



COACH'S CORNER

Coach's Corner is a monthly DIEEC blog dedicated to providing fresh ideas for all early childhood education professionals.

Goal Setting

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If you or your program has developed a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) or worked with the Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC), you have likely spent some time focused on goal-setting. Setting a goal for yourself or your program is an important part of the quality improvement process. But the process involves more than just choosing something to work on. When setting goals we want to be intentional in setting ourselves and our programs up for success. Following the S.M.A.R.T. goal criteria is a great way to get started!

S.M.A.R.T. Goals

One of the most productive ways to set a goal is by using the S.M.A.R.T. goal strategy. Let's review this acronym.

Below are some examples of ways to build community with fellow educators in both FCC and center-based settings.

S- Specific

When setting a goal for yourself or your program you want to be as specific as possible. Consider who is involved with the process and what is the desired outcome. What resources will you need to achieve this goal? Make sure the language you are using leaves no room for questions or misinterpretation.

M - Measurable

In order for a goal to be achieved it must be measurable. You will want to have a way to track your progress and then measure the outcome. Ask yourself the question, "How will I know when my goal has been accomplished?"

A - Attainable

Consider the scope of your goal. Be sure that you are setting goals that encourage growth within your program but that are also realistic.

R- Relevant

Does your goal fit within the long term plan for your program? If you are working on multiple goals for different classrooms, consider how they all fit together. This will enable your program to share resources or have educators support each other with their classroom goals.

T - Time-Bound

Every goal should have a timeframe. Give yourself or your educators a realistic timeline with deadlines for each step of the plan. This helps with time management for all involved.

S.M.A.R.T Goal Examples

- By February 29, 2024, I will collect at least 4 pieces of observation documentation for each child in my program using at least 2 different methods for each child.
- By March 31, 2024, I will have completed the steps and training courses necessary to implement Teaching Strategies GOLD® in my program.
- For the next 3 months I will get at least 30 minutes of daily physical activity and I will keep a log to track my activity.

Is this a S.M.A.R.T. Goal?

Statement	Goal: I want to start using more observations and assessments in my program.	Goal: By March 31, 2024, I will have completed the steps and training courses necessary to implement Teaching Strategies GOLD® in my program.
Specific?	While this goal mentions “observations and assessments” it is too broad. Which assessments?	This goal calls out specific items that need to be completed. It breaks down the path to implementing Teaching Strategies GOLD® into smaller pieces.
Measurable?	What is meant by “more?” This goal does not provide an opportunity for measuring the outcome.	This goal has a measurable outcome as well as steps that can be checked off as completed.
Attainable?	Because this goal is vague, it will be challenging to determine the actionable steps that can be taken to achieve it.	This goal provides actionable steps which help make it attainable.
Relevant?	What kind of assessments? Why? This goal does not provide enough information to determine whether it is relevant.	Teaching Strategies GOLD® is appropriate for early childhood classrooms and is an evidence-based approach to assessment.
Time-Bound?	This goal does not have any timeline or deadline.	This goal includes a specific deadline: March 31, 2024. The deadline will help to plan out the time needed to complete each step and training course.

Goal-Setting Tips

Break a big goal down into smaller chunks. One thing to keep in mind throughout the goal-setting process, is that sometimes we have larger, long-term goals that, in order to be achieved, need to be broken down into smaller goals.

Focus on one goal at a time. Ideally, each educator should be focused on one goal at a time. This helps to make things more manageable and set the educator up for success.

Work together. Consider having a staff meeting to have educators work together to write out their S.M.A.R.T. goals. This is a great way to encourage peer support among the staff. Educators that have similar goals can work together on certain action items. Family child care educators can also work together to support each other with goal-setting and sharing ideas.

Don't forget to celebrate your successes! Take some time, once your goal is achieved to evaluate the process. What worked well? What would you like to change for next time? Reward yourself for achieving your goal!

Ask for support. If your program would like support with creating S.M.A.R.T. goals or talking through the process, our quality improvement specialists at DIEEC are ready and available to support your program. This is also an important step in applying for the state's Quality Improvement Awards.

Resources

[Using S.M.A.R.T. Goals to Inform Program Action Plans](#) - Delaware Institute for Excellence In Early Childhood

[Foundations of Excellence, Topic 4: Pulling it All Together - Program Examples](#) - Head Start ECLKC