

## SMART GOALS: Guidelines for Writing Effective Goals - 11<sup>th</sup> Grade

Last year at the start of your sophomore year, you were asked to set some educational, career, and life-long goals. It's now time to evaluate and reflect on those goals, because successful goal-setting is a continuous, constant process if you're going to be good at it.

This year, please choose four important goals to concentrate on as you approach the all-important senior year. Much of what you accomplish THIS year will directly affect how successful you'll be next year, getting into the college of your choice or attaining the career path you've chosen.

Why only four? Sometimes we fail to reach our goals because we take on too much, and lose focus as a result. (Of course, you can choose to work on more – if you weren't very successful last year, however, try focusing on four or less).

Once you have chosen four goals to focus on, EVALUATE and revise your goals using the S.M.A.R.T. criteria for effective goal-setting. They're called SMART goals because when our goals meet these five criteria, we are far more likely to actually attain them.

- S = Specific** What are you going to do? Use action words such as organize, plan, earn, join, build, learn, etc. Why is this important to do at this time? What do you want to ultimately accomplish? How are you going to do it? "I want to be a better student" is vague." "I want to raise my overall GPA from 3.2 to 3.5 by the end of the semester because I hope to attend the UW, and I plan to do this by....." Now that's getting specific.
- M = Measurable** If you can't measure it, you can't manage it, and you can't see the change occur. Making your goal measurable may also include several short-term measurements that can be built into the goal. "I want to be a better swimmer" is not very measurable. "I want to be able to swim 100 yards crawl stroke without stopping in under two minutes" is measurable. You can also break it into smaller, measurable steps: 25 yards in under 30 seconds with a 5 second rest in between, for example.
- A = Attainable** Goals you set that are too far out of your reach, you probably won't commit to doing. Although you may start with the best intentions, deep down you know it's too much and this will stop you from giving it your best. Your goals should be challenging, yes – *attainable* doesn't mean easy. Our goals should be set just out of our reach, so they will challenge us to improve as we move forward to achieve them.
- R = Realistic** The root word of realistic is "real" – it has to be something we can make a reality in our lives. There are some goals that simply are not realistic, so you have to be able to say, even if it is a tremendously difficult goal, that yes, indeed, it is entirely realistic – that you could make it. A realistic goal may push your skills and knowledge but it shouldn't break you.
- T = Time-bound** Every goal should have a timeframe attached to it. Think of how motivating deadlines are; you start to work when the deadline approaches. Goals without deadlines are what make people procrastinate so much. A deadline gives you a clear TARGET to hit.