



At the beginning of a course or school year it is important for teachers to invest students in individual and broader class goals. Goals ensure that students are striving for ambitious and focused academic achievement, but if students are not invested, they become much less meaningful. Each group of students comes to the classroom with varying performance levels, confidence levels, and interests, making student investment a dynamic and ongoing process. Plans to invest students may look different from one year to the next or one class period to the next. Investment cannot be done just at the beginning weeks of school, but it needs to be revisited on a regular basis and integrated into the classroom culture to be truly effective. If students are committed to achieving their goals, teachers will meet less resistance when presenting challenging content or when student interventions are needed to review material. Additionally, when students feel a responsibility for meeting goals, undesirable and negative behaviors tend to decrease (Childre, Pope & Sands, 2009).

How do I motivate students to work toward their goals?

Step 1: Prep Work

- Review the checklist at the end of the document to provide direction for investing students.
- Create a culture of trust and respect in the classroom.
 - Develop relationships with students by discovering student interests and connecting to students on a personal level.
 - Consider having a theme for the classroom and/or investing students in classroom values.

Step 2: Draft Plan

- Brainstorm motivational and investment strategies that speak to student learning styles.
 - Auditory strategies – Reach auditory learners through chants, songs, and sayings.
 - Visual strategies – Catch the eye of visual learners with posters, charts, and pictures.
 - Kinesthetic strategies – Motivate kinesthetic learners with movement, gestures, and signals.
- Plan a way to introduce goals to students at the beginning of the year.
 - Goal Setting Lesson – Devote a lesson to explain why goal setting is important, how students can set and work toward goals, and what the annual goals are.
 - Student Conferences – Meet with students to discuss initial goals and meet periodically to speak about progress toward their Annual Goal.
- Build opportunities for measuring progress toward annual goals into long-term, unit, and lesson plans.
 - Personal Tracking – Provide students with a folder or a page in their journal dedicated to tracking growth towards goals. The act of marking progress on a tracker makes students more aware and responsible for their own progress.
- Communicate to students their current progress toward goals and methods to continue or improve their own learning.
- Celebrate student success.
 - Verbal and Written Praise – Be sure to recognize those students who are making progress toward their goals.
 - Community Circle – Meet as a class to discuss class goals and celebrate individual student progress.

Step 3: Evaluate the Plan

- Ensure the components of the checklist are used for investing students.
- Elicit student responses to see if students can articulate their goals and progress.
- Revisit plans to invest students periodically. Reflect on initial investment strategies, current student levels, and consider potential changes that would strengthen or renew student motivation toward achieving goals.

Checklist

- I am using motivational and investment strategies.
- I have introduced the annual goals to my students.
- I have created opportunities to measure progress toward annual goals.
- I have used ways to communicate progress to my students.
- I have used methods to celebrate student success.



TIPS

- Offer students the opportunity to create and track non-academic goals. Goals that target behavior or future ambitions give students more motivation to succeed academically.
- Plan incentives for students who met or exceeded their goals and encouragement for those students who are still working toward their goals.
- Give students the responsibility and opportunity to create their own method of tracking growth and measuring their progress once they are informed of their long-term goals.
- Revisit and reflect on motivational and investment strategies often (weekly or bi-weekly).
- Discuss with a partner, mentor teacher, or PLC, possible investment strategies, particularly for students that may be hard to reach with typical methods.



BURNING QUESTIONS

How will I find time for investment?

Often teachers feel pressed for time. Planning ahead ensures leaving time to prioritize student investment opportunities. Once students are motivated, they are more open to learning experiences and have greater focus, which saves time in the long run.

What if my students do not understand goal setting?

Goal setting can be a very abstract for students, particularly in lower grades. Provide students with concrete and visual evidence of goals and progress to help students conceptualize the big ideas.

How do I deliver feedback to students on progress toward their goals?

Feedback helps to invest students in their goals, but generic feedback does not have the same impact on students as personal and specific feedback does. Address students individually as much as possible so that they make the personal connection between the feedback and their progress (refer to Work Hard, Get Smart for further resources).