

Goals, Core Values, and Behaviors

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Context: In-class; Introduction to Engineering

Keywords: values, goal setting, first-year experience

Student Activity Time: 50 minute class period

Students reflected on their core values, goals, and behaviors to support their academic and professional success.




Introducing the Reflection Activity

Students generally have a wide variety of goals that motivate their behaviors as students. The educator facilitated a class session and assignment focused on values, goals, and behaviors to support students in working systematically toward their goals on a daily, weekly, and yearly basis. The purpose of this activity was to prompt students to reflect on their core values and behaviors to ensure that they will be able to achieve their goals in the future.

At the beginning of the class session, the educator discussed the purpose of long and short-term goals, and the ways in which core values and behaviors mediate the achievement of certain goals. The educator introduced concepts for goal setting such as specificity, timing, and measurability. The educator distributed a form with four categories of goals: live, learn, work, and play. Students were to fill in goals for each category with a one and a five year timeline. The educator engaged the class in a conversation about the kinds of goals identified for each category.

The second part of the activity focused on their weekly schedule. On the blank schedule worksheet, students were asked to input a realistic time schedule of how their day and make any necessary adjustments necessary to work toward each of their goals. The educator also introduced the 60 hour rule of realistic weekly productivity. At the end of the class session, the educator distributed the rubric that would be used to grade the worksheets and assigned the completion of both worksheets for the next class session.

The purpose of this activity was to prompt students to reflect on their goals across various areas of their life, specify and assign timelines to achieve them. Second, students were to reflect on their daily and weekly time schedules and revise their schedule in order to work toward each of their goals on a weekly basis. The activity was meant to engage students in connecting their core values to their behaviors in their daily life. As a result of the activity, students were able to specify their life goals in many categories and detail a plan to achieve those goals.

 6.1 Goal Setting
 6.2 Blank Schedule
 6.3 Grading Rubric

Recreating the Reflection Activity

	Description
1	Introduce goal setting, core values, and behaviors as interrelated concepts.
2	Hand out the goal setting worksheet and facilitate a class conversation about goals for each category.
3	Hand out the blank schedule worksheet and facilitate a class conversation about time management and realistic time spent on activities related to students' individual goals.
4	Assign the completion of the worksheets for homework and collect in the next class session.

In the words of the Educator: Tips and Inspiration

Talk about values, not just goals. When I first used this activity I would talk about how it's important to have goals, but now have moved toward a higher level view. Taking time to talk about core values – what things are the most important to you helps to make the goals personal and realistic. Usually students mention things like family, religion, or having a job to support oneself and family. Some students are focused on doing good for the world, so their goal for their degree is to go back and work in their home countries to help their communities. Goals are developed out of core values and inform behaviors, so it makes sense to get students to focus on their values first.

Remind students of the rubric. Many times students don't look over the rubric, so they aren't doing all of the things that I ask, which means they aren't getting as much value out of the assignment. I've had students who just try to get the activity done quickly, especially the schedule portion, and they miss the point of the entire assignment. In order to get the most of the activity, students have to spend time thinking about their actual goals and values, and assign time to work on them every week.

What was the inspiration for the reflection activity? The inspiration for this activity came from my son's special education teacher. My son takes a long time to learn the necessary skills to accomplish certain tasks, so we had to be proactive and think about where we want him to be in five years and how to get him there. For example, we knew that he would need to learn how to shave within five years, so we started breaking it down into very small pieces that he could master over time. That way, when it was time to shave, he was ready to do so. That model applies to a lot of our big goals in life. These big, life goals really need to be broken down into small pieces so that we will be able to achieve them. Doing this activity helps students to see all of the pieces of their life that matter to them, and determine a plan to achieve their life goals.