The S.M.A.R.T.er Approach to
Teaching Goals and Objectives

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Introduction

To develop and implement a successful program, recreation programmers should establish goals and objectives that indicate desired results of programs. Program goals and objectives help link an agency's mission with the daily work of agency staff, and guide the use of organization resources. When written effectively, goals and objectives can be used during the evaluation process to determine the level of program success. They also provide accountability to ensure that the agency is meeting the needs and wants of the people it serves.

For these reasons, goal and objective writing skills are frequently taught in recreation program planning, administration or management, and career development or internship preparation classes. Yet, as Rossman and Schlatter (2003) suggest, creating goals and objectives requires writing skill and "an ability to clearly express one's thoughts with written language in a well-developed, clear and logical fashion (p. 81)." Luckily for most college students, they also suggest that this is a skill which can be learned. While the foundation for this learning activity has been provided by Rossman and Schlatter (2003), Edginton, Hudson, Dieser and Edginton (2004), and Jordan, DeGraaf and DeGraaf (2005), the current paper describes a unique approach to teaching this skill to undergraduate majors. While the examples used are from a program planning course, the process used would be similar for other courses.

Description of Learning Activity

Background

Objectives are specific statements that support broadly based statements of intent known as goals. Although frequently used interchangeably, objectives are con-

sidered to be more measurable and time-specific. It is important to note, however, that some, such as Rossman and Schlatter (2003), have recognized that there is little practical difference between the two terms beyond the position each occupies within the goal and objective hierarchy. This author adopts a similar approach and suggests that this learning tool applies to both goals and objectives intended to be measurable and time-specific.

Learning Activity Part I: Introduction of Content

Begin with a lesson on mission statements (a completely separate learning activity) and introduce the concept of goals and objectives as means of operational- izing an organization's mission statement. Next, differentiate between goals and objectives by indicating that goals are broad statements about what will be accom- plished while objectives are short-term planning statements that describe how goals will be accomplished in measurable, time-specific terms. Conclude this step by sug- gesting that goals, if written without supporting objectives, should also be written in measurable, time-specific terms and, as such, they are to be approached similarly.

Learning Activity Part II: S.M.A.R.T Goals and Objectives

Although goals and objectives can be written in several ways, the following method is recommended for beginners. Identify the five major components of S.M.A.R.T. goals and objectives:

1) **S**ubject;

2) **M**easurement device;

3) **A**ction verb;

4) **R**esponsible party; and

5) **T**ime-frame.

Next, introduce the steps to writing goals and objectives:

Step 1: Begin with **who is responsible** for the goal. For example, "Each group member will" or "Group member X."

Step 2: Include an **action verb.** For example, "will develop" or "will distrib- ute."

Step 3: Include a **subject** that conveys what is going to be accomplished. There should only be one subject in each statement. Statements with two sub- jects can be broken down into two statements. For example, "a pro- gram" or "a flyer."

Step 4: Include a **measurement device** that makes it clear who the accomplished goal or objective will be measured. It is important that measurement devices are quantified whenever possible. For example, if you plan "distribute flyers around town," you still need to make the statement measurable. In more measurable terms, the statement would read, "distribute a flyer to each local church" or "hang a flyer in at least two businesses."

Step 5: Include a **time frame** that makes clear the completion date. For example, "within three weeks" or "two weeks prior to the event."

Indicate that a well-written goal or objective containing all of the above information might still not provide all of the details as to how it will be accomplished. For example, the goal "The Park Interpreter will provide three interpretive programs during Labor Day weekend" does not indicate which interpretive programs will be offered, on which days or at what times they will be offered or whether or not the programs should generate a profit. These details will be determined later by the Park Interpreter. What is important in this goal is that the Park Interpreter knows what to do and by when it must be done.

At this point, it is useful to have the students complete an in-class activity in which they are asked to identify the presence of each of the five SMART components within established goals/objectives (see Appendix A). Students are usually able to complete the exercise within five minutes, at which point you can review the answers with the entire class.

Learning Activity Part III: Types of Program Goals and Objectives

Identify each of the three types of program design goals and objectives:

Program Development: Focus on program specifics. These might include the type of program, the type or number of program participants, or the individual tasks needed to provide the program. The following are examples of goals/objectives that the programs department at a large resort might undertake in the development of a Teen Talent Show:

• Our group will provide a Teen Talent Show on Saturday, August 8th.

• Our group will recruit at least 10 participants for the Teen Talent Show before Friday, March 22nd.

• Our group will recruit a popular guest or local celebrity to serve as the MC for the Teen Talent Show before Friday, March 22nd.

Promotion Objectives: Focus on the promotional efforts of the program. The following are examples of goals/objectives that the Athletics Coordinator of a municipal parks and recreation department might undertake in the provision of a youth basketball league:

- The Athletics Coordinator will create a letter by October 1 to distribute to children at local schools that describes how they can participate in the upcoming youth basketball league.

- The Athletics Coordinator will make copies of the above letter by October 8.

- Before September 15, the Athletics Coordinator will request a flyer from the department's employee who is responsible for making flyers (two weeks before it is needed).

Financial Objectives: Focus on the financial aspects of the program. The following are examples of goals/objectives that an Outdoor Leader for a court mandated youth camp for juvenile offenders might undertake in the development of a new program:

- By March 1st, the Outdoor Leader will identify the names and contact information of at least 20 local businesses to solicit for sponsoring camp scholarships for those youth from families with an annual income of less than $30,000.

- The Outdoor Leader will generate enough money ($8000) before March 1st to be able to provide scholarships to at least 8 of the 16 participants in this summer's program.

- The Outdoor Leader will submit at least three grant proposals, for a minimum of $1000 each, prior to November 1st.

Now have the students return to the in-class activity used earlier and identify each of the statements as one of these program design types. This activity should take only 2-3 minutes. Once completed, review the answers with the class.

Learning Activity Part IV: Performance Objectives

Program development, promotion and financial objectives are known collectively as program design objectives. Program design objectives describe the behaviors expected of the person or persons responsible for planning and implementing the program. Performance objectives, however, are those that focus on the behavior that the participant is expected to demonstrate. Therefore, performance objectives will always begin with "The participant (guest, camper, customer, student, etc…) will…"

Explain this difference between program design goals and performance objectives. Next, identify and describe each of the three basic types of performance objectives:

- **Cognitive** (knowledge related): The campers will demonstrate knowledge of Leave No Trace principles by correctly identifying at least six of the principles. The guest will be able to play a hand of blackjack without assistance.

- **Psychomotor** (physical related): The camper will make 7 out of 10 free throws. The potter will use the wheel to create a vase.

- **Affective** (emotion related): The seniors will demonstrate they enjoyed the dance by applauding at the end of the night when the Program Coordinator asks them to "applaud if you had a good time tonight." The teens will demonstrate they enjoyed the dance by staying until it is finished.

The instructor should be sure to note that the time-frame for performance objectives is often implied to be "during the program" or "by the end of the program." Now have the students complete another in-class activity, similar to the previous one, in which they identify the SMART components for examples of performance objectives and indicate the type of objective for each example.

Learning Activity Part V: Writing S.M.A.R.T. Goals and Objectives

Once the students are familiar with the types of program design goals and performance objectives, as well as the five SMART components that should be included in each of them, have them complete another activity by writing their own program design goals and performance objectives. To ensure successful writing efforts, have students locate each of the SMART components within their goal/objective statements.

Learning Outcomes and Recommendations

After the students complete the suggested in-class activities, the instructor has the option to either collect and grade the activities or to ask the students to locate each of the SMART components within their statements or a classmate's. Often, it works well to have students complete the final step as a homework assignment to culminate the learning experience. In addition, students are asked to submit goals and objectives as part of their service learning projects for the class. This method for teaching students how to write goals and objectives can be used effectively in a variety of classes including management or administration courses, program planning courses or even courses designed for internship preparation. Although the process seems almost elementary, the feedback from students has been extremely positive. In addition, the goals and objectives submitted as part of the author's service learning projects have tremendously improved.

Bibliography

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Appendix A: In-class Activity #1

Program Design Goals

Directions:

1. For each of the statements below, identify the type of goal/objective it is: Program development, promotion, or financial.

2. For each goal/objective, identify the SMART components by underlining each component and writing the appropriate letter above the word or phrase.

    S = subject
    MD = measurement device
    AV = action verb
    R = responsible person
    T = time frame

                    T   R   AV   S

Example: <u>Before the next class, students will identify the components of goals/objectives</u>
        MD
<u>without help from the instructor.</u>

1. The Camp Director will generate $500 in sponsorships from area businesses, by April 1, to subsidize the summer camp program.
2. The Athletics Coordinator will write a news release with all the necessary information (who, what, where, when, why, how much) promoting the Co-Rec Soccer

tournament by August 20th.
3. The Programs Director will develop a comprehensive tour program with a family appropriate tour for each of the four seasons by March 15.
4. Each group member will distribute program fliers to the administrative assistant of one Watauga County elementary school within two weeks of the program.
5. On July 4th, the Trip Leader will provide a canoeing program at no cost to participants.
6. The Senior Center Supervisor will develop a Summer Kick-Off Program for Memorial Day weekend that includes dancing, eating and games.

Appendix B: In-class Activity #2

Performance Objectives

Directions:

1. For each of the statements below, identify the type of performance objective it is: cognitive, psychomotor or affective.

2. For each performance objective, identify the SMART components by underlining each component and writing the appropriate letter above the word or phrase.

    S = subject
    MD = measurement device
    AV = action verb
    R = Responsible person
    T = time-frame (if appropriate)

          R   AV   S   T

Example: Students will identify the components of goals/objectives, during an in-class

      MD

assignment, without help from the instructor.

1. The parents of the Little League baseball players will demonstrate good sportsmanship by calling out only encouraging words to the players.

2. The bird watchers will demonstrate the ability to identify birds by correctly naming at least three different birds and giving an identifying characteristic (coloring, call, flight pattern, etc…) during the nature hike.

3. The children will demonstrate the ability to balance on the snow board and make three turns before reaching the end of the slope.

4. The rope course participants will express perceptions of increased teamwork within their group during processing following completion of the course by using words such as "cooperation," "working together," "helping each other," "supporting each other," etc…

5. The participant will hit the tennis ball, with a forehand stroke, into the backcourt on 5 out of 10 attempts from the baseline.