



Help Learners Set Goals for Themselves

UDL CHECKPOINT 6.1: Guide appropriate goal-setting

— Guiding learners toward setting goals (both short- and long-term) as well as developing strategies for effective learning can help learners succeed in a specific course and become a more confident and successful learner, overall.

What is it?

It is important that learners become well-rounded individuals and academics. One of the most essential skills that lead to success is setting realistic goals. Not only can achieving these goals create a sense of confidence in learners, but goal setting can help learners break down complex assignments and assessments into more manageable pieces, which can help them better succeed. In setting realistic goals for themselves, learners are able to develop strategies for their learning, which can lead to long-term success.

Why do it?

Oftentimes, learners can feel overwhelmed and confused with projects and assignments. These feelings can lead learners to performing poorly, losing interest in the material, and/or not completing the required tasks (which can lead to failure in the assignment and even course). However, by helping learners set short- and long-term goals for themselves and encouraging them to actively work toward achieving those goals, instructors can keep learners motivated in the class as well as their overall academic journey. When learners set goals for themselves, they are developing personal strategies to help them succeed, both in and out of the classroom.

How can I apply it?

Here are some ways that you can help learners set goals and develop learning strategies.

- **Scaffold assignments and assessments.** Making complex assignments and projects more accessible by breaking them down into smaller and more manageable parts can help learners remain focused on specifics without feeling overwhelmed.
- **Model goal setting in the classroom.** Creating syllabi and class agendas that are clear and manageable in scope exemplifies the importance of creating goals within a class setting as well as maintaining those goals throughout the course/semester. Additionally, providing checklists and guides (in-person, on Canvas, etc.) demonstrates effective goal setting for learners.
- **Require self-reflection throughout the course.** Having learners reflect on their successes, failures, and concerns over the course of an assignment or project can help learners better recognize how they can improve their own personal learning strategies.
- **Check in with learners regularly.** Whether in email, in-person, etc., check in with learners to see how they are feeling about the course, specific assignments/projects/assessments, and their overall academic journey. These check-ins

allow learners the chance to ask questions and clarify information while also giving instructors the opportunity to help personally guide learners toward setting effective goals for themselves.

Summary

As humans, we have a better chance of succeeding in any task when we have a clear goal and a defined strategy for achieving that goal. Nowhere is this truer than in an academic surrounding. Helping learners recognize the strategies that are effective for themselves can lead to clearer understanding of expectations, better focus on the material and quality of submitted work, and overall success in the course.