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More Than a SMART Goal: Staying Focused on Student Learning

By Anne E. Conzemius and Terry Morganti-Fisher

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Study Guide

This study guide is a companion to the book *More Than a SMART Goal: Staying Focused on Student Learning* by Anne E. Conzemius and Terry Morganti-Fisher. *More Than a SMART Goal* discusses how to set a data-informed, high-priority SMART goal and goes beyond merely setting the goal to show readers how to properly use the SMART goal process to affect change.

This guide is arranged by chapter, enabling readers to either work their way through the entire book or to focus on the specific topics addressed in a particular chapter. It can be used by individuals, small groups, or by an entire team to identify key points, raise questions for consideration, assess conditions in a particular school or district, and suggest steps that might be taken to promote the effective use of SMART goals in a school or district.

We thank you for your interest in this book, and we hope this guide is a useful tool in your efforts to explore the SMART goal process.

Chapter 1

The Nature of Systems Improvement

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1. What is a SMART goal?

2. What are the five guidelines for system improvement?

3. What is the difference between common cause and special cause variation? Think of an example of each from your personal experience. How might identifying the variation type in each example help you to improve performance?

4. What are the two types of goal alignment? Provide some examples of each. Why is each type important?

5. List the three levels of fix. Where do you see each level currently applied in your school or district?

6. There are four types of questions we should ask at each of the three levels of fix: analysis, alignment, improvement, and action. Choose a level of fix and compose questions for each category.

7. Explain disruptive innovation. When is disruptive innovation necessary?

Chapter 2

Less Is More

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1. What is initiativitis, and how does it spread?

2. What is habitual reflection? Why does Costa believe that habitual reflection is nontraditional for educators?

3. Consider the "less is more" statements on page 46. How can you apply these to your own district or school? What are some other "less is more" statements that your district or school can benefit from adopting?

4. Explain the Pareto principle. Based on the Pareto principle, how can we have the greatest impact?

5. What are the three gaps that can reveal a school's greatest area of need (GAN)? Why is it useful to consider all three gaps? Explain the strengths and weaknesses of each.

6. How does zone analysis work? Why is it an important tool?

7. Consider a goal that you have for your district or school. Is it a "process" goal or a "results" goal?

8. Consider figure 2.4 on page 58. Create your own tree diagram using a goal within your district or school; use zone analysis to determine the indicators, and remember to include time in your goal tree. Now, evaluate your goal tree using table 2.6 on page 59.

Chapter 3

Putting SMART Goals to Work

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1. What are some of the shortcomings of systems that have not properly planned their SMART goals? How can you avoid setting ineffective goals?

2. Why is the principal such an important figure in systemwide improvement? What responsibilities does the principal have in the SMART goal process?

3. What are the six components of professional learning communities (PLCs)? How do SMART goals lead to the formation of PLCs?

4. Who is responsible for student learning?

5. What practices imply a competitive learning environment? How can a competitive environment jeopardize student learning?

6. What are the five elements needed to create a collaborative learning environment? How does each element contribute to the collaborative environment?

7. What kind of culture is preferable in a collaborative learning environment? What are some examples of ways you can promote this culture?

8. What school and classroom conditions should school leaders ensure? Why are these conditions important?

Chapter 4

Professional Learning by Design

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1. Why is it important to allocate time and money to professional development? How can professional development time be used most efficiently?

2. Why should we draw from teachers' perceptional data to help to isolate need?

3. How should teachers go about determining the best practice for achieving a SMART goal?

4. What are some examples of ways that teachers can measure student learning? How does analyzing and refocusing benefit members of the learning community?

5. How do district goals differ from school goals?

6. What are the responsibilities of a steering committee?

7. After reading "Snapshot of a District," consider your own district and school. What can you do at a leadership level to successfully employ the SMART goal process?

Chapter 5

Impact and Implementation

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1. If we fail to reach a SMART goal, what kinds of things can we learn from our efforts?

2. What are black-box and glass-box evaluations? Which evaluation type is more useful? Why?

3. What are the components of the SMART Measurement System™ (SMS™)?

4. What are the four stages of change? How can understanding these stages inform the district on strategic focus?

5. What five attributes help to develop successful teams? Why is it important that these attributes are shared?

6. How are the Indicators of Progress™ (IoP™) and the SMART Survey™ used differently? What are the goals of each?

7. What factors does the SMART Survey assess? Why do you think these factors are important for successful SMART goals?

Chapter 6

Engaging the Mind, Body, and Spirit

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1. What are the lessons of "joining up"? What are some ways in which you already apply these lessons to your school or district, and what sort of outcomes have these efforts had?

2. Why is it sometimes difficult to determine the best actions for movement? What might keep knowledge from being applied?

3. Why can the process for change be "messy"? What do we stand to gain by loosening control?

4. How can we help people within the system see and commit to the bigger picture?

5. What are some ways in which you can be a co-learner? How do you think this will affect your leadership?

6. How can you determine whether you are consistent between your values and your practice?

7. Why is it important that people "*choose to join* the journey"? What does this indicate?

8. What are the qualities that build trust? Which of these is the most fundamental? Why? Which allows action to take place?

9. What are some of the fears regarding the use of data? What can we do to dispel these fears?

10. Why is it important to be aware of mental models? How can dialogue address mental models?