

Toolkit: Goal Setting

Goal setting is an important aspect of learning because it gives purpose and direction to the learning that takes place in school and in the home and community. Parents may be unsure how they can work with you to help their students set goals that are appropriate to their age, interests, talents and abilities. They also may lack knowledge about choices, opportunities and sources of support. There are several ways to encourage parents to help their students:

- Set short-term goals for increasing their participation and learning in the classroom
- Set long-term goals that articulate a vision for their future educational and work goals

Below are two tools that are designed to help you stimulate conversation and action about short-term and long-term goals.

1) How do I support parents in helping their children set short-term goals that are appropriate and realistic? Although most parents have goals for their children, they may not have discovered the importance of involving their children in the process. Here is a template that you can use to suggest to parents that they have those conversations. The template can be adapted to your subject matter and grade level.

Making Connections: Supporting Your Student in Setting SMART Goals

Dear Parents, In our class we have been working on setting classroom goals—what we hope to achieve across the year as a learning community. I want to encourage you to work with your student to set individual goals as well. Having goals helps give purpose and direction to their learning and active participation in our classroom!

A popular model for goal setting is to make sure goals are SMART:

Specific: Can your student see clearly what s/he wants to achieve?

Measurable: How will you know your student is making progress toward the goal?
When will you know the goal has been reached?

Attainable: Is there a reasonable plan for achieving the goal and likelihood that your student will get there?

Realistic: Is the goal "just right" for your student's abilities and resources (not too hard, not too easy)?

Timely: Have you identified a specific time limit so your student keeps the momentum going?

The attached page is designed to stimulate a discussion with your student and can be used as a record to keep track of progress.

Sincerely, [your name]

Student Name: _____

Date: _____

Goal Setting Chart

Specific	What are you going to do? What do you want to accomplish? Why is this important?
Measurable	What actions, products, accomplishments will help you know you are making progress? What will be the signal that your goal is achieved?
Attainable	What specific plan will you follow? Do you have the time and resources to follow your plan?
Realistic	What abilities and resources will you use to reach your goal? Is your goal challenging enough, but still attainable?
Timely	What is your target date for achieving your goal?
Progress Report on (date): _____	Where am I in reaching my goal? What else needs to be done?
Progress Report on (date): _____	Where am I in reaching my goal? What else needs to be done?

2) How can I support parents set long-term educational goals with their students that help them prepare for college and/or work? Before children enter school, they begin to talk about “what they want to be” when they grow up. Often, younger students are limited to choosing adult roles that they have been exposed to—community workers (fire fighters, police), health care professionals, transportation workers, and so on. To expand their thinking and make choices that are appropriate and realistic, they need exposure to a range of alternatives. They also need information about what it takes in terms of educational goals and financial planning that will help them work toward their vision.

The following checklist is designed to help you think about age-appropriate ways to support families in the exploration process, and to help them link what you are trying to accomplish in your classroom with long-term goals for their children.

Checklist: Supporting Parents in Educational and Career Option Exploration

- ❑ What are age-appropriate questions for parents and their children to ask about educational and career options available?
- ❑ How can I find out what questions they are asking?
- ❑ What resources are available in the school and community that I could help parents and students become aware of?
- ❑ What are parents most likely to feel worried or concerned about? What information or school/community services would help them address their concerns?
- ❑ What topics and issues can we explore in the classroom to help students become involved in the conversation about educational and career options? How could interactive homework assignments facilitate those conversations?
- ❑ How can I work with families whose first language is not English?