Key Messages for Maintaining High Expectations for Students

This resource provides ideas to support conversations about high expectations for students. It includes key messages to highlight, tips on facilitating difficult conversations, and resources to lead the group to shared understandings around expectations.

Key messages
- Our expectations for student learning are reflected in the materials (assignments, texts, assessments) we give them.
- Access to grade-level materials really matters. When students are given grade appropriate assignments, combined with strong instruction, engagement, and high expectations, they achieve higher outcomes.
- Students do what they are asked to do; when our demands are high, performance is higher.
- Implementing a rigorous curriculum does not preclude teachers from supporting and accommodating individual learners.

Conversation tips
- Presume best intent.
- Use inclusive language like "we" and "our school community" when responding.
- Lean into the tension by asking clarifying questions.
- Make sure everyone in the group has a voice ("That's really interesting, X. Y, what do you think about this point?").
- Reiterate that these conversations are what will help students succeed and increase student engagement and achievement across the system.
- Resist the urge to rattle off facts and talking points. Instead, spend time unpacking a resource below to bring the group to shared ideas. (Example: Jigsaw read *The Opportunity Myth* and use the 4 A's protocol to discuss.)

Resource	Highlight
The Opportunity Myth (TNTP, 2018)	- Misaligned resources contribute to students not being prepared for post-graduation options. - Students spend up to 500 hours a year on assignments that are not aligned to the grade level. - Students are more likely to find instruction engaging if the teacher expects them to learn. - Students of color and from low-income

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	backgrounds are increasingly less likely to have access to aligned materials and strong instruction. ● The lives of students are being impacted by adult choices.
[Assignments Matter](#) (Eleanor Dougherty, ASCD)	● Task predicts performance: High-rigor tasks lead to higher performance. ● Regardless of what skill sets students bring with them to courses, they need to be challenged. ● "Students can do no better than the assignments they are given." –Ruth Mitchell
[Should We Teach Students at Their Reading Levels?](#) (Shanahan, 2014) [New Evidence on Teaching Reading at Frustration Levels](#) (Shanahan, 2017)	● The research base to support leveled reading is thin. ● Only giving students a diet of instructional-level texts doesn't lead to gains in achievement. ● Students benefit from reading complex texts with appropriate scaffolds.