



GOALS and OBJECTIVES

in Educational Planning and Evaluation

Of the many aspects of school system planning and evaluation, perhaps the most critical and elusive is that of goals and objectives. Until the aims of a school system are stated and evaluated, there is no way of telling how well the system is performing its mission—or even knowing what its mission is.

Much of the confusion about goals and objectives results from the endless variations in style, content, and level of generality of such statements. Differentiating types of goals according to the functions of a system can help reduce this confusion.

There are essentially three kinds of functions in a school system: management, which controls all functions of the system including itself; instruction, for which the system exists; and support, which services the management and instruction functions. All organizational elements of a school system can be classified as serving primarily one of these three functions.

We use the term *program goal* to mean “desired outcome of a program,” regardless of its function. The types of outcomes produced by programs are quite different, however. *Management* outcomes relate to control of the organization. *Educational* outcomes are student learnings. *Support* outcomes are services that support management, instruction, or the system generally. To designate these different types of outcomes, we use

the terms *management goals*, *educational goals*, and *support goals*.

Educational goals also require different levels of generality at various levels of planning. We suggest the terms *system goal*, *curriculum goal*, *course goal*, and *instructional goal*.

We shall define each of these terms in more detail, but first we should explain how we use the word “objectives.” Because “management by objectives” implies that program change will result from the setting of objectives and the allocation of resources to achieve them, we reserve use of the term *program change objective* for statements of intent to change program elements in specified ways to improve their effectiveness and efficiency. Such statements should consist of explicit plans for effecting improvement, including costs, timelines, and goals (outcomes) the change is intended to influence.

Types of Goals

Educational program goals. As mentioned earlier, an educational program goal is a statement of *what is to be learned by students* as a result of an educational program. Four levels of educational goal statement are required for school system planning: system, curriculum, course, and daily instruction. There is no difference in the essential character of an educational goal at these different levels—only a difference in specificity.

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Curriculum developers will avoid confusion if they use “goals” to describe outcomes, regardless of planning level, and “objectives” to state intended changes.

Use of the term "goal" to describe educational outcomes at all planning levels avoids the confusion that for years has attended efforts to teach and learn distinctions among terms like purposes, aims, goals, and objectives—distinctions that were not directly related to organizational planning requirements. We will explain later how to achieve a consistent relationship among educational goals at each level.

Support program goals. A support program goal is an outcome of a program existing to support the entire school system or one or more of its components. Such functions as planning, evaluating, curriculum development, data processing, and public relations are examples of support functions, and programs to carry them out are found in many school systems and even schools.

Two classes of support program goals can be identified: service goals, which specify a service to be performed for another unit or units of the system to enable them to reach their goals; and system support goals, which specify an outcome the accomplishments of which will support the operation of an entire district, a sub-district, or a school. Support programs such as instructional materials clearly exist to provide goods and services required by educational managers to meet their goals. Such programs should be governed by *service goals* which state the service to be provided, the recipient of the service, and the type, quality, and (or) frequency of service to be provided.

Examples of service goals for an instructional materials program are:

- To provide school principals efficient procurement and timely delivery of audiovisual equipment ordered
- To provide school principals timely repair and return of instructional equipment upon request.

Note that these goals, though they exist only to make it possible for educational programs to attain their goals, lend themselves to independent evaluation. In most instances, evaluation of a service goal is appropriately the function of the unit(s) being serviced.

Support services such as legislative and public relations offices support an entire system. Their goals are ends in

themselves (outcomes) and differ in this regard from service goals. This class of goals, called *system support goals*, is illustrated below:

- To increase the amount and share of state support received by the district
- To secure public understanding of and support for educational programs of the system
- To secure understanding on the part of teachers and the administrative staff regarding the policies and actions of the Board of Education.

Explicit statements of support goals are seldom found in school systems, but like well-formulated educational goals, they can exert a direct and powerful influence on the formulation of objectives and programs.

Also like educational goals, support goals represent desired conditions which may not be fully realized. But they provide guidelines which should contribute to the overall effectiveness of the enterprise. They provide points of reference for assessing the quality of the school system.

Management program goals. Managers, the "line officers" of a school system—principals, administrative directors, assistant superintendents for administration or operations, and superintendents—can and should set goals for their own performance. Carrying out the necessary functions of management well and efficiently is the overarching management goal and should be the basis for management's evaluation. These functions include:

1. Establishing and periodically reviewing goals for all programs being managed.
2. Assessing attainment of goals in all programs being managed.
3. Determining improvement priorities within and among all programs being managed (based on assessment of goal attainment) and setting management objectives.
4. Developing plans (and alternatives) for priorities selected for attention.
5. Selecting, refining, and implementing programs for priorities selected for attention.
6. Operating and monitoring all programs.

Management changes will normally

be aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of these functions.

The relationships among goals and objectives just described are summarized in Figure 1. This figure shows how goal-based planning can work at all levels of the organization. It shows that goals, appropriately defined as outcomes of the three major system functions, can clarify what all programs are expected to produce, thus making evaluation and improvement possible throughout the organization.

Objectives

Management controls support and educational programs through subordinate officers. If a manager wishes to make changes in an instructional program or support program, he or she must do so through *management objectives* communicated to (and often developed cooperatively with) school principals or support service heads, who must then set *program change objectives* designed to carry out their intent. The *program change objective*, as stated earlier, should be an explicit plan, stating procedures, tasks, timelines, costs, and outcomes (goals) to be influenced by the change. The budget of the superintendent's office normally carries no funds for program change. The budgets of the schools and a set of support services usually will. However, managers can (and should) initiate the direction and convey the urgency of desired change through the setting of management objectives. These will reflect the priorities of the superintendent and board of education, and of managers at lower levels.

Management objectives can express intent to change or improve programs within each of the three major functions of management, support, and instruction. Examples are:

- To strengthen central planning and evaluation (management function).
- To provide school principals and teachers accurate measures of individual achievement in the basic skills subjects, and reports showing growth of class and grade level groups from fall to fall (support function).
- To review and improve the science program in grades four-to-six (instruction function).

Philosophic differences can arise within school systems regarding the

role of management at each level (district, sub-district, school) in initiating and dictating the character of desired improvements. Obviously, if a superintendent and board assume aggressive roles in setting management objectives, it leaves little time and resource leeway for initiative at lower levels.

Building managers (principals) must translate management objectives from all higher levels into program changes within their schools. The effect on principals of this "pyramiding" of priorities is an inadequately explored aspect of administrative theory and practice.

Levels of Educational Goals

As indicated earlier, there are four levels of organization at which it is useful to state educational goals: *system, curriculum, course, and daily instruction.*

System level educational goals. The board of education is responsible for approving statements of outcomes at the district level. Such goal statements should:

1. Be sufficiently general to encompass all desired learning outcomes within relatively few statements
2. Be expressed in terms of learnings serving the dual needs of the individual and society
3. Provide clear direction to curriculum planners in establishing programs and defining curricular goals.

Curriculum level educational goals. A second level goal is required to elaborate the meaning of each system goal. Such goals, which we arbitrarily call *curriculum level goals*, should:

1. Be sufficiently comprehensive to provide for the full implementation of district goals
2. Be developed within the existing structure of subject fields (mathematics, science, physical education)
3. Be sufficiently precise to provide a basic reference for formulating the goals of courses and other units of educational experience.

Curriculum level goals may be formulated by specialists at the district, area, or even school level, but probably at only one of these.

It should be noted that goal elaboration from System to Curriculum Levels carries with it no requirement for designing educational experiences.

The final two levels may be referred to as the implementing levels, for it is here that curriculum goals are translated into more specific goals which suggest how instruction should be organized and what resources will be required.

Course level educational goals. The third level of goal specification must provide the basis for organizing educational experiences within schools. At this point, curriculum level goals will undergo both an elaboration of detail and a differentiation in terms of student characteristics (age, ability, and interest). Typically, these will be the learning goals of courses (high school and departmentalized elementary schools) and of areas of instruction (nondepartmentalized or non-graded elementary schools).

Course level educational goals should:

1. Be at a level of generality that permits all outcomes of a course to be described in relatively few (about 15-25) statements
2. Be sufficiently specific that criteria for indicating their attainment can be identified
3. Represent knowledge, skills, or values to be acquired, not resources and methods used to achieve them.

In many cases, courses are bound within the covers of a textbook and goals are taken for granted. Or school systems develop curriculum guides or instructional units containing goals and learning experiences. In neither case are goals consistently derived from higher level goals. Thus it may fairly be said that district level statements of purpose and philosophy have not, as a rule, exerted a direct and powerful influence on instructional planning or the selection of learning materials at the course and daily instruction levels. If district and curriculum goals are to serve this guiding and directing function, there must be a direct line from the district to the classroom levels of planning.

Instructional level educational goals. The final step, translating course goals into instructional goals, must belong to the teacher, who should plan not only what building blocks of learning will lead the student to achieve each course goal, but who must, each day in the classroom, achieve as many concomitant goals as possible. This final act of curriculum

design cannot be preempted at a higher level because there is no way the needs of students and strengths of the teacher in a given classroom can be fully anticipated.

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship among various levels of goals in mathematics. It also shows how these levels of goal definition relate to "behavioral objectives" and "performance objectives."

Goal-based Planning

Goal-based planning (like PPBS and Management by Objectives before it), is a logical concept that suffers from oversimplification. For practical application of these concepts in the real world, the terms used must be adequately defined and differentiated.

The distinctions presented here are intended to bring order and logic to the terminology of goal-based planning. They recognize that goals need to be differentiated according to the functions of a school system (management, support, instruction); that goals (program outcomes) need to be differentiated from objectives (statements of intent to change program elements in specified ways to more effectively or efficiently achieve program outcomes); and that educational goals need to have the same essential character but different levels of generality to suit the requirements of planning at the system, curriculum, course, and daily instructional levels.

Some commonly used terms such as "behavioral objectives," "performance objectives," and "goal indicators" are not a part of this system of terminology. The first two (as shown in Figure 1) are better suited to specifying conditions under which learning is demonstrated than they are to stating learning outcomes. "Goal indicators" is a loose term that should be dropped.

There are many problems facing anyone wishing to make goal-based planning work in school systems. Struggling with inconsistent and confused terminology does not have to be one of them. ■

Figure 1.
Goal Based Planning and Evaluation in a School System

	Type of Goal	Stated by:	Evaluated (Assessed) by:	Method of Evaluation (Assessment)	Action
S y s t e m	Management Goals (Stated as management functions)	Superintendent	Board of Education	Interview, instruments	Superintendent prepares management objectives indicating priorities for improvement of management functions.
	Support goals (Stated as services to designated recipient groups)	Support Service Heads	Recipients of services stated in support goals (results reviewed by superintendent)	Rating forms, other instruments	Superintendent prepares management objectives indicating priorities for improving support services. Support service heads prepare program change objectives showing proposed changes, rationales, methods, costs.
	Educational goals (Stated as learning outcomes at system, curriculum levels)	Curriculum personnel (advised by community, approved by Board of Education)	District measurement program (results reviewed by superintendent support staff)	Survey level achievement tests	Superintendent or line staff issue management objectives indicating priorities for improved attainment of educational goals. Principals and support services heads prepare program change objectives showing proposed methods of improving instructional programs in response to district priorities.
S c h o o l	Management goals (Stated as management functions)	Principal	Line administrator to whom responsible	Visitations, instruments, interviews	Record plans for improvement on formal principal evaluation form. Follow-up discussions by principal and administrator.
	Support goals (Stated as services to designated recipient groups)	School professional staff (large schools); principal (small schools)	Designated recipients of services; principal	Rating forms, other instruments; staff discussions	Principals and support staff prepare program change objectives showing proposed improvements in services, rationales, procedures, costs.
	Educational goals (Stated as learning outcomes at the course level)	Teacher planning groups (grade level, subject)	District measurement program; teacher evaluative procedures	Survey level achievement tests; unit tests (commercial and teacher-made)	Principals and teachers prepare program change objectives showing proposed methods of improving instruction in response to school as well as district priorities.
C l a s s r o o m	Management goals (Stated as instructional and pupil management function:)	Form used for teacher evaluation	Principal-teacher	Observation, discussion, formal teacher evaluation procedure	Record plans for improvement as part of formal teacher evaluation. Follow-up discussions by teacher and principal.
	Support goals (Not formally stated at classroom level)	Not stated	Not formally evaluated		
	Educational goals (Stated as instructional outcomes of daily planning)	Teacher	Teacher	Daily observation, testing	Daily planning, diagnosis, prescription.

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