

# Personalizing Learning: Student Goal Setting at White Oaks School

August 2017

In 2017-2018, we are trying out a new approach to conferences in order to support increased student ownership, rigor, and engagement. We want our students to embrace new challenges with confidence, and we are eager to help each child take their next “just right” learning steps.

## Student Goal Setting

- In the fall and throughout the year, teachers will observe students as they learn and play. Along the way, teachers will gather data about where children are excelling, and where they are ready to grow. Teachers prioritize getting to know each child’s learning strengths and needs, and expertly watch for moments when children are ready to leap forward academically, socially, emotionally, and physically. We believe that knowing each child is the heart of personalizing learning.
- At age-appropriate levels and with guidance from teachers, students will identify learning goals, identify how they will work towards these goals, and reflect on their progress. Each child will focus on a unique set of goals, personal to individual learning profiles, developmental readiness, and interests. Along the way, teachers will provide instruction, support, guidance, encouragement, feedback, and learning resources. Learning resources will include recommendations from the classroom homework menu.

## Progress Updates

- Teachers share feedback about student progress in a variety of ways with learners and their parents. Feedback occurs in 1:1 coaching conversations, during small group lessons, as well as in written feedback as children become proficient readers and writers. At Back to School Night, your child’s teacher will explain how you will be informed about your child’s progress over the course of the school year. We consider you essential partners in this journey!
- One of the ways that we provide progress updates is through conversations during conferences. **Conferences will take place the week of October 23 - October 27**, an adjustment to the traditional November schedule so that learning goals can be identified early in the school year. **During conference week, all students will attend from 8:35 am - 12:35 pm** so that teachers can meet with parents in the afternoon. Conference week at White Oaks will align with minimum day schedules at Arroyo and Central Middle School to support families who have children at more than one school.
- During the conference, teachers will share observations about what your child is doing well, and where he/she needs to grow. The teacher also will share information about the goal-setting conversations in the classroom, including the specific goal(s) your child set for him/herself and the areas where the teacher sees opportunity for growth. In addition, teachers will ask you for input about your child’s goals. Although weekly instruction touches all areas of the curriculum, this conversation will focus on key aspects that are relevant for your child, drawing from core academic areas as well as work habits, social skills, and the 5Cs (Creativity, Critical Thinking, Citizenship, Communication and Collaboration).
- Report cards will be provided in January and June, allowing time for students to learn new skills and demonstrate mastery towards goals. As goals are met, new goals will be set. Sometimes, this may occur before the January reporting period. When students are ready to take their next steps, we will be ready to help them soar! If your child is meeting goals earlier than expected, the teacher will reach out to you with information about where your child is ready to stretch next.

- Sometimes, a second conference may be scheduled for students, per teacher discretion, in February. Conversations will occur before and after school hours over the month of February. For all students, goal updates will be included in the comments section of the January report card.
- Any parent may request to meet with the teacher at any time to review student progress, ask questions, express concerns, or learn more about their child's growth.

### Why?

In preparation for our preschool-third grade configuration, our staff engaged in a series of evidence-based conversations about what young children need in order to thrive, anchoring our work in the SCSD Strategic Plan. The following key points from research and our experience have been highlighted along this journey:

- Children learn at different paces and in different ways, thriving when they can practice with guidance at a level just beyond their independent "learning zone". We want to have early conversations that target each child's learning profile, needs for support and challenge, and emerging passions.
- Young children grow in "spurts", leaping forward when they are developmentally ready to take the next step. Personalized goals will inform targeted teaching and learning, allowing teachers to coach each child towards mastery. We'll begin with goal setting, and then give children learning time to practice with support before we ask them to demonstrate mastery. Moving to two report card periods (instead of three) allows us to build in time for children to stretch towards goals, matching our report card schedule with what we've observed works best for children.
- Supporting students' ownership over their own learning is an essential part of how we prepare students for the future. Our students are little people with big ideas! We want to help them feel a powerful sense of agency over their own learning. Student goal-setting conversations in the classroom will help them own their own learning and experience the journey of working towards a target.
- We're building a school culture that fosters a "Mindset for Learning". We know that a spirit of "I can-do-it-ness" combined with meaningful learning goals will foster habits of hard work, perseverance, flexibility, curiosity, and resilience, laying foundations for success.

### Measuring Success

We closely monitor each child's progress in the classroom, and review school-wide data at key instructional points throughout the year. As a staff, we will be devoting a significant chunk of our meeting time to sharing successful strategies and feedback. In the spring, we'll send you a brief survey to see how this plan worked for you and your child. We'll also ask the kids to reflect on the goal setting process and how it worked for them. We also hope you'll share your experiences along the way. We value your insights and partnership, and we welcome your questions and ideas as we work together to support your child's happiness and success.

Sincerely,

Principal Allison Liner and the White Oaks Staff  
[aliner@scsdk8.org](mailto:aliner@scsdk8.org)

Find our strategic plan at: <http://www.scsdk8.org/strategic-plan/>

**SCSD**k8.org