



Active Insight: Evidence in Action



Tip #541: Student Goal Setting

Overview

Goal setting helps students identify what they want to improve and take greater ownership of their learning. Effective goals are personal, realistic and connected to the student's current needs rather than based only on performance outcomes. Students may choose to focus on confidence, effort, decision making, teamwork, skill development or participation. Reviewing goals regularly helps students recognise progress, respond to challenges and understand that improvement can happen in different ways.

Key Teaching Ideas

Support students to create goals that are clear, manageable and purposeful to them. Help students describe what success might look or feel like and identify a small action they can take during each lesson. Goals should be flexible and adjusted when they become too easy, too difficult or no longer relevant. Use brief conversations, reflection prompts and specific feedback to help students notice progress. Each student's goal is very much their own, and they all have their unique starting point and require wide ranging strategies to support their individual needs.

Practical Application

- **Choose a Personal Focus:** At the beginning of a unit, ask students to select one area they would like to develop, such as communicating more clearly, staying involved for longer, attempting unfamiliar skills or supporting others during group activities.
- **Identify a Small Action:** Help students decide on one action they can use during the lesson. A student working on teamwork might aim to encourage a teammate or include another person in play.
- **Describe Signs of Progress:** Ask students to identify what they will notice when they are moving towards their goal. This might include feeling more confident, needing fewer reminders or using a strategy more consistently.
- **Pause and Review:** Build in short reflection moments where students consider what helped, what made the goal difficult and what they could try next.
- **Adjust the Goal:** Encourage students to change their goal or strategy when needed. Reinforce that adjusting a goal is part of the learning process rather than a sign of failure.

Next Steps

Ask students to select one goal that matters to them and identify a practical action they can use in the next lesson. Revisit the goal regularly and use progress, effort and reflection to guide what happens next. Explore [Active Education Australia Resources](https://www.activeeducationaustralia.edu.au) for further support around student goal setting.



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References and Research

1. Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education (Version 9.0) – Establishes the curriculum expectations for developing goals and movement competence, health literacy, personal and social capability, and lifelong participation in physical activity.
2. Australian Sports Commission. (2019). Australian Physical Literacy Framework – Defines physical literacy as the development of physical, psychological, social and cognitive capabilities that support lifelong participation in physical activity.
3. Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The "What" and "Why" of Goal Pursuits: Human Needs and the Self-Determination of Behavior – Explains how autonomy, competence and relatedness strengthen intrinsic motivation, engagement and wellbeing.