

How Goal Setting and Self-efficacy Can Improve Achievement and Decrease Stress

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Rationale:

Sometimes the demands on students can be overwhelming. This session will address ways to help students learn to manage these demands through goal setting and self-regulatory strategies in order to increase productivity and decrease stress. The way students see themselves may be partially determined by their successes and failures. In this session we will consider how self-efficacy impacts achievement and how helping students reach their goals can impact both.

Background Information:

Gifted students often tend to focus too much on performance which can cause undue stress and eventually may lead to low performance due to fear of failure. Many factors are involved in helping students to become well rounded individuals such as self-efficacy (belief in oneself), goal setting, and self-regulated learning.

According to Albert Bandura, self-efficacy is “the belief in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations.” In other words, self-efficacy is a person’s belief in his or her ability to succeed in a particular situation. Bandura described these beliefs as determinants of how people think, behave, and feel (1994). “According to Bandura’s social cognitive theory, self-efficacy and self-regulation are key processes that affect students’ learning and achievement.” (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2007).

Key components of self-regulated learning include goal setting, self-monitoring, and self-assessment. Helping students take an active role in monitoring their success in everyday activities as well as the learning process can give them a feeling of accomplishment and improve motivation. It is important to note that the type of goals also have an impact on students’ perception of success. Mastery goals focus on increasing competence while performance goals focus on demonstrating competence (Turner and Patrick, 2004). Too much emphasis on performance has been connected to lack of motivation due to a fear of failure. Teaching students the difference between the two types of goals and encouraging the use of mastery goals may help students to better value learning and enhance feelings of accomplishment.

Parents and teachers aware of these factors may be better able to help students create reasonable and attainable goals that will demonstrate mastery. Using a self-regulatory approach can be beneficial for students’ self-efficacy and achievement and consequently reduce stress associated with the demands of everyday life as well as the learning environment.

Talking Points:

- Self-efficacy
- Achievement
- Goals
- Self-Regulated Learning
- Implementation

