

MINI ENGAGEMENT SESSION

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Title of Mini Engagement Session	Horatio Alger Continuum

Intended Audience & Description

The Horatio Alger Continuum is intended to introduce tutors/learning center personnel to the invisible barriers that may impact student learning. This exercise can also illustrate diversity, introduce participants to good reading and study skills habits, and more.

Directions

1. Participants line up shoulder-to-shoulder in the center of the room.
2. Leader discusses the activity:

“This is a level playing field! The faculty teaching your classes don’t know anything about you save your name and major. This activity will demonstrate the diversity of the participants by using Horatio Alger’s research regarding barriers to learning.”

“I’m going to make a statement – listen to the directions as you’ll either step forward or step backward if the statement is applicable to you. If it’s not applicable, remain in place.”

3. Instruct participants to return to their seats.
4. Have participants share their feelings regarding the results of the exercise.

“Does this mean the person in the front will be more successful than the person in the back? Why or why not?”

“What else may be gleaned from the results of this continuum?”

5. Interpret the results by summarizing the response from participants.

Background

Biography - Horatio Alger, Jr. (January 13, 1832 – July 18, 1899) was a prolific 19th-century American author, best known for his many formulaic juvenile novels about impoverished boys and their rise from humble backgrounds to lives of respectable middle-class security and comfort through hard work, determination, courage, and honesty. He wrote over 100 books, and his stories, poems, essays, and songs appeared in countless periodicals. His "rags-to-riches" stories have had a lasting impact on the American culture and many well-known authors were greatly influenced by his works.

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ACTIVITY – Horatio Algiers Continuum

If one or both of your parents graduated from college, take one step **forward**.

If you have ever attended a private or parochial school, take one step **forward**.

If one or both of your parents' first language is not English, take one step **backward**.

If you are going to be the first person in your immediate family to graduate from college, take one step **backward**.

If your ancestry can be traced back to European roots, take one step **forward**.

If your parents read the newspaper every day when you were growing up, take a step **forward**.

If anyone in your immediate family has ever served time in a state or federal penitentiary, take one step **backward**.

If there was a small library in your house when you were growing up that consisted of at least 10 children's books and approximately 50 adult books, take one step **forward**.

If both parents worked full time when you were growing up, take one step **backward**.

If your ancestors were slaves, take one step **backward**.

If your ancestors were indentured servants, take one step **backward**.

If your ancestors were denied employment because of their race, ethnicity or religion, take one step **backward**.

If you have ever been denied a job because of gender, race, ethnicity, or religion, take one step **backward**.

If your parents read to you on a regular basis when you were a child, take one step **forward**.

If your siblings, aunts, uncles, or grandparents read to you on a regular basis when you were growing up, take one step **forward**.

If your racial and ethnic group is considered the majority, take one step **forward**.

If your religious affiliation is as a protestant, take one step **forward**.

If your religious affiliation is catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindi, Greek or Russian orthodox, take one step **backward**.

If you grew up in an economically-disadvantaged home, take one step **backward**.

If, as a child, you ever vacationed outside of the United States, take one step **forward**.

If your any of your ancestors were Native Americans, take a step **backward**.

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If you were raised in a single parent household, take a step **backward**.