>
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1. Changes in students’ answers to personal purpose questions from the beginning and end of the learning activities
2. Many examples of students’ possible future selves profiles and research activities
3. Evidence of changes in motivation, confidence, and attitudes from developing a sense of purpose and direction
4. Examples of student discussions of how their perspectives on purpose and direction are changing and why they think the purposeful mindset strategies are helping their learning and resilience

Part 3. Student reflections

For the two students whose work examples were included above, submit student-created reflections on their experience of the personal purpose activities. Use the following questions as a guide (200-word limit for each reflection):

- How did the personal purpose activities help you understand the benefits of having a clearer sense of purpose and meaning to your everyday life?
- How did the personal purpose strategies change your attitude toward learning and the possibilities for your future?

- **Passing:** Student reflections clearly indicate how the personal purpose activities helped them see the value of having a purpose, meaning, and direction, and the reflections are specific and convincing. Student reflections also clearly discuss how the activity improved the student’s learning attitude, resilience, and outlook for their future, and the reflections are specific and convincing.
Part 4. Teacher reflection
Provide a reflection on what you learned, using the following questions as a guide (200-word limit):

- What was the impact of engaging your students in the personal purpose activity?
- How will experiencing these project activities shape your daily teaching practice in the future?

- **Passing:** Teacher reflections clearly indicate how the activity affected both the students and the teacher, and the reflections are specific and convincing. Teacher reflection also clearly states how the experience will affect the teacher’s future practice, and the reflections are specific and convincing.