Tutor-Student Goal Setting Conferences

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# Purpose

One-on-one goal setting conferences between tutors and students empower each student to take ownership over their education. Tutor coaching can help students clarify their goals and codify their plans of action, making it easier to communicate students’ progress to their families and other stakeholders such as teachers. Tutors can use the agenda below collaboratively with students to analyze academic growth and mastery, reflect on overall progress towards goals, and create a new action plan to keep moving forward. This agenda will guide tutors through how to prepare for a student’s goal setting conference beforehand, how to facilitate student reflections on their academic strengths and struggles during the conference, and how to coach the student to craft an action plan that clearly connects students’ strengths to specific moments of concerted effort and that connects students’ struggles to specific future opportunities for growth.

**Using this tool**

Programs should have a process in place for planning for, conducting, and following up on goal setting conferences. This tool provides an outline regarding how to get such a process started if a program has not already established one. The tool’s design is generic and the protocol should be adapted to meet a program’s needs; the tool’s components and language will need to be adjusted depending on the age of the student and the content area in which the student is receiving tutoring. Any goal setting conversations between tutors and students will depend on the foundational goals for tutoring. These initial goals may have been established with families, teachers, and/or schools and provide a good starting point for setting individual student goals.

# Lenses

There are five lenses for thinking about goal setting conferences that help increase tutor efficacy:

1. **Specific & Measurable:** The more specific and concrete the data on which a tutor focuses the conference, the easier it will be for students to identify their strengths and struggles and connect these to their actions during tutoring.
2. [**Growth Mindset**](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xeaEpGHB59HZL6OVxC7de-Yb2-T5wrGgYrgSRoEfl1I/view#heading=h.vwbas92932ms)**:** Making explicit connections between student effort and student academic progress/mastery helps students develop a growth mindset.
3. **Reducing Stigma:** Particularly if a program’s Take-Up is Mandatory, students may feel a stigma attached to the idea of going to tutoring. Helping students see tutoring as support, not punishment, will boost student engagement.
4. **Stakeholder Support:** Sharing goals and progress with students’ [teachers](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1rPQvIt4EoUhQTRsxDY7-3w9HbYEWv1bPYROx2ij-eNs/edit?usp=sharing)/[families](https://docs.google.com/document/d/190yxkoaOC0BxuHfAQqhtZWImWbopkKMZcQgeaCx8QNQ/view) helps provide holistic support.
5. **Student Agency:** The more the student can lead the conversation, the more authentic their reflection will be, the more invested they will be in their action plan, and the more likely they will be to follow through on action steps.

# Before the Conference: Preparation

Both tutors and students should engage in independent reflection before the conference by reviewing the student’s assessment, project, or assignment results and considering the specific student actions that yielded these results. For tutors, this reflection creates an opportunity to prioritize which topics they will guide the student to consider during the conference and identify specific moments that illustrate the connection between the student’s effort and successes. For students, reflection before the conference gives ample time to process and internalize their results and begin thinking more deeply about how their actions influenced their outcomes. By frontloading this intellectual work, both tutors and students can come to the table knowing what they need to focus on and why, helping the conversation flow efficiently.

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| Data Share | | **Lenses** |
| **Conference Date: Goal:**  **Assessment/Project/Assignment: Score (if applicable):**  Consider including the following:   * Effort Data   + Quantitative Examples: *homework completion, tutoring or class participation rates, tutoring or school attendance/punctuality rates, etc.*   + Qualitative Examples: *students’ behavioral choices at home, school, and during tutoring sessions such as asking questions, teamwork, focus, study strategies, productive struggle strategies, etc.* * Specific Academic Data   + Quantitative Examples: *quiz data, breakdown analysis by topic, standard, and question type (multiple choice vs open-ended), completed assignments on blended learning software, other school or tutoring assignments, projects etc.*   + Qualitative Examples: *level of care and detail in a student’s work, progress by rubric strand, the kinds of errors a student makes, etc.* | | **Specific & Measurable:** Specific Academic Data analysis will help students **zoom in** enough on their data to identify their **strengths** and **struggles**. |
| **Growth Mindset:** Effort Data analysis will help tutors and students make growth mindset **connections** between **actions** and **outcomes**. |
| **Stakeholder Support:** Reach out to **families** and **teachers** to get **qualitative data** about a student’s effort in class and circumstances at home to get a **holistic** picture of the student’s actions leading up to the assignment.If your **Setting** is **In-School**, tutors can talk with teachers about a classroom assignment or test. . |

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| Overall Reflections | | Lenses |
| For Students to Fill Out: | How prepared/confident did I feel during this assessment/assignment/project?  What topics did I feel most prepared/confident in?  What topics did I feel least prepared/confident in?  What actions did I take to be successful?  What could I have done to prepare myself better? | **Student Agency:** Students may require **scaffolding** depending on their age and self-awareness. Consider adding **scales** (e.g. 1 - 5 for confidence), **multiple choice options** listing the topics covered on the assignment, or **specific prompts** to look at effort data in the final two questions (e.g. *“Look back at your old homework and notes from sessions”*). |
| **Growth Mindset:** Encourage students to reflect on their actions and experiences **first**, and only **then** reflect on the outcomes they saw on the assignment. Let students make predictions about how they did based on their preparations and confidence **before** seeing their results to build their **academic self-awareness**. |
| For Tutors to Fill Out: | How prepared/confident did this student seem during this assessment/assignment/project?  What topics did this student seem most prepared/confident in?  What topics did this student seem least prepared/confident in?  What actions did this student take to be successful?  What could this student have done to prepare better? | **Student Agency:** Students will feel more invested in the whole goal setting process if they can **contextualize** their goals in terms of their own experiences on a given assignment and the actions they can take to make things (even) better next time.  Instead of **telling** students how to think about their results, **show** them the results and give them a chance to think for themselves. Use your answers to **guide** student thinking, not **override** it. |
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| Data Reflections | | Lenses |
| For Students to Fill Out: | What topics or parts of the assignment or project did I perform best on? Why is that?  If applicable, where do I see improvements from previous assignments, projects or assessments?  What topics or parts of the assignment or project did I struggle with? Why is that? | **Student Agency:** Tutors may need to walk students through how to **interpret** the data or feedback on their assignment or project **before** they fill out their reflections to ensure that the feedback and data are understood. Instead of interpreting the feedback or data for them, present the data in an **intuitive** way and **model** the skills of analyzing the data and breaking down feedback for students. |
| For Tutors to Fill Out: | What topics or parts of the assignment or project did the student perform best on? Why is that?  If applicable, where did the student show improvements from previous assignments, project or assessments?  What topics or parts of the assignment or project did the student struggle with? Why is that? | **Specific & Measurable:** When reflecting on data, tutors should **always** back up their own ideas with “evidence from the text” of this student’s performance on **this specific assignment**, rather than falling back on general preconceived notions about the student or the subject matter. |
| **Growth Mindset:** Take the time to compare your student’s work on **this** assignment to their work on **previous** assignments or assessments, **not** to their **peers’** work on **this** one. Aim to frame your feedback in ways that connect student **actions** during tutoring sessions to specific **outcomes**. |

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# During the Conference: Agenda

Tutors can use this agenda (adapted to suit their program) to guide goal setting conversations with students. Record students’ reflections, new goals, and action plans somewhere the tutor, student, student’s family, and student’s school can reference regularly. Students should take their own notes in order to increase their ownership of the conversation.

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| **Steps** | **Description** | **Lenses** |
| Check in and Explain the Purpose of the Conversation | 1) Check in with the student and ask how they are doing.  2) Frame the conversation and ground the goal in long-term aspirations.  For example: *“The purpose of this conversation is to give you the space to talk about your most recent assessment (or assignment or project) and to get a clear picture of your progress in this subject. Can you tell me in your own words why goal setting is important for us to talk about?”* | **Reducing Stigma:** Ensure framing is **asset-based** by celebrating wins, building on strengths, and seeing what is or isn’t working for the student. |
| Reflection on Most Recent Assignment/Assessment/ or Project | 3) Ask the student to reflect on goals and effort on the last assignment.  *“Let’s start by talking a little bit about [most recent assignment].”*  *“What did you think of this assignment?”*  *“What were your strengths? Where did you struggle?”*  4) Ask the student to consider what held them back from doing better.  *“What do you need more practice with? Why?”*  *“Did you reach your goals? Why/Why not?”*  5) Comment on your student’s reflection; add your own thoughts on their strengths and struggles. Praise their self-awareness if applicable! | **Reducing Stigma:** For students that show low growth, low mastery, or have a low threshold for frustration, be prepared to share several examples of students’ **strengths**. Ensure you **thoroughly** highlight these wins **before** moving on to their struggles. |
| New Goal and Action Plan | 6) Together, set a new goal for the next assignment and identify the next steps (i.e. the actions that the student will take) needed to reach that goal.  *“Based on your recent data and on what we’ve discussed, what do you think your goal for the next assignment should be? What actions are you going to take to get there?”*  7) Guide the student to choose specific actions to help build on strengths and overcome struggles. Consider potential obstacles to these next steps!  Good Examples:   * *“I will come to tutoring on Mondays and Wednesdays to practice my calculator key codes.”* (Planned action has a specific purpose and measurable indicators of effort each week.) * *“I will create flashcards to help me review the concepts that I have not mastered yet, and study for 15 min a day.”*   Bad Example: *“I’m going to come to tutoring more.”* (Too vague!) | **Specific & Measurable:** Students can get even more specific by creating **back-up plans** that involve teacher support (e.g. *“If I can’t do Monday for any reason, call my parents and sign me up for Tuesday instead that week”).* |
| **Student Agency:** Tutors can help **scaffold** student-generated goals by saying things like *“That will show some growth, and if you want to be college-ready by June you’ll need a score of 70 in May,”* or *“That’s a great stretch goal, and a score of 75 will still show tremendous growth.”* |
| Check for Understanding and Support | 8) Recap next steps and why they matter.  *“What are your goals for the next assignment? What steps will you take to get there?”*  9) Thank the student and see if they have any final questions for you.  *“Thank you for talking with me about your exam! I’m excited to support you as you work to meet your goal. Do you have any questions for me?”* | **Stakeholder Support:** Tutors should let students know that they will **communicate** these new goals and action plan next steps to the student’s family/school. Review with the student if there are other ways to help their family/school **support** the action plan (e.g. *“Go to lunchtime homework help at school at least twice a week”*). |

# After the Conference: Follow-Up

After completing all goal setting conferences, tutors can use this list of possible next steps in order to get the most out of goal setting conferences. These steps keep new goals and action plans alive for students (and their families/teachers).

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| **Next Steps** | **Description** | **Lenses** |
| Goals Master List | Create a master list of student goals and action steps. Keep it with you during sessions so that you can keep track of each of your students’ goals and steps.  Refer to the [example tracker](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1TBoWl0BX6rJWt299AiIbxj4ezauzGBazYmYREdLiMHI/edit#gid=1791241790) for guidance. | **Stakeholder Support:** Expand on the master goal list and include a **tracker** for action steps (e.g. check off each session that the student comes in for extra homework help) and **share** that tracker with the student’s family and/or school. |
| Mention and Praise Progress Towards Goals | Look for student progress on action steps or growth in targeted areas and praise progress.  Choose your words intentionally when praising students’ effort and progress. Avoid praising effort or assignment completion *for their own sake*, and instead praise them as means to an end: the student’s chosen goal. See guidance and examples [here](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xeaEpGHB59HZL6OVxC7de-Yb2-T5wrGgYrgSRoEfl1I/view#heading=h.jbw7fsswxf7k). | **Reducing Stigma:** Students have different preferences for praise. Younger students often prefer **public verbal praise**, while high school students may prefer **private written praise**. |
| **Growth Mindset:** Connect the student’s targeted **effort** (completed action plan step) to their academic **success** (growth or mastery in a subject area) whenever possible. |
| **Stakeholder Support: Calling home** to families to **celebrate** student follow-through on these action plan steps is a great way to sustain student motivation. You may wish to tell students, especially high school students, that you plan to call home **before** doing so in order to increase student buy-in (and in case they have a preference about *when* or *whom* to call). |
| Use Goals to Redirect Off-Task Behavior and/or Actions | Monitor student progress toward goals. Point out behaviors, actions, or lapses in progress that run counter to the student’s self-identified action steps. Communicate with each student’s teacher to gather evidence on their progress during class. | **Student Agency:** If a student repeatedly **falls short** of their action plan steps or does not appear to be on track to their new goals, consider **reflecting** with the student about how their action plan is going, why it’s not working, and **tweaking** the plan accordingly. |
| Provided Targeted Support to Prioritized Students | Create a list of students who are most in need of intensive follow-up after their goal setting conversations. Ensure you check in with these students regularly on their progress and provide additional targeted praise and redirection to help them reach their goals. | **Specific & Measurable:** Whenever you provide data-driven reteaching or support, the lowest-lift and highest-leverage way to help students engage with the content is to **share the underlying data and rationale** with them. Be as specific as possible to make the data share as concrete for students as possible. This will increase student **buy-in** for the specific session and **academic self-awareness** in general.  *For example, if your Student-Tutor Ratio is Small Groups: “Today, the three of us are going to learn about solving 2-step equations, because we all got question 5 (about one-step equations) correct, but we also struggled with question 6 (about two-step equations).”* |