

Setting Class SMART Goals

According to Dr. Glasser, a grade of “B” (80% in most schools) is considered to be a demonstration of competency. For that reason, 80% is the usual goal for individual students.

Class goals, however, are based on the percentage of students you expect to reach competency; therefore, they are always set at 100%.

Some educators argue that setting a goal of 100% is not realistic. However, *all students are expected to learn*. Therefore, if the goal is set at less than 100%, it conveys the idea that not all students need to achieve competency.

For example, reflect upon the following class goal: *This quarter, 80% of the students in our class will master math skills, as demonstrated by scoring 80% or higher on weekly quizzes*. Consider the goal from different perspectives. As a parent, if you read that 80% of the students would be successful, would you be satisfied? Would you be content wondering whether your child was one of the 20% that were not expected to reach the goal?

As a student, if you did not consider yourself “good” at math, would you be compelled to work toward competency, or would you expect other students to be responsible for that goal?

As a teacher, do you want only 80% of your students to be successful? Of course not! Rather than worrying about whether the goal is realistic, we need to look at it as one piece of a continuous improvement model. Our goal is for everyone to reach competency; our focus is on our progress toward that goal.

Goals may be set in a variety of ways. The most common is to consider a percentage of work mastered. The following goal uses that method:

By the end of the second semester, 100% of the students in our class will master algebra skills, as demonstrated by scoring 80% or higher on weekly quizzes.

Some teachers prefer to measure progress toward personal goals. In this case, the class goal might read,

By the end of the 2nd semester, 100% of the students in our class will master algebra skills, as demonstrated by reaching their personal weekly goals.

Another option is to measure learning gains. If you have a formative assessment that provides this information, you might set the following goal:

By the end of the first semester, 100% of the students in our class will have made a minimum of half a year’s growth, as measured by the Accelerated Math assessment.

Students should be involved in deciding what will be measured, and what will be considered competency. As part of this, they should have the opportunity to discuss what a goal represents. Consider the following true story.

The class goal in a middle school Intensive Algebra class was: 100% of the students will score 60% or higher on algebra quizzes.

The class was asked to divide into groups of 3 or 4 and to talk about the following two questions:

1. What is a goal?
2. What does a score of 60% mean to you?

Their answers to the questions are shown, below.

1. What is a goal?
 - Something you strive for.
 - Something to work for.
2. What does a 60% mean to you?
 - Below average.
 - Not very good.
 - Barely passing.

After hearing their responses, the instructor asked, “So, is having a goal to be below average good enough for you?”

Of course, the class as a whole said, “No”. They were then asked to consider what would be a reasonable percentage to reflect learning. After a few minutes of discussion, the class agreed to reset the goal to reflect a 75% score on quizzes.

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