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Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from Step Into Student Goal Setting, by Chase Nordengren.

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Figure 3.1 Early Elementary Example 1: Goals

Goal and strategies for (student name): _____

Goal:		Date:
Strategies:		
What are my strengths?		
What will I do if I get stuck?		
Why is this goal meaningful for me?		
Reflection/celebration		

The “Goals” tool shown in Figure 3.1 focuses on reading and writing for early elementary students. The structure here is applicable for all types of goals, both academic and social-emotional. The substantial

flexibility of this format allows younger students to create a kind of log of their one-on-one conversation and guides them to frame goals and strategies in their own words. Additionally, the focus on strategies in the Goals tool allows future conversations to focus on whether and how students used the strategies rather than a grade or other summative outcome.

Figure 3.2 Early Elementary Example 2: Goal Setting for Success: I Own My Learning!

Name: _____

My goal and why I'm setting it:		
How I'm learning (and why):	Evidence of my progress:	Feedback:
Date:		
Date:		
Date:		
Date:		
Date:		
Reflection and celebration:		

As students’ goal-setting practice matures, they may be ready to be introduced to the idea of capturing learning through evidence. The tool labeled “Goal Setting for Success: I Own My Learning!” shown in Figure 3.2 extends the previous example by asking elementary students to record both their own evidence of their learning progress and feedback from their teacher. The use of an open-ended prompt—“How I’m learning (and why)”—lets students focus on the purpose behind each learning activity rather than the mechanics of the activity itself.

The Goal Setting for Success tool invites students to keep both sources of evidence in mind as they think about next steps in their learning. At the end of a goal, this tool also serves to support celebrating success by highlighting all the specific steps students took to reach their goal. Even if students do not meet their goal, this tool celebrates the effort put into their learning along the way.

Figure 3.3 Upper Elementary Example: My Learning Plan

Learning Objective: _____

For this learning objective, list your top two priorities. Answer the questions below for each on

01 I will work on:		
Can I do this by myself?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	If no, then who could help?
		<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Peer <input type="checkbox"/> Family member
		How likely am I to succeed?
		<input type="checkbox"/> Not very <input type="checkbox"/> Probably <input type="checkbox"/> Likely
My plan for action is:		

I'll monitor and celebrate my progress by:		
02 I will work on:		
Can I do this by myself?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	If no, then who could help?
		<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher <input type="checkbox"/> Peer <input type="checkbox"/> Family member
		How likely am I to succeed?
		<input type="checkbox"/> Not very <input type="checkbox"/> Probably <input type="checkbox"/> Likely
My plan for action is:		
I'll monitor and celebrate my progress by:		

With some goal-setting experience, students may be ready to consider the balance between ambitious and realistic goals. “My Learning Plan” shown in Figure 3.3 invites upper elementary students to choose their own learning priorities with open-ended language and also asks them to predict the likelihood of success along the way. Importantly, the tool doesn’t discourage students from choosing more ambitious goals but instead prompts them to plan a system of support for achieving their ambitious outcomes. Used over time, this tool also allows teachers and students to reflect on the levels of challenge students gravitate toward and promotes reflection about students’ goals to help them improve in the process.

Figure 3.4 Middle Grades Example: My Individual Goals

Name: _____ Date: _____

Area (check one):

Reading Work habits

Math Persistence

Target: _____

Where I'll focus and why:

My plan of action:

I will need the following help and resources:

My timeline:

As students gain both autonomy and experience with goal setting, they are ready to be given more responsibility. The “My Individual Goals” tool shown in Figure 3.4 maximizes student flexibility while still asking them to identify a specific goal, articulate a plan of action, and name the specific supports they will need to achieve that goal. This tool can be especially useful for middle grade students.

My Individual Goals is illustrated with both academic and social-emotional goals in mind, though it could easily be adapted to include others. Similarly, this example could be used with or without assessment scores in specific instructional areas as a target, depending on how an individual student is best motivated.

Figure 3.5 All Grades Example 1: Daily Learning Planner

Week of: _____ Name: _____

Monday

Learning goals and why:	How will I know I’m on the right track?
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
How did I do at meeting my goals?	What helped me the most today?

(Continued)

(Continued)

Tuesday

Learning goals and why:	How will I know I'm on the right track?
1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
How did I do at meeting my goals?	What helped me the most today?

The tool shown in Figure 3.5, “Daily Learning Planner,” is most suitable for students with a wide degree of autonomy and choice in the classroom—and it can be used with students in all grades. Particularly in upper grades, students may be charged with completing independent work under the general banner of a class set of learning targets and success criteria. This tool can be used with a whole class at the start of a lesson to record learning targets and success criteria, then could potentially function as an exit ticket for students to reflect on their learning when class is complete.

Figure 3.6 All Grades Example 2: My SMART Action Plan

Name: _____

My goal (SMART format: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timebound):		
Strengths I can draw on and barriers to address so I can reach my goal:		
Action steps (include by when):	Progress check:	Revision (if needed):
Reflection and celebration:		

The most popular framework for understanding what makes an effective goal, for both children and adults, is the SMART goal framework. Borrowed from the world of organizational theory and business consulting and used in both academic and nonacademic contexts, SMART goals have the following characteristics:

- ▶ **Specific:** The goal leads the goal setter toward a concrete objective.
- ▶ **Measurable:** The goal setter has ways to determine whether (and the extent to which) the goal has been reached.
- ▶ **Achievable:** The goal can be realistically accomplished given the goal setter’s timeline, current development, and so on.
- ▶ **Relevant:** The goal has meaning for the goal setter (not only for the teacher).
- ▶ **Timely:** The goal is designed to be accomplished within a specific period.

A variety of professional learning resources and books (Conzemius & Morganti-Fisher, 2012; O’Neill & Conzemius, 2006) discuss setting effective SMART goals. Students may already be familiar with setting SMART goals, which may make it easier to engage them in goal-setting practices. The tool in Figure 3.6, “My SMART Action Plan,” may be more suitable for longer-term goals in which students identify specific action steps along a path toward a larger goal. This tool is also content agnostic, useful for both academic and social-emotional goals in all grades.

Figure 3.7 All Grades Example 3: Personalized Learning Plan

Learning goal:
Common Core State Standards addressed:
1. 2.

Evidence of learning	
At the end of this unit, I will be able to:	To demonstrate learning, I will:
My learning plan	
Why I will learn this:	What I need to know and understand:
I will accomplish this by:	How I'll know I'm on track:
Reflection and celebration of learning:	

For students who are asked to focus their work around Common Core standards, the “Personalized Learning Plan” tool shown in Figure 3.7 makes connections between the standard and their goal more explicit. Particularly when breaking down standards as described in Chapter 2, this tool can guide students through understanding the relationship between a set of essential questions about a content area, the relevant standards, and the evidence they can use to demonstrate learning. After that group process, the tool could be used individually to help students in any grade model a specific goal that will help them answer the questions.