



Foreword

By Mike Schmoker

Many have written about the supreme importance of goals. But in this excellent book, *The Power of SMART Goals*, Jan O’Neill and Anne Conzemius have done something original and important: They have helped us see that goals are a useful and powerful prism through which we can see the totality of school improvement. Goals, rightly understood, both urge and unify the most vital elements of school success. Through this prism, O’Neill and Conzemius allow us to see, with great clarity, the significant and manifold implications of getting goals right—and the needlessly destructive consequences of getting them wrong.

The Power of SMART Goals helps to clarify the fact that first and foremost, goals redefine our relationship to work and effort. In turn, SMART goals redefine the relationship between effort and personal satisfaction. What the authors call “joy in work” can only be experienced when daily work is linked to goals that allow us to see that our thoughts and efforts connect, at every moment, to something larger and worthwhile—to something we can see and examine and enjoy. Without this orientation, effort and energy can only dissipate into aimless, joyless toil. Without goals, we will never work as hard or as smart to accomplish what is important—to us, and for our students.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: The SMART Goals Process

“Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?” asked Alice.

“That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,” said the Cat.

“I don’t much care where—” said Alice.

“Then it doesn’t matter which way you go,” said the Cat.

—Lewis Carroll

From *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (2002, p. 53)

Think back to a time when you made a significant change in your life. Perhaps you were dissatisfied with your career or job, and so you pursued more education, a new position, or a different work setting. If you wanted to master a new hobby or sport, you may have enrolled in classes, joined a team, or sought personal coaching. Maybe you were unhappy about your weight, so you started a weight-loss program. Regardless of whether you were pursuing a dream of something better because you were unhappy or because you simply wanted something different, you probably set some goals toward accomplishing that dream and pursued those goals with passion, rigor, and perhaps even specificity: “I’ll get a master’s



Chapter 2

Keeping Goals Alive

“So if you cannot understand that there is something in man which responds to the challenge of this mountain and goes out to meet it, that the struggle is the struggle of life itself upward and forever upward, then you won’t see why we go.”

—George Leigh Mallory
(cited in Hobson, 1999, p. 112)

The process of goal-setting and monitoring is very much one of “beginning with the end in mind,” to quote the wisdom of Stephen Covey (1999). The “end” we envision is that by the end of this book you will see goals as a way to fuel, guide, and motivate the work you do each day. It is our hope that framing goals in this way will breathe life into how you lead improvement in your classroom, school, and district. Goals can be a driving force for change; they can be dynamic, resilient, and alive with possibilities. For goals to reach their potential as a high-leverage improvement strategy, we need to keep them in the forefront of our attention at all times. Somehow we need to find ways to keep goals alive on a daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly basis. This chapter explores what that process looks like.



Chapter 4

SMART Goal-Driven Curriculum and Instruction

“Learning is driven by what teachers and students do in the classrooms.”

—Black and Wiliam (1998, p. 139)

When Jan was in her first year of teaching, she was confronted with a class of 28 first graders, 8 of whom clearly were already struggling in school. None of these 8 students had mastered beginning level math, reading, or writing skills. Each was “acting out” in his or her own way—one by passively not doing her work and staring out the window, another by throwing crayons across the room when Jan’s back was turned, and another by calling out over and over again. Each student was really saying, “I’m feeling like a failure! Help!” Unfortunately, Jan had no tools to help them. She had no curriculum (other than basal readers and math workbooks) and certainly no assessments. She had very little training in teaching reading and early math skills. She worked harder that year than she had ever worked in her life and was sure that very little student learning resulted. Throughout the year, she yearned to talk honestly with colleagues, to tell them she was feeling overwhelmed and did not know what to do, but she was too ashamed. Sadly, by the end of the year, these same students still were not very strong



Chapter 5

Using SMART Goals to Drive Professional Development

“For it is the ultimate wisdom of the mountains that man is never so much a man as when he is striving for what is beyond his grasp and that there is no battle worth winning save that against his own ignorance and fear.”

—James Ramsey Ullman
(cited in Hobson, 1999, p. 142)

When Anne began her career in education, she was excited, nervous, confident, and scared—a mix of emotions that was both intense and exhilarating. She had an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of children, as well as an enormous responsibility. With great enthusiasm, she accepted a position as a school psychologist in a small rural school district. She soon discovered that her new job required her to perform duties for which her university training had not prepared her. She remembers her heart pounding as she wondered, “What’s this thing called ‘in-service,’ and why am I in charge of it? What does a gifted-and-talented coordinator do? How do I supervise the migrant programs? How can I be the junior varsity girls’ basketball coach?” She realized that she needed a plan, and she needed it right away.