

# Creating SMART Professional Development Goals

Conzemius and O'Neil (2002) posit their SMART Goal process as a valuable tool for the application of the traditional "PDSA" cycle (i.e. Plan, Do, Study, Act) to enhance professional development which focuses clearly on improved student learning. Unlike other perhaps obfuscated or convoluted PD planning protocols, the SMART process provides a simple model to (a) determine exactly what PD goals you may need to target, (b) how to strategically limit and focus your PD efforts, and (c) how to know if you're moving toward your goals. This model and approach are clearly outcome rather than activity focused.

In terms of teacher PD, what is a SMART Goal? A SMART goal is

- Specific and Strategic
  - focused on clearly specified teacher-learning outcomes concomitant with related student learning outcomes and limited to clearly defined teacher-learning strategies supported by the Teaching Quality Standard professional requirements (and the Principal Quality Practice Standard, where appropriate)
- Measurable
  - able to be demonstrated by observable and/or measurable improvement in teacher praxis and student learning
- Attainable
  - limited to strategies and outcomes which can be reasonably expected within the context and timeframe of the PD plan
- Results-oriented
  - will produce an "end point" change in teacher practice and student learning which can be defined, measured and sustained
- Time-bound
  - implementation strategies and assessment of results are bound by an explicit and manageable timeline

While at first glance, and certainly upon first engagement, the SMART Goal process may appear to be linear and conclusive; it is actually intended to be an "organic" and iterative process of on-going professional development. That is, you should not contemplate writing a PD plan, filing it away, hoping to address it sometime, revisiting it at the end of the year, only to create a new plan the following year. A SMART PD plan should be revisited, reviewed, assessed and revised on an ongoing basis. While the model presented below may appear to be linear in nature, in fact you will probably want to begin the SMART process in the "middle", by looking at information you have in order to be able to make good "data-informed decision" about your goals and strategies.

## References

Conzemius, A. , & O'Neil, J. (2002). *The handbook for SMART school teams*. Bloomington, IN. National School Services

## Using the SMART Goal Model to Create SMART Professional Development Plans

You may wish to refer to the “SMART Model” on the next page.

1. While a well written SMART Goal can become the engine for the success of this process, you will generally need to begin at the center of the model by looking at “Measures” before you can begin to write appropriate goals. This step is often referred to as “data-informed decision making”. There is no point in expending energies on a professional development plan unless it addresses a real, measurable and attainable professional improvement goal. Begin by observing and collecting information about student learning needs in your school and classrooms to identify what you need to learn and be able to do to address and improve specific student learning outcomes.

2. From this data identify indicators (such as student learning outcomes from the Programs of Study and Knowledge, Skills and Abilities [KSAs] from the Teaching Quality Standard and/or the Principal Quality Practice Standard) which relate to these identified teacher (and/or principal) and student learning needs.

3. Write a SMART Goal to address these identified and “standardized” learning needs. Remember a SMART Goal needs to be

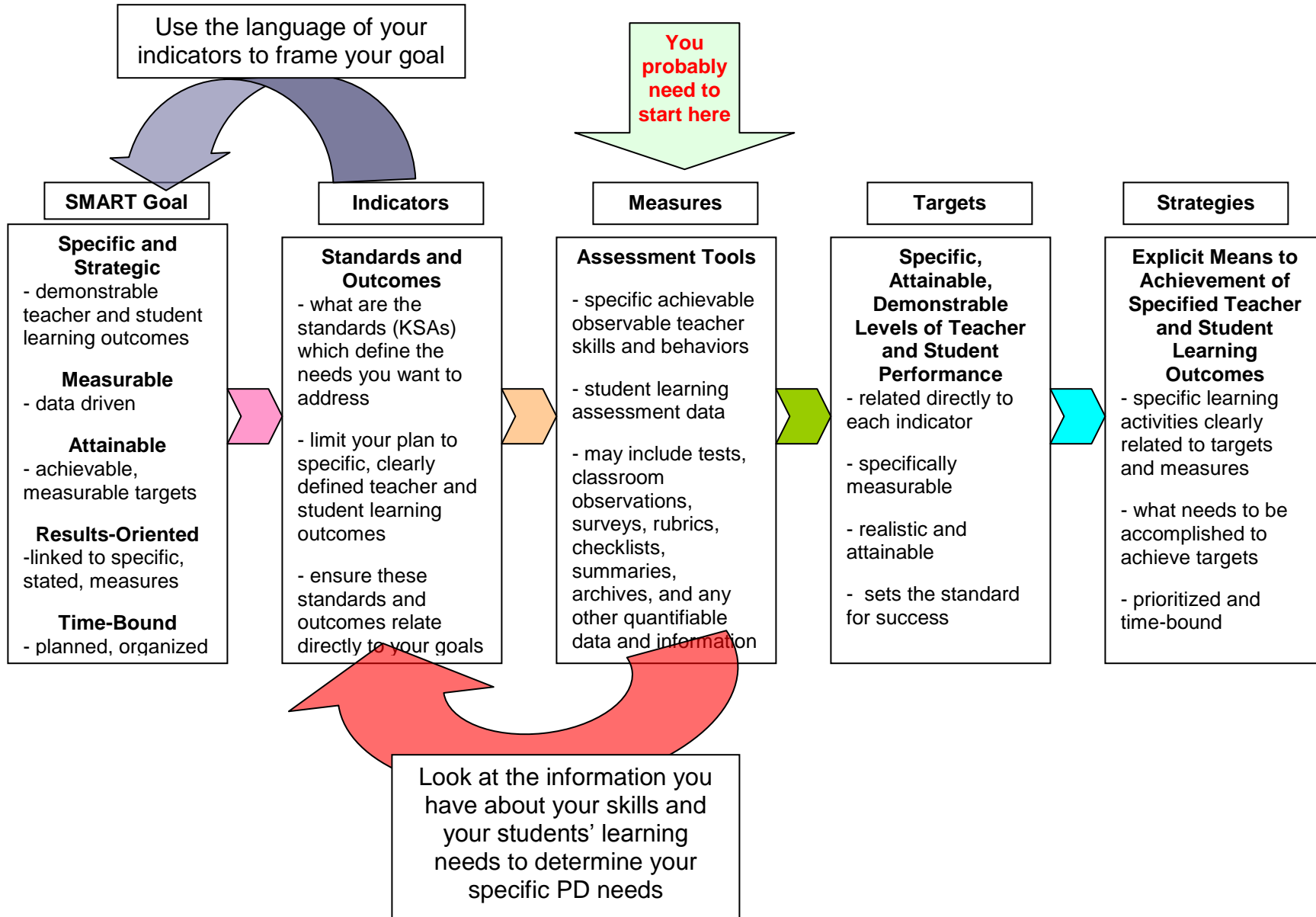
- **Specific and Strategic**
- **Measurable**
- **Attainable**
- **Results-Oriented**
- **Time-Bound**

4. Now look at the indicators and measures again. Do the standards they incorporate and the data they reveal align with your SMART Goal? If not you may need re-write your goal, refine or redefine your indicators, and/or reexamine or reevaluate your measures. This is a reiterative step that you need to cycle through as many times as necessary until you are satisfied that your Goal, Indicators and Measures are aligned and will address and measure the learning outcomes you need to address.

5. Set realistic, measurable, time-bound targets. Hold yourself to these!

6. Develop a strategic plan for addressing and meeting these targets. Set specific dates and identify specific tasks to be accomplished and outcomes to be demonstrated by these dates. Identify who is responsible for this and how each step of the strategy will be addressed and accomplished. You can use the SMART Goal Rubric on the last page to honestly assess your plan.

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## SMART Goal Rubric

Performance	Level 4	Level 3	Level 2	Level 1
SMART Goal	The goal is very specific and strategic in nature. It provides information that is clearly measurable. Considering the goal, the context of the goal and the people involved, the goal is considered attainable. Because the goal is outcomes focused it will produce teacher and student learning outcome results that are identified. The time frame for the goal has been defined.	A goal is described but is missing one of the five SMART elements.	A goal is described but is missing two or more of the five SMART elements.	No SMART goal described or the goal described is a process goal, not focused on teacher or student learning results.
Indicators	The indicators are clearly associated with the SMART goal. The indicators are specific and descriptive pointing towards standards and learning outcomes considered areas of need in teacher and student performance.	The indicators are associated with the SMART goal. While descriptive, they are generalizations which do not make clear what the area of concern truly is.	The indicators are loosely associated with the goal. The indicators are interesting points to be aware of or constructed from “gut feeling” beliefs but have not been drawn from available information or data.	There are no indicators listed or they are so generic they provide no real direction as to where to begin.
Measures	Unique measures have been identified that will reveal teacher and student learning results and progress as related to the indicators. The measures lead to supporting teacher and student learning targets. For each measure there is a 1:1 relationship with a target.	Measures have been identified that will indicate teacher and student learning results. The measures are linked or have a connection with the listed targets.	General measures have been named. There is limited, if any, connection with the indicators. There is limited, if any, connection to the targets.	There are no measures listed.
Targets	Each target identified is a teacher or student learning target that has a 1:1 relationship with the measures identified. The targets are measurable and quantifiable. It is easily understood. The target provides or is associated with a baseline indicator.	The target suggests improvement. The target descriptions may lack clarity confusing qualitative and quantitative measures and results. No baseline or benchmark data is evident in the target, indicators, or goal to support the target values.	The targets are simplistic, lacking a clear relationship with the measures described. If a quantity is suggested (i.e., a percentage) there is no clear description of what is being measured. The list contains targets not related to learning outcomes results. The target suggests maintenance rather than improvement.	No targets have been identified or the targets are not learning outcome targets.
Strategies	The strategies describe with precision the steps necessary to advance the process of improving the intended teacher and student learning outcomes. The strategies identify who will be responsible for the action.	The strategies describe actions that will be undertaken. While many may be listed, it is not clear as to which strategy may be linked with which target. There is no indication of or confusion as to who will be responsible for each of the actions.	The strategies are very generic in nature.	No strategies were listed.