

# Goal Setting

**G**oals are something your child would like to do, change, overcome, or experience. Setting goals encourages all children to do their best. It creates a climate where learning and effort are valued. Goals create structure – they are a map to help you and your child from where you are now to where you want to be in the future. Parents can help with analyzing, monitoring, and providing motivation along the way. No matter your child’s age, parents can help their children set **SMART** goals. SMART goals are goals that are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**elevant, and **T**ime-bound.



## What You Can Do:

- ◆ **In the early years:** Keep it simple and keep it fun. Goal setting requires the ability to think about the future and make plans. The brains of young children are still developing these abilities. Limit goals to simple things your child can achieve in a short amount of time and praise effort, not just achievement. **Example:** Set a goal of learning how to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich for lunch.
- ◆ **In the middle years:** Talk with your child about setting short-term, realistic goals and help your child make a plan to achieve those goals. Break goals down into small steps and chart progress along the way. **Example:** Set a goal to complete a school assignment your child is excited about. Talk about how to start, what specifically needs to be done for the assignment, and how to know when it is completed.
- ◆ **In the teen years:** Discuss short-term and long-term goals your child wants to achieve. Goals can be about school, work, or social activities. Break long-term goals into small steps so your child can see progress and to help maintain motivation. **Example:** Help your child to save money for a concert she would like to attend. Discuss how this may impact other things she may want to buy and then set a savings schedule to reach the goal.

## What Research Tells Us:

Goal setting may have a powerful, positive effect on human behavior including improved task performance, motivation, and perceived self-efficacy.

Learning how to set and achieve goals may help students better understand and work toward what is most important to them. Achieving goals helps students as they seek direction and independence in school and life.

Children should be encouraged to set goals for their learning, personal growth, and their future. When children learn to set goals, and reach them, they can visualize their future and make good choices.