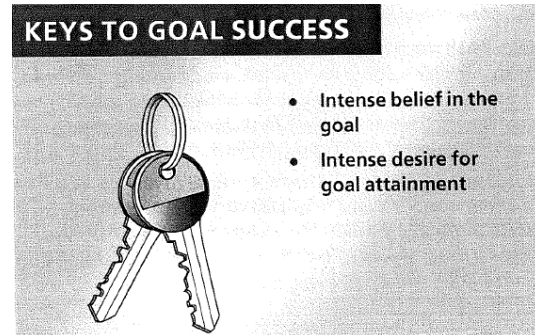


## Setting Goals with Students

Excerpt from *Chapter 8: Focus Students on Goals*: Jensen, E. and Snider, C. (2013). Turnaround Tools for the Teenage Brain: Helping Underperforming Students Become Lifelong Learners. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

### Dreams and Wishes

Starting with students' dreams may be much larger than you had envisioned when initiating thinking about and teaching goal setting. However, it is only by starting with their individual dreams that many students will get excited and start to buy into the power of goals. The challenge for some of your students will be that they have no idea what they want. They have never peeked into their future with a long-range lens. They do not know what is available; they've never seen anything beyond their own world. Perhaps they will dream of owning an expensive car. Even that can be okay because possessing such a car is probably out of their range of current possibilities. They are setting their sights on something much larger than what they have at the present moment. Your wisdom and understanding will be much needed as they start this dream quest. You will quickly ascertain that some dreams seem way too unrealistic, and yet it will be fun for you to see some of your students getting excited about their dreams. Build on this positive state to start the goal identification process.



### Backward Goal Design



Once each student has chosen his or her dream, it is time to start the trip-with you as the guide. You can share with students that you will be teaching them the steps using the backwards goal design to achieve their personal dream by guiding them through the process of goal setting.

## What You Can Do

- Talk to students about their dreams. Most important, listen. Develop an accepting attitude in regard to their dreams. Try to use words or phrases to demonstrate your interest.
- Be a role model. Talk about your own dreams, and what you did to become an educator (or to reach any other big goal).
- If students don't have dreams, just keep introducing them to big ideas. One of them will catch on.
- Many students have no idea about the multitude of career choices available today. Encourage them to search the internet; this site is a good start.  
<http://medicalcareerinfor.com>.
- Teach students the power of believing strongly in a goal. Does the goal represent what the student really wants, his or her dream? If it doesn't the student will need to start over, making the goal personal and positive.
- Teach the skill of visualizing goal achievement. Students could each find or draw a picture representing their goal fulfilled and place it where they can view daily.
- Determine, with students, their starting point. In the case of a large goal, it's very easy for a student to procrastinate and not begin. Identifying the first small step facilitates action.
- Help students take their long-range goal and break it down. A chart or mind map is a very useful tool to accomplish this.  
<https://www.mindmapping.com/> If you are not familiar with making a mind map, the landing page on this site gives a good enough explanation for you to make your own.
- Stay positive and celebrate. It could be years before a long-range career goal is actualized. This makes it imperative to have milestones set along the way, the attainment of which can be celebrated.

### Problem-Solving Model for Students

1. Start with a positive attitude.
2. Identify the real problem.
3. State your end goal (and the reward).
4. Identify the resources available.
5. Review the boundaries and limitations
6. Identify potential paths you could choose
7. Predict the risks of your chosen path
8. Choose the strategies to get there
9. Implement and adapt those strategies as needed
10. Celebrate success

Chances are that nobody has ever just laid it out-no one has shown your students a step-by-step system for solving life's problems. Now, the model we just presented is not designed for addressing every single problem on earth. But, it applies principles of science, critical thinking, and prediction to achieving goals.

In addition, support and cooperation from peers are also promoters of goal achievement. In studies spanning over eight decades and involving over seventeen thousand young adolescents, the results showed that when adolescents worked cooperatively on goals, peer relationships improved and goals were attained (Roseth, Johnson, & Johnson, 2008). Teenagers can be very social, and positive peer relationships are vitally important to them. As you continue to maintain an atmosphere of cooperation and support in your classroom, the impact on your students' goal achievement will be significant. Cooperation means students are encouraging and helping others to succeed while still working independently on their own goals. There are many possible systems you could devise to facilitate this cooperation. For example, you could establish "goal buddies" or small goal groups for encouragement, progress monitoring, and sharing of ideas. As you begin the process of setting and attaining goals with students, consider doing the following:

### Removing the Roadblocks

As an educator, you understand the power of setting and achieving goals. You also have witnessed many students who consistently fail to achieve any goal and never really decide to act. They give up because the whole process seems overwhelming and the real or imagined obstacles lure them into inaction. There can be many real obstacles, but there are solutions for overcoming each one. Although it is not intended to be all-inclusive, the chart shown here identifies some common obstacles and possible solutions for goal achievement.

<b>Obstacle</b>	<b>Solution</b>
Lack of seriousness about the goal; lack of passion	Set a compelling goal that evokes positive emotions
Fear of failure	Expect setbacks and move on; success is often riddled with short-term failures along the way
Self-doubt – uncertainty about one’s capability to do long-term, sustained work toward the goal	Identify and focus on personal strengths; maintain daily focus on small steps.
Not meeting a deadline	Examine reasons for not meeting the deadline and set a new one; examine priorities and spend more time on what is the most important.
Lack of organization and focus	Record everything, starting with the big dreams, goals, and daily tasks; keep records in a notebook or on an electronic device and review and revise daily.
Lack of progress	Identify obstacles and address them; continually review progress and implement next steps for achievement.

## TO SUM UP

This chapter has departed from traditional goal setting, which promotes smaller goals as a starting point, and promoted a more global initial approach to stir students' excitement and instill a desire to achieve dreams. Many of your students do not see the connection between what they are currently doing in school and what their lives could be like in five, ten, or even fifty years. You have told them in many different ways how important school can be for their future, and yet the message doesn't seem to sink in. That is exactly why a different starting method is suggested here. By using a backward design, students can start visualizing, planning, and establishing personal milestones to achieve their dream goal through consistent small steps. The backwards goal design, once again, works like this: (1) start with a big dream, (2) turn it into long-range goals, (3) set goals with specific outcomes, (4) figure out your intermediate steps, (5) plan what you need to get done this week, but (6) focus on the one thing you can do today.

Achieving goals takes long-term persistence, something many students are lacking when it comes to seeking life success. A goal provides the focus and clarity needed at each step to reach the established milestones. For students, keeping a journal or log of all their dreams, successful steps, and even bumps in the road can be beneficial. This writing can move their mind and spirit forward with purpose and conviction in regard to who they are, what they want, and how to achieve it. A concrete plan that has been put down in writing and shared with a goal group can eliminate procrastination and propel students into needed action. Working toward a big dream is hard work, but writing it down, setting deadlines, making a plan, and taking daily action will lead to success.

After reading this chapter on student goal achievement, you may be asking yourself, "How could I possibly add this to my curriculum? Where would I find the time?" Recognizing the benefits of implementing the backwards goal design for students is the starting place. Next, discuss it with your colleagues and building administration to determine your building's need to teach this concept. With the need established, begin initial planning by determining the grade level or levels for participation, the subject matter for including it, and who will do the teaching. Another possibility is to use any building flextime such as in homerooms, advisor-advisee periods, or study halls. With careful planning and a goal to make this a reality in your building, it can happen!

All METS should have a copy of the book.

*If you do not find the book, we have extra copies.*

*Email our office, and we will mail it to your METS.*