don't you want to do better?

Implementing a Goal-setting Intervention in an Afterschool Program

by Amy Hallenbeck and David Fleming

Sam (a pseudonym) sits quietly at an empty desk. It is 3:15 p.m.; all of the fourth-grade afterschool students are in one room. "Okay, everyone, let's get started on your homework," Ms. Wall says. Boys and girls take books, paper, and pencils out of their backpacks and place them on their desks. After looking at one student's agenda, Ms. Wall reads the homework assignment aloud: "Write a sentence with each vocabulary word. Underline the word in your sentence." Students begin to write. A few minutes later, Ms. Wall realizes that Sam's desk is still empty and he is not working on his homework. "Sam," she says, "why aren't you writing your sentences?" Sam shrugs and avoids her gaze. Ms. Wall steps over to his desk and asks, "Why aren't you doing your homework, Sam? Don't you want to do better?"

Goal setting is not an innate skill. Adults who are successful at reaching their goals have learned to set realistic goals and to plan to attain them. Afterschool programs, because they have latitude in their curricular offerings and program elements, can provide strong backdrops for goal-setting initiatives. While studies have shown that goal setting is a behavior elementary-age children can accomplish (e.g., Murawski & Wilshinsky, 2005), they do not examine goal-setting initiatives in afterschool programs.

This paper describes a goal-setting intervention implemented in a 21st Century Community Learning Centers afterschool program serving students in grades 1–5 at two school sites. We structured the goal-setting intervention using the Transtheoretical Model, which depicts behavior change as a process that evolves through a

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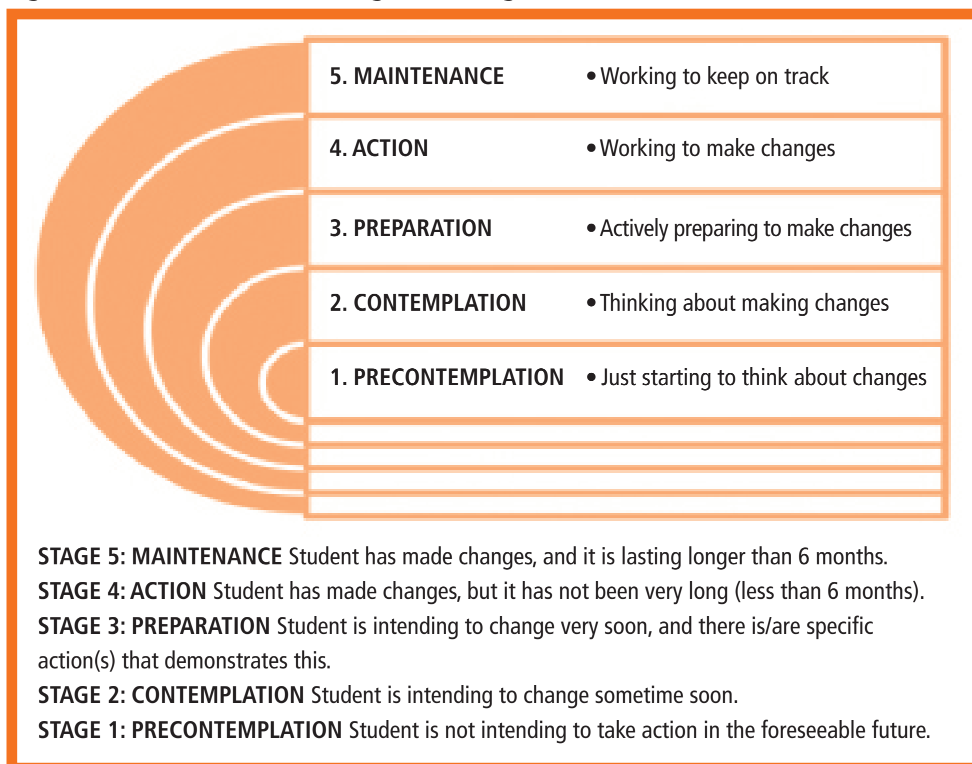
Figure 1. Visual Model of the Stages of Change



series of stages (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1984). We believed that use of the Transtheoretical Model, and specifically its Stages of Change construct, could provide elementary afterschool students with a method of setting and achieving goals. With the assistance of afterschool teachers as the goal-setting facilitators, we wanted to discern:

- Is there a difference in the pre-intervention and post-intervention scores of the Stages of Change among students participating in the afterschool intervention?
- How does an afterschool goal-setting intervention affect students' goal-setting behaviors?
- How does an afterschool goal-setting intervention affect intervention facilitators?

Our results show that the intervention offered benefits for both students and teacher-facilitators. We used our data to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the goal-setting intervention in order to improve its implementation.

Conceptual Framework

Goal Setting

Schunk (1984) identifies three critical elements of goal actualization: "goal specificity, difficulty level, and proximity" (p. 15). *Specificity* is illustrated by a study in which fifth- and sixth-graders who made greater improvements to their texts when told to "add information" rather than simply to "revise" (Graham, MacArthur, & Schwartz, 1995). Several studies (e.g., McTigue, Washburn, & Liew, 2009; Peterson & Davis, 2008) demonstrate the importance of appropriately *challenging* goals so that students are neither overwhelmed nor understimulated. Goal *proximity* is related to how quickly a goal can be achieved. While adults may be capable of dividing a large goal into smaller components and foreseeing eventual completion, many children are not (Bandura, 1977). Bandura and Schunk (1981) found that third-graders who were given instructions on how to divide a large set of materials and complete a task in specific increments had higher motivation and completion rates than did students who were simply told to work productively.

Goal effectiveness appears to be influenced by many factors, among them feedback, rewards, realistic but challenging goals, and participation in the goal-setting process (Schunk, 1984). In addition, many students need facilitators to provide guidance and modeling in order to achieve their goals (e.g., Margolis & McCabe, 2004; Shilts, Horowitz, & Townsend, 2004).

The Transtheoretical Model and Stages of Change

The Transtheoretical Model is a commonly used theoretical framework for behavior change (Hutchison, Brecken, & Johnston, 2009). It was initially used in changing addictive behaviors such as smoking (Prochaska, 1979; Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross, 1992). Research revealed that change proceeds through a series of stages (DiClemente & Prochaska, 1982). Each of these Stages of Change has identifying characteristics (Prochaska et al., 1992), as illustrated in Figure 1, which also shows the specific descriptors for the stages that we used with facilitators and students.

Although the Transtheoretical Model has served as the basis for change intervention and exploration in contexts ranging from voice therapy (van Leer, Hapner, & Connor, 2008) to physical activity and exercise (Marshall & Biddle, 2001), most studies have involved adults. Some studies have used the model with adolescent participants

(e.g., Davey, Richards, Lang, & Davies, 2006; Hausenblas, Nigg, Downs, Fleming, & Connaughton, 2002; Willoughby & Perry, 2002) or with children (e.g., Topp et al., 2009).

Framework Synthesis

Afterschool programs have proven to be valuable venues for academic support and improvement, character building, positive social and physical development, and development of non-academic skills and interests (Zhang & Byrd, 2006). Precisely because they are not required to focus exclusively on academic objectives, afterschool programs can and do include non-academic program components addressing personal issues such as values, self-esteem, health and physical fitness, social skills, and emotional wellness (e.g., Bruening, Dover, & Clark, 2009; Deerin, 2005; Durlak & Weissberg, 2007; Gacherieu, 2004; Hishinuma et al., 2009; Payton et al., 2008). Developing students' goal-setting skills is thus congruent with the broad objectives of many afterschool programs.

We hypothesized that the Transtheoretical Model's Stages of Change (SoC) construct could give the afterschool students and their adult facilitators a means of establishing student-focused goals, monitoring behavior change, and fostering movement toward actualizing those goals. Using a visual model of the SoC and monthly meetings between facilitators and students, we hoped to reveal how elementary-age students navigate the goal-setting process. We believed that the process of helping students establish and work toward goals using the SoC construct could also positively affect facilitators. The convergence of the afterschool program, the goal-setting intervention, and the SoC construct provided a unique combination of factors with which to examine the viability of goal setting as a beneficial element in afterschool programming for elementary students.

Design and Structure of the Goal-setting Intervention

Setting

Located in two rural schools in the southeastern United States, the afterschool program where we implemented the goal-setting intervention was a partnership between the school district and a nearby university. The intervention took place in the second year of the program's operation. The two sites had 145 regular participants during the 2009–2010 program year, with 73% of regular attendees receiving free or reduced-price lunch. School staff, program site coordinators, and the program's project director selected students for the program based on factors that placed the students at risk, such as low grades or test scores, teacher recommendations for academic assistance, living in a single-parent household, and being a "latchkey child." Program foci were homework help, academic enrichment, and goal-oriented performance. The 40 part-time staff members included certified teachers, non-certified teachers, and students majoring in education at the partner university.

The program not only stressed homework and academic enrichment but also provided activities students might otherwise not have experienced such as a performance by the partner university's a cappella choir and an interactive presentation on rocks and semi-precious gems. The goal-setting intervention, implemented in the program's second year, had been specified in the 21st CCLC grant application. As principal investigator for the grant and project director of the program, we wanted to teach goal setting because we believe that:

- Students often want to "do better" in academic and other areas.
- Students often do not know *how* or *what* to do in order to "do better."
- The parents or guardians of at-risk students may have neither time nor skills to teach their children how to "do better."
- Students can learn how to "do better" if they are taught to set and work toward goals.

We knew that the goal-setting intervention had to be intentional and include all students. We decided to use a visual representation of the SoC construct so students and teacher-facilitators could literally *see* how working toward a goal could help students achieve it. We provided one-on-one time between facilitators and individual students so that students would receive the guidance they needed in order to change their behaviors. We thought that students who participated in establishing their own goals and action plans and who received positive feedback from teachers could be successful in actualizing their goals.

Training and Implementation

Prior to the September start of the program, all staff were required (and paid) to participate in a two-hour training and orientation session. Goal setting was addressed in a 25-minute breakout session in which we discussed the purpose of the goal-setting intervention, gave an overview of the SoC construct, showed a visual SoC model, used examples to demonstrate how the model works, and gave teachers the student goal-setting forms we had designed (see Figures 2 and 3). We assigned each facilitator a group

Figure 2. Teacher Directions for Student Goal-setting Form

INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS

December (You will also need a copy of your November assessment submitted to the Site Coordinator):

• In direct consultation with the student, please refer back to the original goals for each of the categorized areas established in November. Write a short (1–3 word) description of the original goal in the space provided for each (e.g., math grades). Review any strategies the student has used to meet that goal since identification in November. Write (in their own words when possible) the strategies and examples of evidence for reaching toward that goal. If no strategies or examples can be given, simply put "none." In any case, please provide a short "teacher suggested strategy" for them to use as a vehicle for improvement by the next review in January.

• If a goal needs to be adjusted, changed, replaced, or omitted, please do so and mark appropriately on the evaluation sheet.

• Upon completion of the review of goals and their current efforts, please reassess each on the scale provided. Upon completion of the sheet, please submit to your respective Site Coordinator before the holiday break.

Figure 3. Student Goal-setting Form

INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN – DECEMBER

Student Name ________________ **Grade** ___ **Teacher Name** ________________ **Date**___________

SCHOOL GOALS

Goal #1: (short description) ____

How much are you currently working on this? Examples? ________________Current Stage: ___

Teacher Suggestions: ____

Goal #2: (short description) ____

How much are you currently working on this? Examples? ________________Current Stage: ___

Teacher Suggestions: ____

Goal #3: (if applicable)____

How much are you currently working on this? Examples? ________________Current Stage: ___

Teacher Suggestions: ____

COMMUNITY GOALS

Goal #1: (short description) ____

How much are you currently working on this? Examples? ________________Current Stage: ___

Teacher Suggestions: ____

Goal #2: (short description) ____

How much are you currently working on this? Examples? ________________Current Stage: ___

Teacher Suggestions: ____

Goal #3: (if applicable)____

How much are you currently working on this? Examples? ________________Current Stage: ___

Teacher Suggestions: ____

HOME GOALS

Goal #1: (short description) ____

How much are you currently working on this? Examples? ________________Current Stage: ___

Teacher Suggestions: ____

Goal #2: (short description) ____

How much are you currently working on this? Examples? ________________Current Stage: ___

Teacher Suggestions: ____

Goal #3: (if applicable)____

How much are you currently working on this? Examples? ________________Current Stage: ___

Teacher Suggestions: ____

Table 1. Frequency of SoC Scores by Goal Type and Month

	GOAL	NO GOAL RECORDED	NO STAGE ASSIGNED	STAGE 1	STAGE 2	STAGE 3	STAGE 4	STAGE 5
November N=107	School 1	5	16	**40**	29	10	7	0
	School 2	28	23	**31**	18	5	1	1
	Community 1	43	13	**27**	19	4	1	0
	Community 2	54	11	**24**	11	5	2	0
	Home 1	22	16	**31**	23	10	5	0
	Home 2	33	19	**26**	17	7	4	1
December N=60	School 1	2	12	3	**19**	11	11	2
	School 2	22	9	1	**17**	5	6	0
	Community 1	19	12	2	**14**	8	5	0
	Community 2	43	4	5	3	0	3	2
	Home 1	8	12	2	**17**	9	11	1
	Home 2	34	4	3	**8**	4	6	1
January N=99	School 1	2	2	7	13	21	**50**	4
	School 2	30	2	9	15	19	**19**	5
	Community 1	15	7	7	19	**25**	23	3
	Community 2	58	3	**11**	10	7	8	2
	Home 1	13	5	6	15	26	**31**	3
	Home 2	43	2	8	17	6	**20**	3
February N=85	School 1	1	9	0	10	17	**37**	11
	School 2	26	7	1	8	15	**23**	5
	Community 1	13	6	3	14	10	**36**	3
	Community 2	49	4	4	6	6	**14**	2
	Home 1	6	12	3	9	16	**31**	8
	Home 2	41	4	2	9	10	**14**	5
March N=36	School 1	2	9	0	2	3	**12**	8
	School 2	14	6	1	3	1	**9**	2
	Community 1	6	7	0	3	3	**15**	2
	Community 2	25	1	1	1	0	**6**	2
	Home 1	6	7	1	2	2	**13**	5
	Home 2	24	2	0	2	1	**7**	0

of six or seven students, with the idea that the groups would remain constant for the program year. We asked facilitators to meet individually with each group member once a month to complete goal-setting forms and to help students work toward their goals. Subsequent required training sessions in October, November, and February included 15- to 20-minute portions on goal setting.

During the first one-on-one meetings in November, students worked with their teacher-facilitators to establish goals in three areas: school, community, and home. Each month, facilitators met with their students, using the goal-setting forms first to establish action plans and then to discuss progress and modify action plans. Facilitator instructions therefore changed slightly with each month's forms based on the needs we anticipated and our review of the previous month's student forms. Facilitators were asked to support students in working toward their goals and to ascertain what stage students had reached in the

SoC model. Students' goal-setting forms were kept in group notebooks, which we collected monthly for review.

Methods

We collected quantitative and qualitative data on the goal-setting intervention. Student forms provided SoC scores as well as qualitative information concerning specific goals, supporting actions and activities, and facilitator-student interactions. The project director conducted one structured in-depth interview with a teacher-facilitator. The remaining qualitative information came from informal discussions with facilitators at year's end, an end-of-year survey with ten open-ended questions for facilitators, and notes from a meeting between the project director and two site coordinators.

Project Findings

Students

We did not study students' perceptions of the intervention. However, teachers generally believed the goal-setting intervention had a positive impact on students. They believed that it helped students learn how to establish and work toward goals. For at-risk students like those in this afterschool program, positive individual attention from an adult may well have had further-reaching effects than student forms could reveal.

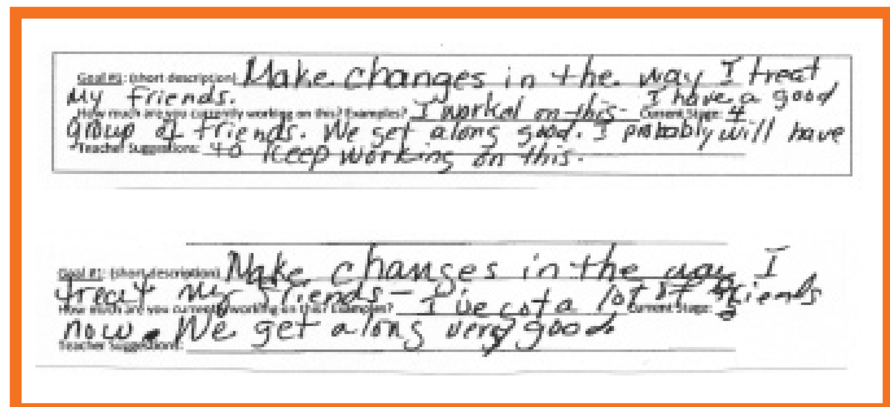
Frequency counts of students' SoC scores for each month of the intervention, each goal category, and each goal within each category reveal behavior change and progress toward goals, as shown in Table 1. In November, the first month of the intervention, the number of SoC scores in Stage 1, Precontemplation, was at its highest for all three goal types. SoC scores in home goals tended to be in Stage 4, Action, by January; in school and community goals the scores tended to reach Stage 4 by February. The SoC scores show no indication that, once students moved into the Action stage, they relapsed into a previous stage. We saw variation in the number of goal-setting forms that were completed and returned, with March, the last month of the intervention, showing the largest drop-off.

Changes in student goal-associated behaviors were also evident in the comments facilitators recorded on the goal-setting forms. In response to the question, "Is there a school subject you would like to improve in, and what changes would you like to make to do so?" Brea, a second-grade student, replied, "Math. It's different than last year." Her initial school goal was to "improve math skills." Though the goal itself lacked specificity, Brea took more specific intermediate steps to achieve it. When asked how much she was currently working on her goal, she answered, "I'm paying attention and trying to listen to my teacher." In a later month, she said, "I practice when I get home after school. . . . It's my favorite subject now." In the final month, Brea commented, "Sometimes I ask the teacher to help me. I always try, and I practice at night when I have a test on those things."

Charlie, a fourth-grader, made significant progress toward his community goal: "Make changes in the way I treat my friends." He initially reported getting mad and yelling at his friends, walking away when people tried to talk to him. In fact, the situation seemed so dire to Charlie that, when asked if there were other changes he would like to make, he replied, "I wish I could move because there is nobody to play with." The following month, Charlie commented that he was "still working on this a lot." By February, Charlie was reporting more positive results; by March, the final month of the intervention, Charlie had made a substantial change (see Figure 4).

The teacher-facilitator we interviewed at the end of the year described several students who had achieved their goals. One student in particular had made significant progress toward improving her math grade. Belle had a low math grade for the first and second nine weeks because she did not know her multiplication facts. Together, the teacher and Belle determined that Belle's school goal would be to "Earn an A in math." They planned for Belle to work on multiplication prac-

Figure 4. Charlie's February and March Goal-setting Forms


Goal #1: (short description) Make changes in the way I treat my friends.
How much are you currently working on this? (Examples)? I workd on this. I have a good group of friends. We get alons good. I probably will have to keep working on this.
Current Stage: 4
Teacher Suggestions:

Goal #1: (short description) Make changes in the way I treat my friends.
How much are you currently working on this? (Examples)? I've got a lot of friends now. We get alons very good.
Current Stage: 5
Teacher Suggestions:

tice at home with her grandmother every school night. The teacher said that, as a result of the practice:

> The third nine weeks she had pulled it up to an A. Just. . . knowing that she's getting it [multiplication practice] with us here, and then she's going home and they're focusing on at least 10 or 15 minutes every night. . . has allowed her to say "Well, if I do this. . . I can bring my grade up!"

Many students, like Belle, not only accomplished their goals but also gained a sense of pride from their accomplishment. For example, a first-grade student who had a long history of disruptive behaviors learned to "raise my hand and not blurt out." A fourth-grader whose goal was to improve his reading earned enough points to "march in the school-wide Accelerated Reader parade." He was so excited that he asked his parents to come to school for the event. Some goal-setting forms demonstrated students' awareness of and responsibility for the people and the world around them in such goals as "not fighting with my brother" and "recycle more to help the planet."

Teacher-Facilitators

We talked with teacher-facilitators at the end of the program year about implementing the goal-setting intervention. In conversations and year-end questionnaires, teachers frequently used favorable statements to describe the intervention, its impact on students, and their personal perceptions and experiences.

An extensive interview with one third-grade teacher, Claire, revealed that at first she was unsure about the intervention and how to implement it:

> Honestly, at first I felt overwhelmed with what we would be taking on, and would the kids be able to respond to what they understand. I guess once I saw on the pyramid level [the visual figure], then it kind of clicked and made sense. I was first thinking it was just the goals, but then when we got into the training and we could see that you know this level was [students'] thought process, and this was their ideas, and the next level was thinking what they were going to do to accomplish this goal, then it kind of clicked for me.

Claire said she had questioned whether teachers and staff would be able to facilitate the intervention in light of everything else that took place, and sometimes took precedence, during the afterschool program. She was equally unsure of the students' abilities to understand and respond to the idea of setting goals and working on them.

Claire also reported positive outcomes for the students. She thought the intervention "was a good thing" because it allowed her both to hold students accountable and to show them how to be accountable. She also believed that blending goal setting with existing components made the afterschool program more complete: "We've got the academics, the homework, the academic enrichment, and we've got the computer time and the recreation time, that's just all being able to be pulled together." Claire believed that goal setting had the potential to harmonize all of the program activities, a possibility we had not considered.

When asked about benefits of the goal-setting intervention, Claire remarked that she perceived changes in her relationships with students. She believed that the process "allowed [students] to see that we [teachers] are real people." The one-on-one meetings provided opportunities "to get to know the students on a more personal level." "They're students," she said, "and we need to see them as people as well, and they have problems, and they have issues outside of the school that really come into play and affect what they're doing in the classroom." A specific benefit for her was "spending that time giving one-on-one attention." Claire saw further implications:

> We're here to try to help them in school, but we're also wanting to. . . create productive citizens one day. So not only are we here to teach them academics, but we're here to teach them that. . . if they're not excelling and they're not to the level they want to be, then there [are] things that we can do to help them get to where they want to be.

On the year-end questionnaire, not all teachers were enthusiastic about the goal-setting intervention, but several reported positive experiences. Some reported enjoying the opportunity to become more familiar with the students and the non-academic aspects of their lives. For example, one teacher responded, "It helped me get to know the students better in regard to their lives outside of school." Another teacher wrote that it helped her "to understand what the kids prioritized in their lives." Teachers generally saw the goal-setting intervention as mutually beneficial: they developed stronger relationships with the students and could see the progress students were making, while students could also see their own progress toward achieving their goals.

Lessons Learned

Goal setting can be a viable activity in an afterschool program, even with elementary-age children. Despite some

teachers' initial misgivings, the goal-setting intervention helped students make behavioral changes that allowed them to progress toward, and in some cases achieve, their goals. The data we gathered give us tools with which to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the goal-setting intervention, raising several issues to be considered in planning and implementation. Though we became aware of some of these issues in the midst of the intervention, we did not ask facilitators and students to change goals midstream.

Teachers generally saw the goal-setting intervention as mutually beneficial: they developed stronger relationships with the students and could see the progress students were making, while students could also see their own progress toward achieving their goals.

Logistics and Timing

Careful planning and preparation are essential, from determining the sizes of the goal-setting groups to designing forms that reflect the desired outcomes. Providing specific places for facilitators and groups to meet, storage locations for student forms, and a protocol for dealing with student absences were critical elements of the intervention.

Teachers were enthusiastic about the way the goal-setting intervention was eventually organized. Initially teachers were asked to meet with students once a month, with at least three weeks between meetings. With these loose guidelines, many teachers rushed to do the December goal-setting forms and often did not complete them. After we established a specific week each month for the intervention, during which homework was the first priority and goal setting second, forms were completed more thoroughly and consistently. Designating a specific window of time for the monthly meetings allowed facilitators to focus on working with students on goal setting.

Staff Training

Teachers' feedback demonstrated that thorough understanding of the goal-setting intervention, its goals and terminology, and the theory and rationale behind it are crucial if teachers are to properly execute the intervention. Providing research information about establishing goals and fostering goal actualization can help teacher-facilitators understand how to teach the process of goal setting while supporting students as they work to attain their goals. These issues should be addressed in the initial goal-setting training and emphasized in subsequent trainings.

Although we held four training sessions, we found that teachers did not always understand the theory and practice of goal setting. For example, in response to a question about seeing behavior change in her students, one teacher interpreted the word *behavior* to mean obeying rules and acting as one should in school. She indicated that she saw no behavior change, even though she had indicated changes in SoC scores on student forms. On her year-end questionnaire, this teacher wrote, "The teachers don't need to be trained; the students need to understand what goals are and what setting goals means." Facilitator training should work toward helping teachers understand that they are responsible for teaching students about goals and goal setting, especially when the students are very young. Proper training would help teachers to see the entire intervention as a process—not simply as a desired outcome.

Teacher training needs to be real and meaningful, modeling what teachers are being asked to do with students. Teachers suggested that staff training should have included better explanations and visual models. As Claire expressed:

> During the teacher training, I think I would put it on more of a personal level with the teachers [to help] us learn what we need to do with the kids. Maybe we could go through the process and write goals for ourselves.

Facilitators need to experience the process of setting a goal that is specific, appropriately challenging, and complex. In spite of the research we had gathered concerning goal specificity and proximity, we did not have training time to discuss how to assist students in constructing specific, realistic goals. Sometimes student goals were too broad, such as the student who wanted to "get a better grade in science." While getting a better grade is an appropriate desire, the student and facilitator need to indicate what "better" means in terms of the starting grade so they can gauge the student's progress. A more appropriate goal might have been "to earn a B in science." Other students chose inappropriate goals such as "eat more pizza and macaroni and cheese."

Effective training should include examples of student goals that need to be modified through facilitator questioning. One fifth-grade girl set a goal "to have sis-

ters." Being the only girl in her family prompted her choice, but she chose a goal over which she had no control. A student whose initial goal was to "paint the inside of my house one color" could have been asked whether she could accomplish this goal without assistance, who would help, and how likely she was to reach the goal. Perhaps this student could modify the goal to make it something she can attain, such as painting pictures during afterschool time that she can use to decorate her room. Good facilitating leads to better goal setting and actualization. Training might include role playing to help facilitators prepare for one-on-one meetings with students.

Other areas in which teachers needed more help were in using SoC scores and helping students develop specific steps toward their goals. A first-grade student's initial community goal was "to recycle paper and glass bottles." When he told the facilitator that he "had a recycling bin," the facilitator marked him at Stage 3, Preparation. However, having a recycling bin did not necessarily mean that the student was actively preparing to make changes. In other instances, facilitators did not record specific suggestions to help students attain their goals. Since the research shows that students are more successful in achieving goals when given specific small steps to follow, this factor should have been emphasized in staff training.

Student Orientation and Motivation

Students need to be introduced to the idea of goal setting, not simply to be told that they are going to set goals and work toward them each month. Facilitator one-on-one meetings are vital to the success of the intervention, but by themselves they are not sufficient. We did not specifically instruct facilitators to introduce goal-setting concepts to the students; we believed that the facilitators, many of whom were certified teachers, would naturally move to introduce the ideas prior to beginning the goal-setting process. Though some teachers may have led an initial lesson or activity, the lack of understanding shown in the goals some students established and the forms that contained no teacher suggestions for steps toward the goals indicated that the introductions either did not occur or were not highly effective. Students should practice goal setting in whole-group, small-group, and partner activities and discussion before they establish personal goals. They need opportunities to examine sample goals, discuss the extent to which the goals are or are not realistic and specific, and then modify the goals so that they are appropriate.

We did not consider rewarding students for taking specific actions toward their goals. Claire suggested that rewards could foster student motivation:

> I think that if we let them know, yeah, they're all working towards a goal, and not only are they going to get the satisfaction of reaching that goal but just some little celebration—nothing major, but just, you know, we're. . . having a goal celebration.

Family Participation

We did not design the intervention to involve parents and caregivers. However, goal-setting forms included "home" as a goal category, and completed forms frequently contained recommendations to "practice at home." Community goals such as "recycle paper at my house" and "pick up trash in my neighborhood" tacitly required the permission or cooperation of parents. In addition, some goal-supporting activities needed to be completed at home, such as eating more vegetables in order to "get healthier." Indications of how much a student had worked at home toward a goal relied solely on student self-reporting. Teachers commented that, without parent input and participation, follow-through was difficult: "It was easier to track the academic goals and the goals at your school. Maybe a downfall that we need to look at [is] how we can include the parents."

Curriculum

Possibly the most significant change that could improve the goal-setting intervention for teacher-facilitators and students would be adding a written curriculum that would include lessons and activities to introduce students to the process of goal setting. Teachers asked for support materials to use with individual students and for the other students to work on during one-on-one sessions. One teacher noted on a goal-setting form that the student "had *much* difficulty understanding concept" [teacher's emphasis]. One teacher reported using materials "on teamwork, tolerance, and self-esteem," but indicated that materials specifically for goal setting would have been helpful.

After teachers are introduced to the intervention and have themselves established a goal and planned actions to accomplish it, they need a curriculum that takes students through the same learning process. Such a curriculum might have relieved some of the frustration our facilitators appeared to feel. The curriculum should be flexible to adapt to the needs and personalities of facilitators and students but include core elements such as key terms and sample goals that students can practice with and modify. Each class or group could establish a group goal so that

discussions and activities could include a concrete goal and action plan with which all students are familiar. Individual, partner, and group activities that call for short stories, role playing, reading about famous individuals who have accomplished goals, drawing a picture of oneself reaching a goal, writing a poem about one's goal, and other creative activities could be included. The curriculum could also include templates for parent involvement materials such as letters to parents about the initiative, general ways that parents can help at home, and specific information about student goals and action plans. Resources both for facilitators and for parents could also be provided.

Ongoing Success

Periodic collection and review of student goal-setting forms allowed us to address some concerns and to support facilitators and students in the midst of the intervention. However, more frequent discussions with facilitators might have revealed additional problems and concerns—or successes—that might not be evident from a review of documents or interviews and questionnaires conducted at the end of the intervention.

In addition, facilitators need opportunities to share successes and challenges with one another. As we talked with teachers and reviewed student forms, we saw that some facilitators were very comfortable with goal setting and innovative in their approaches. Others may have benefitted from hearing and seeing what these facilitators were doing. Motivation over time should also be considered; rewards for students (and facilitators) who accomplish a goal can provide additional incentive.

Our afterschool program is continuing the goal-setting intervention. We have written a curriculum, redesigned our teacher-facilitator training, and modified the student forms. Though our program has struggled to get parents involved, we are trying to use the goal-setting intervention as a conduit to request parent input. We opted to have first- and second-graders participate in setting a group goal and action plan rather than individual goals. We have planned incremental rewards for students who make significant progress toward their goals. Finally, we are actively seeking input from facilitators and students on a regular basis.

Sam sits quietly at an empty desk. It is 3:15 p.m.; all of the fourth-grade afterschool students are in one room. "Okay, everyone, let's get started on your homework," Ms. Wall says. Boys and girls take books, paper, and pencils out of their backpacks and place them on their desks. After looking at one student's agenda, Ms. Wall reads the homework assignment aloud: "Write a sentence with each vocabulary word. Underline the word in your sentence." Students begin to write. A few minutes later, Ms. Wall realizes that today Sam's desk is not empty, and he is working on his homework. "Sam," she says, "you are writing your sentences!" Sam glances up at her and, without missing a beat, says, "Yes, Ms. Wall, my goal is to make an A, so I need to do my homework."

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