

Setting Goals in Teacher Evaluation

In the new teacher and principal evaluation system, the instructional frameworks and leadership frameworks all include goal setting provisions related to student growth. In addition, the focused evaluation requires that a teacher/principal connect their evaluation to one criteria and most likely to some goals around how to become better practitioners as well as the student growth. Though the new system doesn't require professional practice goals, the system is designed around growth so it makes sense to consider what goals can be created that improves a teacher's practice. We may inadvertently place so much importance on student growth goals that we forget or dismiss the more global and impactful professional practice goals.

Goals can be directly related to both professional growth and student growth. The goal setting process requires that we monitor and adjust our actions as needed based on information, data and feedback. In addition, monitoring student outcomes such as habits of mind, higher order thinking, and academic achievement will help us refine and adjust goals when necessary. As the new evaluation system moves closer to state-wide implementation, I continue to get questions about what should be considered when creating these goals. I've come up with a set of considerations below.

1. **Goals are contextual:** Setting goals should be based on the context of the classroom, the school, the level of support, resources available, and time provided. Some people think that all teachers should set the same goal that increases student achievement by the same percentage, i.e. increments of 10%. This simplified approach doesn't take into account the data that should be used in developing goals. As a principal in a middle school, the goals that teachers set were different based the context. For example, the teacher who taught the 8th grade remedial reading course set different goals than the teacher in the 8th grade advanced English class. My point is that context matters and it should be considered when developing goals.
2. **Goals are developed by using information and data:** Besides the contextual data that should be considered (but sometimes ignored), teachers should look at information to establish a baseline, understand the needs for the goal, and be able to use that data to establish benchmarks for monitoring progression of the goal. Without this data, it's very difficult to determine if the activities and strategies connected to the goal were successful, were being achieved, or needed to be adjusted midway through the process.
3. **Goals address a need:** A goal is initiated by a need from students or a need by the educator. The goal should define that need and have strategies embedded in the goal to address that need.
4. **Measurements of success:** Goals should have measurements and evidence that can be used as benchmarks along the way so teachers can effectively monitor progress towards achieving the goal. These benchmarks should be primarily formative in nature and used to adjust the goal if necessary. There should be multiple measures of evidence related to the goal and measures should be valid. Classroom based assessments and measures should be considered first since they are likely the most relevant to the students and most valid in nature. There should also be some summative measures that indicate whether the goal milestone has been met. In the area of student growth goals, associations may want to connect with the district and establish a list of evidence options that could be available to teachers to use during the evaluation process.

5. There will be lots of emphasis on student growth goals as they are embedded in the state framework in criteria 3, 6, and 8 for teachers (3,5,8 for principals). We shouldn't forget about goal setting that is focused on our practice as well. We should ask the question, "What are we doing to make ourselves better?" This type of goal should definitely be a consideration since the entire system is supposed to be about growth; growth of practitioners as well as growth of students.
6. SMART Goal Structure: You may want to consider using a SMART goal structure as the foundation for goal setting. SMART stands for;
 - Specific and Strategic- Will working towards this goal provide a return on investment that connects to broader goals (team, school, district etc.)? Strategic implies that the goal is clearly articulated and specific.
 - Measurable - How will you see that change occurred? What concrete criteria will you use to measure change? You may also notice that the "measures" are already built into the new evaluation system in SG 3.2 and SG 6.2.
 - Attainable/Achievable - How far will this goal stretch you? Is it too far? Is it far enough?
 - Results oriented - How will working towards this goal impact students? How will your goal increase student achievement? How will it make you a better educator?
 - Time Bound - What deadlines and milestones exist for this goal? When will this goal be completed?
7. Goals should be challenging but Realistic: When goals are developed using good baseline information, they are designed to be both challenging and realistic.
8. Student growth goals can be a subset of a larger goal: You may want to consider establishing goals that are connected to instructional practice where the student growth goal scaffolds up to a larger teacher growth goal. For example, let's say that a teacher wanted to set a goal regarding how to better use formative assessments in the classroom. A student growth goal can be nested in the larger goal so that the activities and strategies associated with the goals are a natural and demonstrate authentic practice instead of a goal that sits outside of instruction. In other words, you don't have to orphan the goal; you can keep it connected to what you are already doing in the classroom to become a better practitioner. Of course, this doesn't always work so you may have to have separate student growth goals.

In addition, a teacher can work as a team to establish goals (criterion 8) and then the goal that is written as a team could serve as the class goal (criterion 6) and if a subgroup of students is struggling with achieving the class goal, you can establish a separate subgroup goal (criterion 3). In other words, the goals can be nested within each other. Again, this won't work in all situations . . . it's just something to consider when writing goals.

9. Another area that should be considered (but not mandated) when constructing effective goals is how those goals are connected to the overall context of the school and district. Is there a connection with the school and/or district improvement plan? In some cases, this can be an easy answer of "yes." In other cases, it can be more removed. That said, just because you teach a music class or some other non-core subject area doesn't mean you can't connect it to reading or math. For example, I've walked into a choir class in a middle school and watched the choir director teaching students about fractions by using the half notes, quarter notes, and

eighth notes, etc. that was highlighted in the sheet music. I've seen PE teachers have circuits established in the gym and in order to move to the next station, they had to answer questions connected to the student's Washington State History course. These examples demonstrated tremendous coordination among staff and integrative strategies throughout the school. It also connected to the goals that the 7th grade team established as a collaborative team.