# HOW TO CREATE SMART GOALS USING A
TREE DIAGRAM

SMART goals are just one of the many valuable concepts Learning Forward Academy members use in their learning experience. Use this tool to learn how to create SMART goals for your school or district.

WHAT IS A TREE DIAGRAM, AND WHY USE IT?

A tree diagram is a graphic organizer that can help educators make their goals SMART — strategic and specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and time-bound. We use graphic organizers every day — e.g. calendars, planners, PDAs, agendas. They help us organize our thinking, create and monitor plans, connect isolated pieces of knowledge, and make meaning.

They're especially powerful when used by teams because they help distribute everyone's individual knowledge, making thinking visible by creating a powerful picture of what we are all thinking together. Teams that use the tree diagram to create SMART goals often discover their collaboration becomes more focused and concrete.
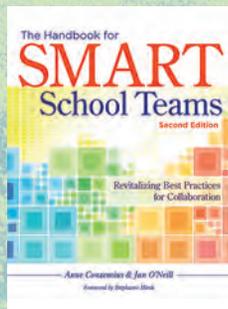
A much larger discussion on SMART goals and the use of the tree diagram can be found in the introduction and Chapter 9 of *The Handbook for SMART School Teams, Second Edition: Revitalizing Best Practices for Collaboration* (Solution Tree, 2014).

TREE DIAGRAM

| | Results goal | Indicators | Measures | Targets |
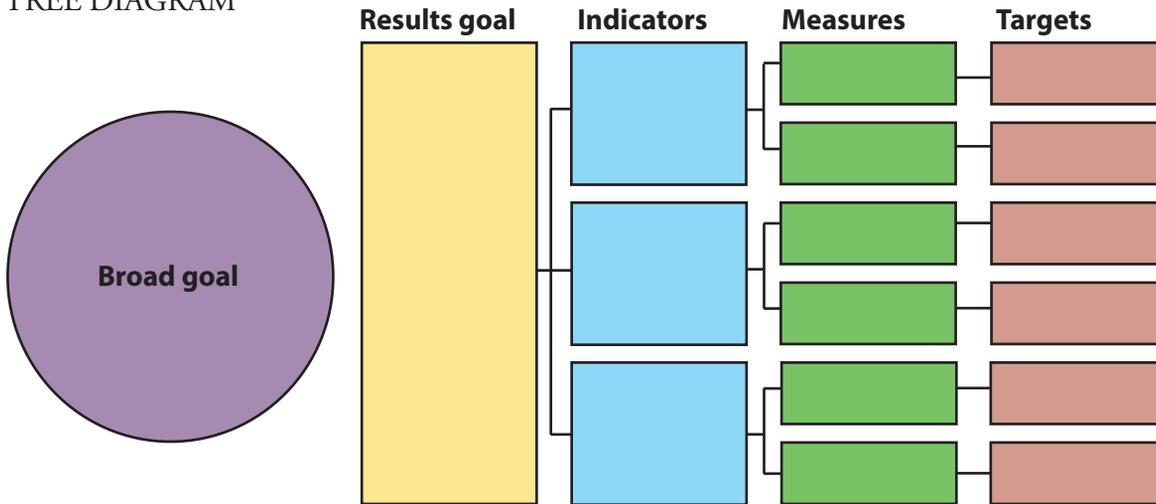
HOW DO YOU USE IT TO CREATE SMART GOALS?

Close the achievement gap in our community.

1 BROAD GOAL

Let's walk through the tree diagram's components using a broad educational goal as depicted in the circle above: *Close the achievement gap in our community.*

2 RESULTS GOAL

In the box labeled "results goal," we would put a results-based, more specific goal focused on closing the distance between today and our long-term goal of closing the achievement gap. To do this, review the data to see where the largest discrepancies are (e.g. African-American students) and then set a level that is both attainable and challenging enough to motivate the staff to work hard on it (e.g. if only 50% are graduating now, try for 85%). Establish a time frame. For example, if the long-term goal is a 10-year time horizon, set specific goals that are five years out.

Broad (long-term) goal

Close the achievement gap in our community.

Intermediate (more specific, interim) goal

85% of African-American students will be graduating on time five years from now.

Source: Used with permission of SMART Learning Systems, LLC (smartlearningsystems.com, Fitchburg, Wisconsin).

3 INDICATORS

Indicators are the evidence we look for to see if the specific results goal is being achieved. In reviewing data and talking with educational experts, we discover that kindergarten readiness, reading at grade level by 4th grade, and mastering Algebra 1 by 8th grade are important to achieving success. (Using systems thinking, this change theory asserts that while elementary age African-American students won't graduate until years later, the work that needs to happen to align around these indicators will strategically focus the system toward helping all students graduate on time.)

Results goal

85% of African-American students will be graduating on time five years from now.

Indicators

Kindergarten readiness

Reading at grade level by 4th grade

Mastering Albebra 1 by 8th grade

Indicator

Kindergarten readiness

Measure

Kindergarten assessment — social, emotional, physical, and cognitive readiness for kindergarten

4 MEASURES

Measures are the tools used to gauge progress on each of the indicators. We'll use multiple measures for each indicator, but in this example, we'll show just one kindergarten readiness measure.

Indicator

Kindergarten readiness

Measure

Kindergarten assessment

Target

55% of incoming African-American kindergartners will show learning-related skills (letter knowledge, reading sensitivity, self-esteem, self-regulation, social competence, motivation to learn)

5 TARGETS

Establishing improvement targets for each measure allows educators to track improvements not only by overall averages but also by subpopulations. Targets can be defined on a year-by-year basis as more incremental steps toward the longer-term goal. In this example, we looked at the data and discovered that, over the past years, only 50% of incoming African-American kindergartners have demonstrated learning readiness on the kindergarten assessment, so we set a target of 55% by next year.

The actions we take to make this target a reality belong in our action plan. (For example, one action might be to pass a pre-K policy so that all children have an opportunity to learn critical skills; another might be to implement a parent education program so that from birth children have high-quality language experiences.)

USE THE BLANK TREE DIAGRAM TO CREATE YOUR OWN SMART GOALS.