

## **BUILDING BLOCKS TO YOUR SUCCESS!**

### **Jo Sundin**

The program in which I teach is a DOE funded program at Quinsigamond Community College and is located at City Square, 100 Front Street, Worcester, Massachusetts. This is an ABE program with an enrollment of approximately 380 students in 22 classes. Our staff consists of 2 full time administrators and 23 part time staff. I currently teach level 2 ESOL.

Goal setting and countable outcomes are on everyone's mind in every program at the beginning of every school year. With goal setting intrinsically being such an important part of our program, I wanted to come up with a creative way of getting my students positively onboard and keeping progress toward their goals before them all year. To gain more knowledge on the subject, I attended a workshop at Network called, "My goal? I want to speak English!" The most important piece of information I left with was the following: *Visuals are key*. It was from this main thought that my idea was produced.

Desiring a way to represent my students' goals and to showcase any achievements, I arrived at the idea of building a center-piece visual display for the classroom. This visual display would be a constant reminder to everyone of what they were striving for, how much they had accomplished so far, and what tasks they had yet to accomplish. In order to stay on track, the visual display would always be in sight, and would become an important part of our classroom. When the goals were revisited, anyone fulfilling a goal would be acknowledged by the class, and this would allow individuals to feel adequate recognition for their accomplishment as well as having the support of others.

With an obvious agenda firmly in mind, the only thing left was to work out the details. How exactly was I to represent this? After brainstorming, I decided that the concept of building blocks seemed to fit.

### **PROCEDURE for making a visual display "Building Blocks to Your Success" (see photo)**

#### **I. Making the Chart**

1. From construction paper, cut out building blocks stacked 4 high (or, choose your own number) for each student in the class.
2. Take a photo of each student and paste each under a stack of blocks.
3. Find images on the internet, or in magazines, to symbolize each goal.
4. Create a key of symbols that explains each image on the chart.
5. Hang up the chart where everyone can see it at all times.

## II. Setting our Goals

1. In class discuss the following with your students:
  - a. What is a goal?
  - b. How do we set realistic goals?
  - c. Now that we have goals, what are the specific steps needed to make sure they get accomplished?
1. Discuss the different goals on the Countable Outcomes list .
2. Each student works one on one with the counselor to choose their goals.
3. Set up classroom goals as a group to model a goal setting process. These goals will be accomplished by all during class time. My examples of classroom goals:
  - a. Learn American Culture- Scheduling a field trip to Sturbridge Village
  - b. Improve Computer Skills- Weekly visits to the computer lab
  - c. Participation in Community Activities- Brown Bag Lunch at Mechanics Hall.
4. Create individual folders for each student and place within it their "Goal Setting" sheet in it.
5. Mark each folder with the student's goals on the front cover. Check off each goal as it is reached.
6. Inform students that they can let you know when goals are accomplished, and that you will document the achievement in their folder.
7. Let each student know what documentation is needed to reach their goal.
8. Weekly or biweekly, ask the students how they are doing with their goals. At this point, you can answer any questions they might have.
9. As students reach their goals revisit the chart and acknowledge everyone that has reached any of their goals.
10. The day you revisit, bring up each student that has completed their goal, one by one, and announce their personal accomplishment and how they reached it. Give them their appropriate picture of their goal and have them stick it to their building block stack. (The class then cheers loudly and huge grins are plastered across students face!)

## **FURTHER ACTION**

1. Continue using the chart throughout the year.
2. Make sure that even on days not dedicated to revisiting the chart, all of the students are aware that it is there, and that everyone can see how well they are doing!

## **ADDITIONAL RECCOMENDATIONS**

When following the procedure outlined above, here are a few additional tips that may spur further creativity and fun within the “Building Blocks to Your Success!”

- 1 Allow students to be creatively involved in the representations of their personal goals.
  - For example: give them the task of looking through magazines and taking clippings of the things they personally feel exemplifies the goals they would like to reach. These clippings may be displayed on the chart as incentives.
- 2 Making the chart itself can be a very time consuming task. Allowing the students to create the chart themselves not only shares the work, but gives the students an even more integral role in the process of goal-setting and achieving.
  - For example: allot each student the tasks of cutting out their blocks and decorating their part of the chart. Personalizing each students’ section inspires creativity, and better familiarization with their goals.
- 3 Make sure that everyone is involved. Classroom morale and support is another huge motivation for students.
  - For example: schedule certain classes as “Revisiting our Goals,” and be sure to acknowledge each student for any improvements made.
  - Also, always encourage them to survey their progress by keeping the chart in a prominent place in the classroom!

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

Through the development of “Building Blocks to Your Success,” I have found that the students were not the only ones learning new things about goal setting; I also made discoveries. For example, as an educator I am now aware that visually representing accomplishment is a powerful incentive for anyone striving towards an objective; it

reminds them of where they are going, and more importantly, that they *are* getting there!

Using the classroom as a venue for publicly celebrating and recognizing students' successes is a tangible way to lead them through the steps laid down in the process of goal setting. Creating the "Building Blocks to your Success" ultimately allowed students the chance to define the goals they would like to reach, and through celebrating small successes achieved en route, motivated them to perpetually grow as students and people.