

SMART Goal and Action Planning Template

The Iowa Department of Education recommends using SMART goals as a guiding framework for district and building leadership teams to plan, develop, implement and monitor professional development in relation to teacher learning and student achievement. SMART, an acronym for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-based and Time-bound, facilitates the clarification and concentration of efforts when addressing professional development priorities and student outcomes. Through the development of SMART goals, teams can align their initiatives with deliberate actions that enhance professional practices and foster student success.

SMART goals serve as a catalyst for focused planning and resource allocation, ensuring district and building teams achieve their desired outcomes for professional learning and student achievement.

Considerations When Crafting a SMART GOAL

- When crafting SMART goals, teams should prioritize their roles in improving professional practices and advancing student learning. These goals should be the subject of collaborative discussions among team members, focusing on the desired outcomes.
- Goals should be high-level and aligned with core district and building outcomes, yet specific and clear enough to be measured for success. They should support overarching professional development priorities that directly connect to district/building learning initiatives and improvement strategies, promoting measurable progress in educator practices and student achievement.
- If a team sets too many goals, it may indicate they are too narrow or task-oriented. In such cases, teams should revisit the goals and combine related goal statements into broader outcomes tied to results rather than specific tasks.

By grounding professional development and student learning in SMART goals, districts and building teams can enhance collaboration, ensure alignment with shared priorities, and promote measurable progress in educator practices and student achievement.

Parts of a SMART GOAL

S – Specific and Strategic

A goal must specify the objectives to be achieved, clearly focusing on defined teacher learning outcomes that align with corresponding student learning outcomes. Specific goals must be well-defined and free of ambiguity or generality. The consideration of “W” questions may assist in developing a specific goal:

- Who – Who needs to be involved to achieve the goal?
- What – What will the goal specifically accomplish?
- When – When will the goal be attained?
- Where – Where will the educator accomplish this goal?
- Which – Which requirements or constraints are involved in achieving the goal?
- Why – Why is the goal important? (e.g., reasons, purposes, benefits, etc.)

M –Measurable

To maintain accountability, a measurable goal must have concrete criteria for measuring progress toward achievement. There must be a source of information to measure or determine the achievement of the goal. Criteria typically include quantitative (how much? how many?) measures rather than qualitative (what is it like?). Consider the following questions when determining how the team will measure the goal:

- What metrics will the team use to determine goal attainment?
- What are the indicators of progress toward the goal?
- What are relevant and feasible data sources and collection methods?

A – Attainable and Actionable

Goals should inspire and motivate, not discourage. They should be challenging, yet reasonable, actionable and attainable. Consider the scope of the work required to accomplish the goal in the context of the available resources (e.g., materials, technology, facilities, culture, climate, and teacher expertise). Achieving the goal may require a shift in attitudes or beliefs in addition to new skill development; however, goals that are too far-reaching or subpar become meaningless and should be avoided.

USING ACTION VERBS

Specific actions may include verbs such as oversee, update, write, coordinate, process, supervise, develop, provide, manage, create, maintain, plan, implement, support, evaluate, transition, produce and administer.

R – Relevant and Results-Based

A relevant, result-based goal aligns with the district and/or building priorities, supporting the overall effort of improvement. A relevant goal considers the district or building learning context and the challenges that affect stakeholders (e.g., students, teachers, parents, and community), directly connecting to ongoing work. It also focuses on making a direct impact.

T – Time-Bound

A time-bound goal occurs within a specific and realistic timeframe, with a specific target date. Typically, alignment with the district calendar (e.g., school year, semester, quarter) or existing strategic plans (i.e., multi-year) provides a reasonable timeframe. It will depend on local context and needs, including current work and projects, workloads, and scheduling parameters within the district or building.

Example SMART GOAL

By May 2025, the 6th-grade team will implement weekly differentiated reading groups to improve students' reading comprehension scores by 15% as measured by district benchmark assessments, utilizing existing reading intervention resources and professional development provided by the district literacy coordinator, in alignment with the district's literacy improvement initiative.

Benefits of an Action Plan

The goals define *what* the team wants to achieve, but an action plan outlines *how* you will achieve it by breaking the goal(s) down into manageable tasks.

An action plan helps the team:

- Clarify responsibilities by assigning tasks to specific individuals or groups.
- Set timelines for each step, keeping progress on track.
- Identify needed resources ahead of time to avoid delays.
- Monitor progress and adjust as needed.
- Increase accountability and teamwork by making expectations transparent.

Considerations When Crafting a SMART GOAL

1. What evidence will be collected to demonstrate that the goal is met
2. Anticipate any obstacles that may be encountered that would prevent the goal from being met? How could these obstacles be prevented or remediated if met?
3. What resources are necessary to reach each milestone and ultimately, the goal? (Consider human capital, time, money, training, materials, etc.)
4. What are the major milestones of the goal and action steps necessary to reach each?
5. What is a reasonable timeline for accomplishing each milestone and associated action steps to meet the goal on time?
6. How will we monitor our progress toward the goal, including implementation fidelity and student outcomes? (Think about formative, routine checks that may be necessary to monitor throughout the process, in addition to the individual completion of tasks that will help to achieve the goal.)
7. How will and when will the team evaluate progress toward the goals and determine if and when adjustments are needed?

SMART Goal Planning Template

	Goal Elements	Example Frames	District/Building Goal Draft
S	Specific and Strategic <i>(instructional strategies and/or strategic outcomes)</i> Who needs to be included? Who will improve? What does achievement look like? How will it be accomplished?	By [date], [who] will [specific action or strategy] to achieve [specific objective or outcome] for [target group]. To address [specific issue], [who] will [specific action] aligned with [standard or priority].	
M	Measurable <i>(milestones or benchmarks)</i> How will improvement be measured?	Progress will be tracked using [specific data source or tool] to measure [specific metric]. Success will be demonstrated by [quantifiable change] in [area].	
A	Attainable or Achievable <i>(challenging, but reasonable)</i> What are the actions required to achieve the goal?	The goal will be achieved using [available resources] and supported through [specific strategies or support systems]. [Who] will develop [specific skill or capacity] within [specific context or resource constraints].	
R	Relevant or Results-based <i>(strategic target)</i> How does it align with district and/or building goals?	The goal directly supports [district/building priority] by addressing [specific need or focus area]. The outcome will lead to [specific impact or change] aligned with [district/building vision or initiative].	
T	Time-Bound <i>(timeline and/or target date)</i> When will the goal be met?	The goal will be accomplished by [specific date], with milestones reviewed at [specific intervals]. [Who] will complete [specific action] within [specific timeframe] to meet [timeline requirements].	

Putting It All Together

SMART GOAL: *(Combine each of the pieces into a single statement.)*

EXAMPLE FRAME: By [specific date], [who] will [specific action or strategy] to achieve [specific measurable outcome] for [target group], using [resources or supports] and within [context or constraints], in alignment with [district/school priority or initiative].

Action Plan Template

SMART Goal

Overall Due Date	Measurement of Success

Potential Obstacles	Prevention or Remedy Measures

Resources Needed	Details <i>(Name, Associated Costs, etc.)</i>

Milestones/Benchmarks for Success	Due Dates
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

Action Steps	Responsible Party	Due Dates

Progress Monitoring Measures	Progress Results	Adjustments Made	Date

Final Review Date	Celebrations	Opportunities	Next Steps