

Mount Wachusett Community College
Adult Basic Education Program
Countable Outcomes Goal Setting Process
2004; Revised 2008

The Program

The Mount Wachusett Community College/Adult Basic Education Program, located in Central Massachusetts, has been in operation for over 25 years and offers classes at 4 sites. The class schedule is based on the public school calendar and MWCC has an open enrollment policy that allows students to enter and exit anytime there is an opening between September and June. The sites are located in Leominster, Fitchburg, Gardner, and Devens and offer between them:

- 4 ABE Classes
- 5 Mpre-ASE Classes
- 5 ASE Classes
- 5 ESOL I Classes
- 5 ESOL II Classes
- 4 ESOL III Classes
- 3 Math Classes

The entire program is administered by 1 full-time director. The director relies on 26 instructors, 1 program/curriculum development coordinator, 2 tech coordinators, 4 site coordinator/counselors (2 full-time), and 2 program assistants to complete the grant requirements. Each site has a site coordinator/counselor who oversees day to day activities; providing academic support to teaching staff and academic counseling to students.

The Goal Setting Pilot

The **program development team** analyzed the MWCC goal setting process as an ongoing project. They did so to create a more student centered process that gives students a stronger voice in choosing their goals and greater input on how they achieve their goals. The team is facilitated by the program development coordinator and the team is comprised of the director, 7 instructors, and 2 coordinator/counselors. The program gathered materials that were distributed at the directors two day ABE Directors Meeting in Sturbridge, *The PAWG report*, *The Countable Outcomes Manual*, as well as their own site specific procedures and tools used in previous years. The MWCC countable outcomes process was developed by focusing specifically on the five required components suggested by the DOE/ACLS that were based on the recommendations of the GSWG.

- Goal setting should be done with a staff member that is likely to have an ongoing relationship with the student.
- Goals must be determined by the student and negotiated with the staff person.
- Student goals must be communicated to the instructor.
- Student goals must inform instruction and be incorporated into a programs' curriculum development process.
- Student goals must be revisited on a regular basis.

Common processes were developed to be used upon intake, various lessons to be used in the classroom, methods to update information, and tools to capture and report the results. Most of our tools were taken from materials received at the ABE Directors Meeting that were being used at other DOE funded programs. The program development team successfully piloted the process with 5 classes in FY 2004.

In September of 2004 all staff members were trained in the new process and given a manual created by the pilot team that included the new goal setting strategies, classroom lessons, tracking tools, and the CO 2003 report. Teachers must adhere to the basic goal setting process outlined in the manual, but may do so using any lessons or tools they feel work best with their class. We encourage instructors to share any tools they may develop that work effectively. The Countable Outcomes process at MWCC is expected to continue to evolve in the next 3 years becoming more streamlined.

Current Goal Setting Process

Intake

Site coordinator/counselors will meet with all students for an orientation to the program prior to the student entering the classroom. Program policies and offerings are discussed and offered in print form. The intake form is explained and completed, along with the attendance policy and the release of information form. The SC/LSS brings out the DOE mandated goal sheet and then, with the student, opens a discussion about goal setting processes and why our program feels that defining goals and creating a plan to meet the goals aids in student educational progress. When asked why they want to attend the program many students state that they want their GED or to speak/read/write English better. We honor that educational goal and then try to delve further by asking questions such as;

Why do you want to get a GED?

Will it change what you do each day? How?

What do you want after you get your GED?

Would you like to take college classes or study for a trade?

How will *Communicating Better in English* make your life change?

Do you have children? Do they bring home schoolwork?

Do you have trouble explaining what you need at work?

Do you have a hard time talking to doctors? Banks? Librarians? Utility Workers?

etc.

We ask how meeting their goals will help them in their lives as workers, family members, community members, and students. This conversation is very helpful in identifying goals that go beyond just educational attainment.

After identifying and negotiating 1 to 3 goals with the student we again briefly explain that goal selection is a key component to the program and goals will be selected and reviewed regularly in the classroom. The student is told that goals are open to discussion and sometimes change as a student attends classes and that changing goals and meeting other goals are a sign of personal and educational growth. Any goals that the student wishes to disclose upon intake will be relayed to the instructor prior to the student entering the class along with their assessment scores and a basic information paragraph about the student. This information is disclosed on a sheet similar to the following -

Student:			Date:	
Math Score:			Reading Score:	
Best Plus Score:			REEP Score:	
Primary Goal	Long	Short		
Secondary Goal	Long	Short		
Secondary Goal	Long	Short		
Comments				

We have found that it can be difficult to set goals with beginning level ESOL students at intake because they are sometimes overwhelmed with program information. We still go over goals and the goal setting process and explain that their teacher will be talking with them about goals in class but we may not be able to set goals during intake.

Classroom Goal Setting Process

Understanding Goal Setting and Identifying Goals

In the original process a goal setting lesson is done during the first 2 weeks of class. Since we are no longer required to set goals before we can enter a student in attendance, teachers will often wait until students are more comfortable in class before they introduce a goal setting lesson. This is usually during the first month of classes and then revisited throughout the year. Classroom teachers will introduce a goal setting lesson of their choice.

~~within the first 2 weeks of class.~~ The lesson must explain in greater depth to the student how to set goals, develop a plan to meet their goals, and how to know when they have met their goals. The MWCC Countable Outcomes Manual contains examples of lessons used successfully in the pilot, however, the teacher has the freedom to use any lesson he/she feels would work best in their classroom.

Many teachers use inspirational stories followed by classroom discussions on goals that they and/or their student have met in the past. They often lead by example telling about goals they have made for themselves and the steps they have taken to meet these goals. No goal is ignored, even if it does not fall directly within the countable outcomes chart. Teachers do attempt to open students up to the wide range of goals they can consider by using visual aids, written charts, and conversation. Teachers are given a copy of the countable outcomes chart so they have the full scope of what we are looking for, along with the necessary documentation required for certain goals. They are aware that the DOE will seriously consider what documentation is required and how we obtain the documentation of proof on some goals.

The teacher works with the students individually to select at least one short-term goal if none were identified upon intake. All student goals are written down during this meeting and if the student identifies a goal they did not choose during intake it is documented as well. During the individual student/teacher discussion a plan is devised to identify how class lessons could help the student meet their goal; how their education is going to lead to goal attainment. If the student has difficulty developing a plan the teacher helps them create steps by asking questions that pertain to steps towards the goal attainment.

Example: If a student wants to get their drivers license, but they don't know the steps involved, the teacher might ask them questions such as: "Where will you need to go?" "Will you have to study?" "Can we find some words you may need to understand so I can teach the vocabulary to you?" "Do you need to check the legal requirements?". The teacher can explain how writing down the list of questions and working together to answer them will help the student create a plan. The teacher will also help the student identify the people who can help the student.

Documentation

Student plans are documented on a pre-designed form, in an open journal to the teacher, or through dictation with the student and teacher. The choice of documentation type is up to the instructor. All documentation is kept in individual student folders that are kept in locked file cabinets. These student folders are referred to as the classroom *Individual Student Goal Folder*. Students have access to their folder and the work within them during class time.

Learning Log
Name: _____
Date: _____
Something I learned this week:
Something I enjoyed this week:
Something I didn't like this week:
What I want to do next:

Goals Inform Curriculum

Goals selected by the students individually or as a class give the teacher ideas for lesson development, which will help meet the needs of the students. Teachers add lessons, vocabulary, speakers, field trips, or any other necessary curriculum to the class to help students meet their goals. Goals drive the curriculum in the classroom. By doing so, the classroom time becomes more meaningful to the student aiding in retention and better attendance.

Example: Recently we had a teacher who realized that her class did not have checking accounts. This came up during the goal setting lesson. The students told her that they paid their bills with cash in person or with paid for Money Orders when they needed to mail the bill. They did so because they did not understand how checking accounts worked and how to choose the right one. The teacher did some research on local banks and created lessons using banking vocabulary and definitions. She did some basic math lessons to show how to use a checking account register and how to reconcile accounts. She had students go to banks they liked and gather checking account offers. As a class they studied the various offerings and made educated decisions to choose the checking accounts that best suited their needs. The class read pertinent materials, learned new vocabulary, and did some basic math, all important literacy skills, while doing an activity that was meaningful to them.

Revisit Goals Regularly

Classroom teachers revisit goal setting with the students every week or two by opening the Individual Student Goal Folders with students while others do class work quietly. It is important for the teacher and the student to spend some time talking alone with one another about the class lessons and how the student feels about the time spent learning. They go over progress, documenting success, changing or adding new goals, and reviewing the steps towards attainment.

Learning Log

Name: _____

Date: _____

Something I learned this week:

Something I enjoyed this week:

Something I didn't like this week:

What I want to do next:

GOAL SETTING

Name: _____

Date: _____

Goal: _____

How will I work on the goal? (action steps)

1

2

3

Resources Needed:

How can your teacher help you meet this goal?

What might get in my way?

Date Goal Met:

Explain how you know the goal was met?

Class: _____ Instructor: _____ Date: _____

Student	Goals Chosen	Steps Taken or Date of Completion
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STUDENT GOALS

Student: _____ Date of Review: _____

Goal: _____ Date Set: _____

Progress: _____

Comments: _____

Goal: _____ Date Set: _____

Progress: _____

Comments: _____

Site coordinator/counselors update the necessary program forms and transfer the collected data record to the appropriate data entry person. By collecting the data and transferring the information to the DOE we know that what we do in our programs will be measured and that we are making the best possible effort to be sure that what counts is counted.

Conclusion

MWCC feels that strengthening our goal setting process has improved our program significantly on many levels, but most significantly for the student.

Students

- Are attending more.
- Making a stronger commitment to the program.
- Helping guide the curriculum towards content areas that are meaningful to them.
- Is taking ownership of their lives in the areas of employment, community, family and education.

We do feel that our process is evolving and changing and will do so until the flow is seamless. We know that our practitioners find new ways to add lessons, complete documentation, work individually with students everyday and we want to encourage additions to our process that help us all in the long run. Teachers are tweaking their lessons and changing their own goals within the goal setting process regularly and we encourage their input.

This model was documented by Julie Crowley, the Site Coordinator and Counselor at the Mount Wachusett Community College/ Devens Learning Center. You can contact Julie at j.crowley@mwcc.mass.edu