

An ESL Practitioner Comments

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When using EFF with classes, goal-setting in terms of the three roles is our starting point. If there are ten or twelve students, in order to arrive at a measurable objective for the creation of a real world learning task, it is first necessary to reach consensus. This means much discussion about what is a priority in terms of learning and language acquisition. Feedback from students is very positive. They report that the discussion is a motivation for self exploration and examination of what they want to learn as well as how they learn.

On the first day of the quarter I ask the questions "What is it that you want to be able to say in English?" and "Who would you like to be able to talk to in English?" I allow students to translate and speak with one another in native or shared languages, and if I share a language with a student, I use it. The point is to consider the questions that will allow thoughtful and intentional work in role-mapping.

I ask the students to take the Mind Maps and the questions home, seek help from bilingual friends, brainstorm lists for each category (family, worker, citizen) in terms of the questions, think on it, sleep on it, do anything that helps." This becomes the basis for the ESL course.

I find that after a quarter of work my students are ready to role-map anew and discuss the four Purposes with an eye to their own futures.

Setting SMART Goals

*"A dream is a wish your heart makes,
but a goal is a dream with a deadline."*

Author unknown

One way to introduce goal-setting to learners is to talk about "SMART" goals. Using this acronym, learners can begin to understand how to transform their dreams into realities.

S Specific
M Measurable
A Achievable
R Realistic
T Timely

Carolyn Beiers, from the Family Learning GED Program in Greenville, South Carolina, does more than simply tell her learners what the acronym for "SMART" goal-setting is. She works with learners through each step of the process.

For example, in working with a parent to develop short-term goals, Carolyn first asks, "In your role as a parent, what would you like to do, or do better?" A typical response might be, "I want to be able to read to my child." This is the *dream*. The challenge is to turn this into a SMART goal.

Carolyn suggests, "Let's make that a *specific* goal." The parent may respond with "I WILL read a book to my child." To make the goal *measurable*, the parent suggests, "I will read four books to my child."

Making a goal *measurable* sometimes isn't as difficult as making it *achievable*. So Carolyn continues to work with the parent. The parent thinks about what is *achievable*, then offers, "I will read two books to my child." Carolyn continues to help the parent narrow the goal. The parent makes it *realistic* by suggesting, "I will read one book to my child every night."

The next question is when will this happen. Without a deadline, a goal continues to be a dream. The parent pro-

vides a SMART goal by offering a deadline – making it *timely*, "I will read two books to my child every night for one week."

After the parent has set a goal using the SMART strategy, Carolyn then asks the parent how s/he will know when the goal is reached. Together, they work out a plan, using a calendar, chart, or checklist to provide evidence.

At the end of the week, it is now much easier for the parent to see whether the goal was achieved. The parent can then reflect on the success of that goal, and move one step toward his or her larger goal. If the goal was not reached within the time limit, the teacher can guide the parent to look at the reasons for not accomplishing the goal, and then work through the goal-setting process again, making changes as necessary.

Caroline Beverstock,
South San Francisco:

Even though I've felt that I was reasonably good at helping students to articulate their goals, I found that the structure of the roles made visible on paper (using the Mind Map form) helped students to say more and, I suspect, articulate more significant goals. For example, a young mother of two volunteered that she had never registered to vote and that she'd like to do that and prepare to vote. I doubt that it would have come out in past, less focused conversations."

SMART Goals

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| Specific: | State your goal clearly. Leave no question as to what is being attempted. |
| Measurable: | Make sure that you can measure your progress. How will you tell when you have reached your goal? |
| Achievable: | Remember that we “grow” toward the goals we set by taking one step at a time. Goals should be challenging but not overwhelm us. Create a plan for reaching your goal to make sure it’s achievable. |
| Realistic: | Remember that goals can be both “high and realistic.” It is for you to decide. Goals are <i>realistic</i> if they are something that you are both <u>willing</u> and <u>able</u> to work toward. |
| Timely: | Goals are <i>timely</i> in that you have them now. Setting a deadline helps you stay focused and gives you something concrete to shoot for. |

1. A significant goal for me is (SPECIFIC):

2. When I have achieved this goal, I will know by (MEASURABLE):

3. To achieve this goal, I will do these things (ACHIEVEABLE):

4. This goal makes sense because (REALISTIC):

5. I will achieve this goal by the following deadline (TIMELY):

My victory celebration will look like this: