

# Realistic and Encouraging Goals

Promising Practices 2

Suggestions for Program Improvement for Ohio ABLE Practitioners

Goal Setting/Review

## Program Puzzler

Your program conducts new student orientation once a month at the main site. During the orientation goal-setting activities, one student intends to enter the military in the next six months and needs a General Educational Development (GED) credential. When the student is given a Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) locator, she barely tests into Level M. She is then given the Level M full battery pretest and places in Educational Functioning Level (EFL) 3, Low Intermediate. The teacher conducting orientation is concerned that the student may not be capable of completing the goal within the program year, but he does not want to discourage her from her GED goal. How can the teacher best handle this situation?



### Timely Tips

Use a mastery checklist of what needs to be completed before taking the GED test.

Use a visual to explain types of goals and illustrate the relationships between them.

## Peer Perspective

### Initial Goal Setting/Form Completion

- Conduct testing first to inform realistic goal setting with students.
- Explain what the actual TABE scores mean and the scores needed to attain the goal of GED.
- Work with students individually to set smaller, attainable goals that are part of the larger long-term goal.
  - o Set a short-term goal of attaining placement in EFL 6 before taking the GED practice test.
- Use an interest inventory for goal setting, particularly with those wanting to enter postsecondary.
- Mark “to improve basic skills” as the primary goal on the Student Registration Form, and explain this initial goal as short-term and that a long-term goal can be passing the GED.
  - o Make sure to work through the entire goal-setting process with students to help them understand and set long-term and short-term goals and to establish concrete steps to accomplish goals.

### Data Quality Controls

- Establish procedures like those described in Initial Goal Setting/Form Completion so that all staff members assisting students during orientation follow the same process.
- Double check forms to ensure that goals are realistic based on test scores and EFLs.
- Highlight problems or discrepancies on forms so that issues can be discussed at monthly staff meetings.
- Maintain clear, regular communication between the administrator, the ABLELink person, and the classroom staff.
- Refresh skills in goal-setting instruction (e.g., methods to engage students in the goal-setting process) on a regular basis.

## Added Insights

Remember that the GED is not the end of education for most students. To one degree or another, we all become life-long learners. Encourage all students to consider postsecondary education options among other potentially long-range goals.

Advising students on goal setting and other issues is a program must. Advising allows for check-in with students, helps students identify impediments to success and ways to deal with them and provides opportunities to discuss and adjust goals. Advising students in setting goals should include activities to make goals detailed, specific, and achievable. Students should identify actions or strategies that will help them achieve their long-term and short-term goals and build self-confidence.

A variety of suggestions are offered in the literature concerning student orientation. Specifically, successful

orientation includes building support systems and relationships in the classroom, discussing goals and concerns, and getting acclimated to the program. In addition, engaging students with other students is key. Programs should consider asking current students to act as role models and mentors for incoming students or having new students work in small groups on activities that explore learning strategies and interests, perceptions of learning/school history, and short- and long-term goals. The *Program Administrator's Sourcebook* (National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, 2005) offers both of the following suggestions:

- Help students clearly identify their goals and develop an action plan to achieve those goals.
- Reassess students on a regular basis and communicate the results to students.

Literature mentioned in the Added Insights of this document is drawn from reviews, reports, and papers housed on the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) website. Refer to <http://www.ncsall.net/index.php?id=15> for more information. In addition, the reference below, also found at the NCSALL site, is more directly cited in this document.

Taylor, J., Smith, C., & Bingman, B. (December 2005). *Program Administrators' Sourcebook: A Resource on NCSALL's Research for Adult Education Program Administrators*. Cambridge, MA.  
<http://www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/teach/PASourcebook.pdf>

### ABLELink Accompaniments

- ◆ Latest Progress Recorded for Students, by Class
- ◆ Latest Progress Recorded for Students, by Site
- ◆ Latest Progress Recorded for Students, by Teacher
- ◆ Practice GED Test/Official GED Test Student info
- ◆ Students Who Passed The GED Test

Developed by the OSU ABLE Evaluation and Design Project, 2008; revised edition, 2010.

*Funds for producing and distributing this publication were provided by the Ohio Board of Regents under authority of Section 223 of the Workforce Investment Act, 1998. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Ohio Board of Regents or the U.S. Department of Education, and no endorsement should be inferred.*

