

## **SMART Goals from the Principal's Point of View**

I believe we perform more effectively when we have an end in mind. I believe we work most effectively and find the most enjoyment in our work when we work with others we respect and who are facing similar challenges to our own. *SMART Goals* is one method to encourage all of us to do this on a regular basis.

The difference between goals that are smart and other goals is that the former are meant to be very specific and tied to student achievement. The other key to this is that they should take place within a specified period of time and the results should be analyzed, which leads to another round of goals. This establishes a cycle of evaluating our practice that has been proven to positively affect student performance and teacher satisfaction.

So the question comes up as to exactly what this would look like. I would like to give an example to help with any questions that may develop. I will use one of the SMART Goals that was very successful from the previous school year.

The physical education department wanted to maintain and improve the health and physical fitness of all students. They had collected data over the years on their program and decided to focus on the Presidential Fitness Program as the bar to measure their success. They wanted to improve on the results from the 2005-2006 school year. In 2005-06, 38% of the students in the middle school qualified for an award, and 9% of those earned the Presidential Fitness Award. The department made this a focus over the course of the year. At the end of the school year, the results for the 2006-07 school year were 41% of the students earning an award and 12.3% of the students earning the Presidential Fitness Award. The teachers also established what amounts to a physical fitness report card that was sent home with every student in the middle school. With childhood obesity being as significant a problem as it is, this was an excellent goal and the results clearly show progress.

The things we learned from this past year include establishing an actual target for the improvement and also trying to break the process down into smaller feedback loops that occur in the area of approximately four weeks. We now also realize that to succeed, teachers must see the goal they are attempting to achieve as worthy and the measure they will use as being valid. When these two integral pieces are in place, the process is successful even if the actual number is not attained. Whether the SMART Goal is personal, as in the case of physical fitness and health, or academic, the important thing is that we generate feedback for ourselves that will help us help our students to improve.