STRUCTURE & STRATEGY:

A GUIDE TO WRITING AND USING GOALS FOR CONTINUOUS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Every Student Succeeds



Strategic Goals

Set TARGETS that are realistically ambitious.

Choose METRICS that are strategy-appropriate.

Goals do much more than indicate if a school has reached the anticipated targets. Goals that are closely aligned to strategies let school improvement teams know how well the strategy is working and if the change is an improvement. Goals should be designed to serve as feedback loops to generate meaningful data and aid the team in adjusting their course of action.

GOALS

1. OUTPUTS | OUTCOMES ARE NOT THE SAME

OUTPUTS lead to OUTCOMES.

The actions we take lead to the results we get.

Outputs are the action steps.
Outputs are appropriate to use as process-oriented measures when monitoring **implementation** of an action plan.

95% of students in grades 6-8 will COMPLETE THE BASELINE ASSESSMENT.

Outcomes are the effects of our actions.
Outcomes are appropriate to use as quantitative measures when monitoring the **impact** of an action plan.

85% of students in grades 6-8 will REACH THEIR INDIVIDUAL GROWTH TARGETS.

PA CYCLE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

ACHIEVEMENT GOALS

2.

measure how well students **perform** against standardized learning expectations, **regardless** of where they started.

Setting Achievement Goals

By maintaining ambitious expectations, schools communicate a belief in students' potential. **Achievement goals** ensure that students are held to high academic standards. Achievement targets remind educators to be intentional about guiding learners toward grade-level or course-specific outcomes. To meet these expectations, teachers must scaffold instruction and provide tiered interventions that bridge students' diverse starting points to learning benchmarks.

EXAMPLE: At the end of

Q1 QUARTER ONE

25%

Q2 QUARTER TWO

35%

OF ALL STUDENTS WILL

be on track to meet or exceed grade-level expectations as measured by the beginning-of-the-year ELA Firefly benchmark assessment.

> Something to think about:

The plan's action steps for the next quarter are based on this expected outcome. If the outcome is different at the end of Q1, the action plan will need to be adjusted.

score emerging or higher on at least four components determined by the semester 1 common writing assessment and associated rubric.

> Something to think about:

At the mid-year check-in, data directly related to students' in-class performance indicates if the strategy for improved writing is working (what we expect to see in student work as a result of the instructional strategy) and if the change is an improvement (the percentage of students developing the necessary writing skills).

ANNUAL MEASURABLE GOAL

At the end of the school year

35% of all students will meet or exceed grade-level expectations as measured by the end-of-year ELA Firefly benchmark assessment.

> Something to think about:

Here the focus shifts back to grade-level performance standards to examine the outcome of the strategy on overall ELA performance.

> "Our expectations are the first measure by which our young people judge their own capabilities. **Lowering our expectations and standards will not inspire them to achieve anything beyond the status quo.**
>
> Maybe your students … aren't performing at their peak potential today. I would encourage you not to lower your expectations to accommodate their current performance. **You have more influence with them than you think.**"
>
> *Mark Perna | Answering Why*



3. GROWTH GOALS

measure how well students are growing academically–learning new skills, acquiring knowledge, and performing to their full potential.

Growth measures tell us if our students are making progress from their starting points.

Every Student Succeeds

PA CYCLE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

When adults believe all students can learn and grow as a result of instructional practices, the growth goals they set should confirm these beliefs.

If we provide
EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION
and our
INTERVENTION
systems are properly structured to address individual learning needs, then we should expect a high percentage of
STUDENTS LEARNING + GROWING.

90%
of students will meet or exceed their individual growth goals as measured by a change in their scores from the baseline assessment to the mid-year assessment.

> Something to think about:

If your growth goal is too low–for example, **40%**–then you are effectively stating that **60% of students are not expected to grow** as a result of instruction and intervention.

BENCHMARKS

Q1 **By September 30, 25% of students will be on track to proficiency as measured by the baseline assessment.**

Notice that the Q1 benchmark, on track to proficiency, is an achievement target. A baseline is needed in order to establish targets for future growth.

Q2
Q3
Q4

In subsequent quarters, you would raise the benchmark to 90% as illustrated in the example above.

Establish and maintain consistently high expectations for GROWTH from quarter to quarter.

90%



Every Student Succeeds

PA CYCLE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

4. ATTENDANCE GOALS

measure the extent to which all students are regularly attending school.

Students who are chronically absent:

- **Are more likely to have difficulty learning to read by third grade**
- **Show lower academic performance in middle school, and**
- **Are more likely to drop out of high school**

(Attendance Works, 2018)

DID YOU KNOW?

The number of absences does not and cannot decrease over time. Once a student misses 18 days, there is no way to recover him as a regular attender.

When a student misses **10%** of the days enrolled, he is chronically absent.

- At 10 days, 1 or more absences → chronically absent
- At 50 days, 5 or more absences → chronically absent
- At 100 days, 10 or more absences → chronically absent

Accumulating absences make it increasingly difficult to increase regular attendance rates as the year goes on. Instead, **set a high attendance goal early in the year and adjust quarterly benchmarks to account for accumulating absences.**

ATTENDANCE EXAMPLE:

Q1 At the end of quarter 1, 90% of students will meet the regular attendance target, attending at least 90% of days enrolled.

Q2 At the end of quarter 2, at least 85% of students will meet the regular attendance target, attending at least 90% of days enrolled.

Q3 At the end of quarter 3, at least 80% of students will meet the regular attendance target, attending at least 90% of days enrolled.

Q4 At the end of quarter 4, at least 75% of students will meet the regular attendance target, attending at least 90% of days enrolled.

> Something to think about:

When implementing a Tier 2 intervention strategy, shift the focus in quarters 2 and 3 to students directly impacted by the intervention. Use a metric that measures the intended change in targeted outcomes. For example, *the percentage of students at risk of chronic absenteeism will decrease by 3% as a result of the intervention.*

QUESTIONS?

Michael Imburgia
State Project Director for K-12 Continuous LEA/ School Improvement |
Executive Director's Office | Statewide Projects Team
Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13 |
michael_imburgia@iu13.org

March 2025