# Goal Setting

**SUBMITTED BY:**  Kathryn McGinn

**SUBJECT(S):**  Career Development

**GRADE LEVEL(S):**  9, 10, 11, 12

## ☰ OVERVIEW:

Students will read an article about goal setting and consider how it relates to their own lives. Students will identify risks of excessive goal setting and they will brainstorm characteristics of positive goals. Students will reflect on their own goals and whether they are practical/healthy to pursue.

## ☰ NBEA STANDARD(S):

- Career Development, I. Self-Awareness

## ☰ RELATED ARTICLES:

- "Student Essay: Becoming a Professor Begins Early with Achievable Goals"
- "Motivational Intelligence: 3 Steps to Setting Effective Goals"

**Common Core Standard(s):**

- ELA CCR Writing 1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
- ELA CCR Reading 1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

- ELA CCR Reading 10: Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.
- ELA CCR Speaking and Listening 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

**Objectives/Purposes:**

- Students will think about the role of goals in their own lives.
- Students will differentiate between positive and negative goals.
- Students will work constructively in groups.

**Knowledge@Wharton Article:**

- "'Goals Gone Wild': How Goal Setting Can Lead to Disaster"

**Other Resources/Materials:**

- Newsprint and markers

**Activities:**

1. Have students read "Goals gone wild…"  As they read, ask students to underline information that relates to some of the pitfalls of excessive goal setting.  In other words, what kinds of goals does the article describe as harmful?

*(10 mins)*

2. When students finish reading, discuss the article as a class. Student responses may vary, but be sure to address some of the harmful goal-setting practices below:

- Goals that are too specific lead employees to develop a narrow focus and ignore problems not immediately relevant to the goals.

- Goals with unrealistic time frames may lead managers to act based on short-term solutions rather than focusing on long-term strategies.
- Workers with overly ambitious/specific goals may engage in risky behavior to reach those goals.
- Individuals may resort to unethical behavior to meet goals.
- If you're always pursuing a goal, you're never happy: you're always waiting for the next reward, never recognizing the value of simply doing good work.
- Workers may rely too heavily on past behaviors rather than learning new skills so that they don't lose any valuable time in pursuit of their goals.
- Companies that set individual targets may create an unhealthy sense of competition among workers.

*(5 mins)*

3. While the article addressed what *not* to do in terms of goal setting, it only briefly described what could be done to improve the practice ("The authors suggest that goal setting should be undertaken modestly and carefully, with a focus more on personal rather than financial gain. They also make the case that much more research — and more skepticism — is needed about the practice of goal setting.") Divide students into groups of 3-4, and have each group brainstorm a list of 7-10 Rules for Positive Goal Setting. Students may draw upon the article for suggestions and work from their own experiences.  Students should write their lists on newsprint and be prepared to share with the class.

*(10 mins)*

4. Groups each share 2-3 rules with the class.

*(5 mins)*

5. Have students do a free-write in their notebooks in response to this prompt: Over the course of this unit, what are some of the goals you have outlined?  Based on today's work, are these realistic/healthy goals?  Why/why not?  If they are not, how can you amend your goals to make them more productive?  Share with a peer.

*(10 mins)*

**Tying It All Together:**

Look at some of the article comments on the K@W website with students.  There is a strong debate about whether or not goal-setting itself is the problem, or if poor execution of goals is the real culprit.  Ask students where they position themselves in this debate?

*(5 mins)*

**Practice Outside of the Classroom:**

- Ask adults about the role that goal-setting has played in their professional lives.  What types of goals do they find motivating?  What types of goals are counter-productive?
- Also read the Wharton Global Youth Program article Motivational Intelligence: Three Steps to Setting Effective Goals.
- Think about what motivates you to succeed — are you someone who works for intrinsic rewards (e.g., acquiring new knowledge) or extrinsic rewards (e.g., getting good grades)?  What are advantages/disadvantages of these different types of rewards?

**What Worked and What I Would Do Differently:**

Students came up with creative lists of rules for positive goal setting. Many of the students' rules were similar, but that was okay: we discussed why certain rules came up repeatedly.

Students also enjoyed participating in the dialogue at the end of the K@W article. They liked the heated nature of the debate about goals, and students had strong opinions themselves on the topic.