

Why Do We Need SMART Goals?

“According to research, goal setting is the single most powerful motivational tool in a leader’s toolkit. Why? Because goal setting operates in ways that provide purpose, challenge, and meaning. Goals are the guideposts along the road that make a compelling vision come alive. Goals energize people. Specific, clear, challenging goals lead to greater effort and achievement than easy or vague goals do” (Blanchard, 2007, p. 150).

“Goal setting is one of the simplest and most effective organizational interventions that can be used to increase employee performance” (O’Hora & Maglieri, 2006, p. 132).

“[Schools with teachers who learn and students who achieve] use clear, agreed-upon student achievement goals to focus and shape teacher learning” (WestEd, 2000, p. 12).

“Collegial support and professional development in schools are unlikely to have any effect on improvement of practice and performance if they are not connected to a coherent set of goals that give direction and meaning to learning and collegiality” (Elmore, 2003, p. 60).

California elementary schools that outperformed schools with similar student populations assigned a high priority to student achievement, set measurable goals for improved student achievement, and had a well-defined plan to improve achievement (Williams et al., 2005).

“Consistently higher performing high schools set explicit academic goals that are aligned with and often exceed state standards” (Dolejs, 2006, p. 1).

“Our investigations suggest it is critical to define and publish a protocol that articulates specific inquiry functions: jointly and recursively identifying appropriate and worthwhile goals for student learning; finding or developing appropriate means to assess student progress toward those goals; bringing to the table the expertise of colleagues and others who can assist in accomplishing these goals; planning, preparing, and delivering lessons; using evidence from the classroom to evaluate instruction; and, finally, reflecting on the process to determine next steps” (Gallimore et al., 2009, pp. 548-549).

“One of the greatest challenges to team success is the inattention to results. . . . But there is no getting around the fact that the only measure of a great team—or a great organization—is whether it accomplishes what it sets out to accomplish. . . . When it comes to how a cohesive team measures its performance, one criterion sets it apart from noncohesive ones: its goals are shared across the entire team” (Lencioni, 2012, pp. 65-66).

Schools that have the greatest impact on student learning establish clear and measurable goals focused on improving overall student achievement at the school level. “Data are analyzed, interpreted, and used to regularly monitor progress toward student achievement goals” (Marzano, Warrick, & Simms, 2014, p. 57).

“The problem is not the absence of goals in districts and schools today but the presence of too many that are ad hoc, unconnected, and ever-changing. . . . [They are too often fragmented and so] people see them as discrete demands with little or no connection to . . . their daily work. . . . The solution lies in developing limited goals, persisting, and avoiding distractors. . . . These leaders . . . [use goals] to establish continuous focused direction” (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, pp. 20-21).

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