

# The Features of a Goal-Setting Conversation

Although goal-setting conversations don't all need to adhere to a rigid, formal structure, they should include the following elements:

1. Checking in on how the student is feeling about their learning, including their social-emotional well-being
2. Clarifying the student's learning target, helping them understand key ideas, and ensuring that they understand the importance of what they're about to learn
3. Understanding the student's current achievement through artifacts and evidence of learning (formative assessment information can be very useful here)
4. Restating the learning target as a specific, engaging, and appropriate goal
5. Setting an action plan for meeting the goal, including the steps the student will take, when the work will be done, where it will be done, whom the student can partner with to support their work, the materials they need to support their work, and how their learning will be measured
6. Setting a timeline for you and the student to follow up on how learning is progressing toward the goal, potentially involving families in the process
7. Monitoring student progress toward the goal as they complete it
8. Assessing student progress and celebrating success at the end of the goal period

There is no harm in keeping the boundaries around these features somewhat fluid. Each student will bring to each conversation a different understanding of formative evidence of learning, different levels of interest, and even different energy levels from day to day. The most important part of goal-focused conversations is to keep students engaged, demonstrating an ongoing interest in their learning and drawing them into a dialogue on the next steps in their learning.

Source: Chase Nordengren, *Step into Goal Setting: A Path to Growth, Motivation, and Agency* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin; Portland, OR: NWEA®, 2022).

