

# Using SMART Goals For Continuous Quality Improvement

## Continuous Quality Improvement Process (CQIP)

The primary objective of the Continuous Quality Improvement Process is improvement. The goal of the CQIP is to help every NM PreK program set reasonable, measurable goals that will lead to sustained improvement over time. Change in practice may be gradual or sudden; either way, it is only meaningful if it lasts over time and improves the experiences of children and their families.

As part of the CQIP, every NM PreK program makes a plan by setting both short and long-term goals. Every plan is different, depending on the needs and vision of the program, and depending on what goals have been met and which goals need more attention. Each plan consists of at least three **SMART** goals for the upcoming year, and a detailed action plan to meet those goals. As goals are completed, new goals are chosen – this is the continuous part.

Goals are guided by a variety of information sources:

- Consultant reports
- Monitoring feedback
- Student assessment data
- Parent surveys, staff surveys and community surveys
- The results of your ECERS-R and ECERS-E assessments
- You may also use information from any other tools or resources you may have used (PAS, CLASS, FOCUS, etc).

Your Program Monitor is available to help you if needed.

## About SMART Goal Setting

**SMART** is an acronym for the 5 steps of **s**pecific, **m**easurable, **a**chievable, **r**elevant, and **t**ime-based goals. It's a simple tool used by many types of businesses to go beyond the realm of fuzzy goal-setting into an actionable plan for results. Goals may or may not be completed in the upcoming year but progress toward the goal must be measurable.

Example:

Goal: Increase the number of opportunities for children to explore rhyme in the classroom.

*This is a classroom specific goal inspired by Item 4, Sounds in Words, in the ECERS-E. Although familiarity with rhyming is important, this goal does not outline how that will be accomplished. By using the SMART goal steps, this goal can become clearer and easier to accomplish.*

SMART Goal: The teacher will plan 3 activities per week for 3 months that will draw the children's attention to rhyming sounds.

## Is it a SMART Goal?

- Is it Specific? Yes—it states exactly what the teacher will do. (It does not just say “the teacher will use more rhyming activities in the classroom”)
- Is it Measureable? How? Yes—it states 3 activities a week for 3 months. This could be measured by reviewing the lesson plan forms for these three months. (It does not say “We will encourage more rhyming in the classroom”)
- Is it Attainable? Yes—because rhyming activities can be easily incorporated into a variety of daily events, leading 3 such activities a week is very attainable. (It does not say “the teacher will read a rhyming book to every child every day”)
- Is it Relevant? Yes—Rhyming is an important literacy skill for 4 year olds and it is assessed through Essential Indicator 2.2a Sounds of Language- Rhyming. (It does not say “the children will learn advanced trigonometry...”)
- Is it Time Lined? Yes—three months

## Other SMART goal examples:

- Rewrite the Parent Engagement Plan to meet all NM PreK Requirements
- Change hiring policy - require enrollment in TEACH and ECE classes (if needed) within the first 60 days of hire
- Develop and Implement a Parent Survey to be administered by 9/30 each year
- Plan and implement two staff team building/training events per year

## Some Additional Questions to Consider:

- Are your goals linked to the mission, vision and strategic direction of your program?
- Are your goals broken down into manageable chunks?
- Have you communicated the goals often and using a variety of methods to families in your program? It is amazing how families will support you if they are aware of your goals.
- Are your families and staff involved in the goal setting process? Inviting and encouraging families and staff to participate in decision-making about program objectives gives them a genuine “stake” in the result. The act of participation in joint decision-making builds relationships based on trust and mutual respect. These alliances you form at the outset will help you ride through some of the most seemingly impossible obstacles.

## SMART Goal Worksheet

Goal: \_\_\_\_\_

Verify that the goal is SMART.

Specific: What exactly will you accomplish? Will an outside person be able to understand your goal and know exactly what you want to accomplish?

---

---

---

---

Measureable: How will you know when you have reached this goal? How will others be able to tell you have reached your goal?

---

---

---

---

Accountable: Who will be responsible for the different parts of this goal? How will the people responsible be held responsible for completing the goal?

---

---

---

---

Resources Needed: What support and resources will you need to complete this goal?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Time-bound: When will this goal be achieved?

---

---

---

---

Once you have completed the worksheet, transfer the information to the NM PreK CQIP form, or use your own format, as long as all the required information is included. Part of the CQI process is to regularly review your goals. Sign off on completed ones, adjust any that need adjusting, and create new ones as required so that you always have 2-3 goals in process. Where appropriate, post the goals for families and staff to see.