

Future Thinking & When/Where Plans

Middle School

High school



Intervention Overview

Shane Lopez (2013) found “when students see a direct connection between the future they want and their attitudes and behaviors today, their commitment and effort soar(n.p.).” Thinking about the future is a large part of creating hope and energy in our students. However, future thinking becomes wishful thinking when it is not connected to goals and action. As educators, we need to find out the future our students are envisioning and help them chase their personal goals. For example, we can personally relate our instruction to their future goals to help them see the value of literacy and mathematics. One way to help students reach their goals is by using a when/where plan. Once a student has set a goal, a when/where plan gives them a clear idea of the time and place they will work on it (Lopez, 2013). For a student who wants to write their own book, their when/where plan could include them writing 500 words after their after school snack in their bedroom. As the student moves forward, the when/where plan can be adjusted depending on what helps them be the most successful.

Intervention Guide

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| Grade Level: | 6th-12th |
| Materials: | Paper, pencil, additional materials as needed. |
| Duration: | Varies |
| Implementation: | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Have students reflect on what they envision for their future and what needs to be accomplished to achieve that future (college attendance, work experience, development of certain skills, etc.).2. Have them choose a goal they can work towards now to help them reach some of those steps.3. Help them create a when/where plan to achieve their goal.4. Follow up with students on the success of their plans and goals. |

Does it work?

Peter Gollwitzer and Veronika Brandstatter (1997) assessed the impact of where/when plans, or what they called implementation intentions, on the ability of university students to complete projects over Christmas break. Participants were asked to set two goals, one easy and one hard, that they wanted to accomplish over the break, such as writing a paper, exercising, etc. While most students in the group were able to accomplish their easier goals without a when/where plan, only 25% were able to accomplish their harder goals without a when/where plan. This study also assessed a group of students that were all given the same project to complete over Christmas vacation, but participants were randomly assigned to either create a where/when plan or complete the assignment without the plan. Of the group that created a where/when plan for the project, 75% completed the assignment on time. However, only 33% of participants in the group that did not create a where/when plan completed the assignment (Gollwitzer & Brandstatter, 1997).

References:

- Gollwitzer, P.M. & Brandstatter, V. (1997). Implementation intentions and effective goal pursuit. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 73(1), 186-199.
- Lopez, S. J. (2013). Making hope happen in the classroom. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 95(2), 19-22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/003172171309500205>



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