

Standard #6 Making Healthy Decisions and Setting Goals

Decision-making

Good decision making is a skill that youth have an opportunity to learn every day of their lives. Youth learn two important lessons when they are allowed to make some of their own choices. First, they learn that every choice is connected to a consequence. Second, they learn they will be held accountable for their choices. If youth are held accountable for their decisions, they increasingly learn responsibility for their actions.

Young children don't need to learn a formal decision-making model. Instead, children in early elementary grades should be encouraged to make choices and then experience the resulting positive or negative outcome of their choices. Upper elementary, middle-level and high school students learn a formal decision-making model as a means to organize their thoughts into a process for making increasingly complex decisions that confront them.

(Source: Adapted from Healthy Keiki, Healthy Hawaii: A Handbook for K-12 Educators, 2002)

Teachers can help their youth make good decisions by teaching them the following decision-making process:

1. Identify the situation. Students should ask, "What decision do I need to make? Who is involved? Am I feeling pressure to make a decision? How much time do I have to decide?"
2. List the options. What are all the possible choices I could make? Remind students that sometimes it is appropriate not to take action. Discuss the options.
3. Weigh the possible outcome. Students should ask the following questions to weigh the consequences of each option: a. Does this choice present any health risk? b. does this choice reflect what I value? c. Does this choice violate any local, state, or federal laws? and d. would my parents or guardians approve of this choice?
4. Make a decision and act on it. Students can use everything they know at this point to make a responsible decision.
5. Evaluate the decision. After they have made a decision and taken action, they can reflect on what happened. What was the outcome? How did their decision affect their health and the health of those around them? What did they learn? Would they take the same action again? If not, how would their choice differ?

(Source: adapted from Glencoe Health, p.42, 2009)

A useful tool to help encourage students to make good decisions is to post the questions raised above in a noticeable place in your classroom.

Goal-setting:

Some things to bear in mind when helping students set goals include:

1. Be careful when suggesting deadlines or time limits. When we get to the age where the months seem to fly by, it's easy to forget what time feels like to a child. Do be specific. Getting outside and just playing may not cut it. Have students come up with some specific things they can do for a set amount of time.
2. Have students write their goals down – or help them with that if they are too young. Write down not only the goal itself, but also WHY it's important and what it will LOOK LIKE when it's achieved.
3. As much as possible, let students be the ones to come up with the ideas for their own goals. If you need to make suggestions, be as sensitive as you can to their age and interests. Be especially sensitive about the "size of the goal". Students need to have big goals broken down into mini-goals so that they can see progress quickly, preferably on a daily basis.
4. Goals that have no concrete feedback aren't worth much. Help students to monitor their actions. Teach them to keep track of their health-related activities and how much time they spent doing them. Talk about their progress. If they're meeting their goals, cheer on the hard work; if they're not, find out why – it may be time to set a new goal.
5. Recruit support. Suggest that they get the whole family or other friends involved.
6. Lastly, get your students to be more active by treating successes. If all goes well, your students will be working hard to meet their goals. Show them you've noticed by giving them specific praise. This will make them feel good, and it will make it more likely that they'll keep up the hard work.
7. And finally, why not start using "New Month" goals in your classroom instead of "New Year" goals? That way you and your students can have all the excitement, anticipation and motivation that comes with the New Year twelve times a year.

(Sources: adapted from 1. <http://www.kidsgoals.com/goal-setting-kids.shtml> and 2. <http://www.uabhealth.org/>)

The following goal-setting process is from Health Promotion Wave:

- 1) Make a goal statement that:
 - a) is positive, productive, and health-promoting
 - b) is realistic – start small
 - c) matches your desires and abilities"I would like to accomplish..."
- 2) Goal Development Steps
 - a) List of steps leading up to your goal
 - b) Corresponding activities
 - c) Priorities and timeframe"My list of things to do will include..."
- 3) Roadblocks and Challenges
 - a) List of roadblocks that might stunt your progress

b) Strategies for getting around roadblocks and meeting challenges
"One of the challenges I will need to deal with is..."

4) Resources

- a) List of resources that help you reach your goal
- b) Accurate and current research
- c) Reliable and trusted resource people

"Some people I could talk to who have attempted this before..."

5) Criteria for success

- a) Ways of measuring your progress along the way
- b) Reward yourself for all levels of success

"I will know my program is working when..."

(Source: Health Promotion Wave)