



Strategies to Support a Positive School Climate

Goal Orientation

Goal orientation refers to a person's ability to set a relevant, attainable goal and exert deliberate and persistent effort to achieving it. It entails creating a plan, developing strategies, and monitoring progress towards achieving the goal.



Why is it important?

- The goals that teachers emphasize in the classroom (e.g., performance or learning-oriented) influence the goal orientation of their students (Friedel et al., 2007).
- Those with a learning goal orientation focus on acquiring new skills and applying them, rather than comparing their results with others or seeking favourable judgements (Gaumer Erickson et al., 2018).
- There is a positive correlation between establishing learning-oriented goals and academic achievement (Linnenbrink-Garcia et al., 2008).

In Practice

By supporting goal setting with students, schools can teach them how to set and achieve both academic and personal goals.



What can schools do?

Goals help boost motivation and engagement by offering clear insight into what students are working towards. In the school setting, the following goal setting models are commonly adopted:

- **Growth Mindset:** The growth mindset theory is founded on the concept of incremental growth and proposes that one can learn to develop and improve overtime. By adopting a growth mindset, schools can foster a motivational climate that encourages effort and belief in one's abilities to help accomplish their goals.
- **SMART Goals:** The SMART goal method offers a structured approach that students can follow when setting goals. SMART is an acronym for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound. Specific goals clearly state what is to be accomplished; measurable goals allow us to assess progress towards reaching it; attainable goals are realistic and achievable; relevant goals are understood as important; and time-bound goals have a precise target date.
- **Mastery Goals:** Students who embrace mastery-oriented goals, also known as learner-oriented goals, focus on personal standards of success (e.g., the acquisition of new knowledge and skills) rather than performance outcomes (e.g., grades). Mastery-oriented goals are associated with effective learning strategies such as persistent effort, a preference for challenge and self-efficacy (Friedel et al., 2007).

By encouraging goal setting processes, schools can foster a vision for success within their schools.



In the Classroom

Teachers can support a mastery-oriented approach by setting co-developed short-term goals with students and guiding them through each step of a goal setting process.

- Give students the freedom to determine their goals and how to track progress towards those goals.
- Document student goals and share them with parents, caregivers and classmates to make progress visible.
- Teach students to learn from mistakes by modeling how to work through adversity and take ownership of shortcomings.
- Provide frequent check-ins and support students by discussing whether their goals are realistic or appropriate.
- Help craft revised goals alongside students by asking them to reflect and assess what worked and what they might do differently next time.
- Celebrate when students attain their goals or reach milestones towards achieving them.

By setting and working through goals, students will develop a sense of ownership over their education and learn to engage in reflective practice to further develop their skills.

References

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