



Mid-Year Check-In



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INSIGHTS FOR FAMILIES is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Insights is produced by Marcia Latta, communications consultant.

“Efforts and courage are not enough without purpose and direction.”

—John F. Kennedy

The new year is a great time to pause to evaluate our progress and goals. As the school year is nearly half over by the first of January, it is also a natural time for students to reflect on the school year so far and set new goals for the future.

Self-reflection is a valuable practice that can benefit students of any age, and is a helpful skill in the workforce after graduating. It is an important part of learning and should be the first step in the goal-setting process.

Student-centered approaches to learning

Self-reflection is active, requiring students to engage and pay attention. When students are engaged in their own learning, they are empowered to take charge of their own studies and become advocates for their achievement.

Called self-regulated or student-centered learning, students participate actively and reflect on ways to improve.

The University of Washington Center for Teaching and Learning promotes student engagement to educators through a variety of tactics for the classroom. “Research has demonstrated that engaging students in the learning process increases their attention and focus, motivates them to practice higher-level critical thinking skills, and promotes meaningful learning experiences.” <https://bit.ly/2sR2ARf>

Encouraging students to monitor their own progress

Technology tools offer opportunities to monitor progress for continuous improvement. Learning apps like Khan Academy offer built-in progress checks in the platform's online study programs: “One way to help empower and drive students as they're learning is to encourage them to monitor their own progress. This allows learners to track their own improvement, figure out what they need extra help on, and set their own goals.” <https://bit.ly/2PIEZZm>

Most digital education programs provide immediate feedback through tests and progress check-ins. Students can be motivated by seeing their own progress or by the digital badges or scores that are often built into the program. These programs can provide the data students need so they can see areas they should focus on for improvement.

Reflection

Literacy consultant Patty McGee writes, “Reflection is the stickiest glue for the brain. When students take time to consider what they have learned and how they have grown, the learning is longer lasting and much more impactful. As John Dewey has written, ‘We do not learn from experience...we learn from reflecting on experience.’”
<https://corwin-connect.com/2017/02/help-students-reflect-set-goals-powerful-learning/>

Many teachers ask students reflective questions to help them review what they have learned and what they want to learn next:

- What was significant learning for you in the last unit?
- What did you learn about yourself as a learner (or writer, reader, social scientist, mathematician, or whatever the subject area)?
- What was your favorite mistake and what did you learn from it?
- What feedback did you get from your teacher or other students that was important to you?
- What are strengths you noticed about yourself?
- What are next steps in your learning journey?
- Looking ahead to the next unit, what are some challenges you imagine?
- What strengths can you bring to meet those challenges?

Goal setting

Goal setting is an essential follow-up to reflection. The cycle should include reflection, goal-setting, planning, repeat.

Students may have experience setting goals. If not, give them sample goals to help them get started. Goals should be easy to understand, in kid-friendly language, not too broad or too specific. Kids should understand that they are a starting point and will likely expand or narrow.

The goals should have a plan built in. The following prompts can help guide them:

- List what you know you need to still learn in order to reach your goal.
- What strengths and knowledge do you already have that will help you reach the goal? How do you plan on using this?
- What do you imagine having to do first? After that?
- Who can help you reach this goal? Specifically, what will you need from him or her?
- What are important habits you will draw on daily to help you reach your goal?

After the reflection, goal-setting and planning process, students should begin again. This amazing, cyclical, and transformative process learners take to consider where they have been and where they want to go—the cycle of reflection into goal setting into more reflection—is one of the most powerful experiences you can create
<https://bit.ly/2PfoVb>