



# PERSONAL GOALS and GROWTH:

## How do I build upon the individuality of my scholar?

**INTRO.** It is fun and useful to explore scholars' interests and connect them to real-world opportunities. Scholars can simultaneously learn how to set goals and engage in related activities. Some things about them will change from year to year and you can be a transitional support.

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**“ I feel privileged to be a part of PSP. It not only teaches you ways to be successful, but it also encourages you to not give up and keep persevering until you achieve your goals. ” - Scholar**

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## I. INTERESTS: WHAT SKILLS AND INTERESTS DO THEY WANT TO DEVELOP?

**CONSIDER:** Let your mind wonder back to childhood. Think about playing and daydreaming.

**What especially fascinated you? What did you love to do?**

**What talents or abilities might those early interests point to?**

Your scholar may have interests or skills that aren't on a "career list". As discussed in the 'College Access' guide, it is good for them to find colleges that align with careers of interest. However, this guide is also about going outside of that, if and when needed, to allow them to explore who they are and what they like doing with the intent that this can be infused in their future educational experiences in and out of school. (Middle school is especially a great time to hone in on their personal interests!)

## A. What are their interests?

**EXPLORE INTERESTS.** Maybe your scholar is artistic or athletic. Maybe they are really interested in marine biology or a topic that isn't really covered in secondary school.

- Investigate their likes and dislikes. What things do they do when they aren't at school, or wish they could be doing but maybe don't have access to currently? Which subjects are interesting, or what are they reading online on their own time? What are their hobbies?
- If you have a scholar who isn't sure what their interests are, here are some TOOLS<sup>1</sup> that can be adapted to get them thinking and brainstorming<sup>2</sup>. Even if they know them, it can be cool to do a self-assessment<sup>3</sup> (Check out **Appendix B!**). Their interests may change (year to year or day to day!!) so doing it each year is also a plus. You can reflect alongside them as well – you might learn something about yourself! It also models self-reflection!
- “Clarity comes from engagement!” Encourage scholars to find out more by engaging in these interests. Schedule fun, interest-aligned activities. Let them explore ideas freely.

## B. What areas do they want to grow in?

**First, connect interests to opportunities.** I like<sup>4</sup> X, so maybe that job would look like A, B, C ...

- As you build your relationship begin to connect the educational piece. If they are an artist, maybe they would be interested in owning a business; so business and marketing skills could be important for example. If they are interested in travel and foreign cultures, maybe journalism and reading and writing are good skills for them to think about building.

**TIPS:** You might have a stellar athlete. But, you might also have a scholar who loves athletics and may not end up doing collegiate sports. Sometimes they need support in connecting that love to something tangible. For example: Loving sports = Radio host, Physical Therapy, Sports Management, Kids Athletic Programs, Sporting Event Planner, Coach, PE teacher, Trainer, and more. Liking fashion but hating drawing could = Buyer, Product Development, Ecommerce Management etc. **Help them think outside the box!!!**

## **Second, time to get involved!**

- What leadership roles or activities might align with these interests?
- Who could they meet that might help them better understand if this is something they want to do long-term?
- What community organizations or events could they go to to meet people with similar interests?

***Third***, instill skill development in your time together! This will happen organically too, but you can strategically do some things with your scholar to help them grow in areas of interest:

- We all know that there is a need for problem solvers in today's world. One of the ways to help your scholar grow, have fun, and become a problem solver in the process, is through infusing creativity into mentoring. How?<sup>5</sup> Look at some of these resources<sup>6</sup> for doing so. Activity Guide<sup>7</sup> for Mentors.
- Utilize cultural and educational field trips. Plan experiences that target areas of interest, and build related skills. For ex: interest is in marine biology and you tour the aquarium.

***Fourth***, be your scholars' cheerleader. They might find that interests and strengths do not currently align. A part of succeeding, even in the things we enjoy, is 1) engaging, 2) learning from our letdowns, and 3) persevering through the tough pieces. Support their engagement and decisions, but also encourage them to think about WHY they engaged in that activity initially and what is behind their desire to walk away from it.

**Q:** How can I help build their networking skills? Check out the supplementary document 'Habits of Success' for support building academic, life, and career skills.

## II. GOAL SETTING: HOW CAN WE SET GOALS TOGETHER?

**CONSIDER.** Sometimes it is hard to modify our expectations and put our goals second to someone else's. It is awesome that you have mentoring goals! Just remember to be self-aware about how those goals differ from the goals of your scholars and that you may have to modify your expectations based on your individual scholars and their needs. Reflect on your goals as they relate to your mentoring relationship.

**What are they right now? If applicable, were they different when you began mentoring?**

**DO! SET GOALS TOGETHER.** This is best done when initial trust and confidence have been built. Early on, the goal is a strong mentoring friendship. Focus on that first.

**Scholar's goals.** This includes goals outside of and aligned with college. Consider:

***First***, have them visualize what they want to do and "be". Visualize success. Success in school and college? Success in their daily life? Let them define success for themselves. How does it feel? What does it look and sound like?

**Second, draw a map, a flow chart, or a diagram.** It is helpful to take the above – where they want to end up (long-term goals) – and then identify where the scholar is currently. Backwards planning from the end goal can help create actionable steps to move towards those goals.

**Third, write or type the goals out (See Appendix A!).** Use the diagram to identify short and long-term goals. Remember that small goals can be powerful. Small steps lead to bigger ones! You can help them create measurable, purposeful goals:

- It can be measured. It includes *how much* and *by when*.
- Write them out on index cards or keep them in a shared excel document.
- Use mind mapping to chunk down one goal into manageable steps.
- Help them get through the first task on the list! The first step can be the hardest!

**TIPS:** Use the *Path to College* figure from the ‘College Access’ guide and the ‘PSP Core Program Guide’ as tools to help with mapping. Don’t be afraid to encourage your scholar to have a stretch goal. [Check out](#)<sup>8</sup> Goal Activities and Envisioning your future on pgs. 54-55.

**BE! FOCUSED ON OVERALL DEVELOPMENT.** Let your scholars lead goal development. Help them fill gaps and make connections. Help them see options and alternatives, but do not criticize choices. Let them discover and decide if their goals and plans are feasible. The ‘Habits of Success’ guide will talk about the role you can play to help them reach their goals and reflect and adjust along the way. Enjoy the JOURNEY most of all!

**Q:** How can I help them achieve those goals? ‘Habits of Success’ guide will help you support building academic, life, and career skills to help your mentor reach goals now and in the future!

### **III. TRANSITIONING: HOW CAN I HELP THEM WITH TRANSITIONS?**

**CONSIDER.** It is challenging to transition to and through middle school, high school and college. “Treat a child as though she is the person she is capable of becoming.” – Haim Ginott

**What do you remember about this time in your life?**

**What does the above statement mean to you?**

#### **A. What role does youth development play?**

**1. Adolescent Characteristics** can vary widely, but most will display many of them at some level.

- It is good to revisit (p. 60-63) some of the unique characteristics of young people to help better understand what to expect – to some degree – emotionally, intellectually, physically, socially, etc. For instance, most adolescents prefer active over passive learning experiences, experience restlessness and fatigue due to hormonal changes, and have a strong need for approval.<sup>9</sup>
- Don't let this distract you though from your scholar's individual personality and unique qualities!

**2. Positive Youth Development:** REVIEW<sup>10</sup> a bit about Development Assets. Development assets are factors that increase the chances youth will grow up to be caring and responsible adults, and decrease the likelihood that they will engage in risky behaviors.<sup>11</sup> For example, external assets include constructive, enriching opportunities through creative activities, youth programs, or congregational involvement. Each asset also includes aligned **ACTIONS** such as developing 'Social Competencies' related to planning by talking through planning ahead and asking "what if" questions; or 'Positive Identity' related to a sense of purpose by providing inspiring books or telling them about a time you made a mistake and learned from it. You can get more in depth info here.<sup>12</sup>

**3. Moving Through Stages.** Your 8<sup>th</sup> graders will be 9<sup>th</sup> graders at some point, and eventually a graduating senior! Youth can be apprehensive about increased academic pressure, the unknown, and new social situations.

**First, you can support a smooth transition.**

EDUTOPIA<sup>13</sup> has specific resources to help MS and HS students with transitions. It includes expert recommendations, examples of what successful transitions look like, and tips for social and academic support. To help you might:

STRATEGY	EXAMPLE
Give them opportunities to express feelings about school.	Acknowledge the change that is coming and ask open-ended questions to see if anything is worrying them.
Do not minimize fears or concerns but do help them overcome those fears.	Make sure they know where the bus stop is or how to open a lock. Help them time how long it takes to get from class to class on campus.
Be aware of school services offered.	Have an idea of where to direct your scholar for particular help or concerns at school. Seek out help for your scholar if problems persist.
Encourage them to forge productive relationships.	Talk to them about authentic networking, learning how to effectively relate to those along the way as they enter college.

**TIPS:** [‘Tips for Mentors’<sup>14</sup>](#) (p. 7) offers specific ways mentors can help middle school scholar. Also, consider directing your scholar to resources they can use like [PBSKids.org](#) that has questions and advice for kids from kids. You can read more facts and tips about transitions at [Sylvan<sup>15</sup>](#).

**Second**, use strategies to keep in touch in summer or other breaks (probation, travel, etc.).

- Have ‘Save the Dates’ for when you will meet-up again
- Send a card or postcard if you are traveling
- Use the “breaks” to connect by creating an activity to revisit when you meet again. For ex: during your travel you have to find three things that remind you of your scholar; scholar writes one thing that they love or learned at summer camp each night to share later.

**4. Youth We Serve.** Sometimes you might not know where a scholar is coming from, what they are going through, or have gone through. At some point, your scholar may share really personal things with you and some of those might be related to their family dynamics. Also, you could have scholars with unique circumstances such as an incarcerated parent or a military parent. Seek our help if you need it! Some starting places to find guidance include CASA, Soldier’s Project, and local nonprofits serving that particular group.

**PRACTICE.** Think about everything you have learned so far about mentor roles, our youth, and so forth. Choose one of the development assets you can put into practice.

- **What are two things you can do to accomplish that?**
- **What are two things you should avoid doing?**

For example, a mentor can provide support by being sure to meet regularly with the scholar, by doing “fun” activities with them, and by being encouraging and positive. Criticizing or lecturing will be counterproductive.

**TIP:** You are a key player in building scholar confidence and empowering them to make decisions that will help them achieve their goals. See and highlight the good!

## **B. How can I help them grow?**

**CONSIDER.** Think back to a time when you were really stressed or were experiencing a crisis or difficult time in your life.

**How did you cope with that situation? Were there people who helped you?**

**If yes, what was helpful? What activities or surroundings helped you?**

**Q:** How can I set them up for success? 'Habits of Success' guide gives you some key insight into the 'what' and 'how'.

**CHALLENGES.** Mentoring can be an incredible experience and impact both the scholar and the mentor. Challenges may arise, whether they are the scholar's personal challenges or within your mentor/scholar relationship. It is good to think about the root of the problem and seek solutions.

**DO! PROBLEM SOLVE TOGETHER.**

**A.** Steps you might take with your scholar to **solve a problem** include:<sup>16</sup>

- Identify and clarify the problem (if there is more than one, focus on one at a time)
- Outline a few possible solutions
- Choose the best solutions
- Identify steps to implement it
- Implement it or support them in implementing it if it's outside of your relationship
- Help make adjustments if needed, and review outcomes

**B.** If it's a personal challenge, help them ask **self-reflective questions** in relation to the situation. You both can do the same if it's a conflict between you two.

- How did I act? Why did I say or do that?
- What was said or done and how did that make me feel?
- Could I have done something differently?
- What are my strengths? What do I need to work on?

**C.** If healthy boundaries are being challenged, here is a general **3-step approach** you can consider from page 8 of 'Ongoing Training for Mentoring':<sup>17</sup>

- 1. Your relationship is a key strategy to intervention.** How can you respond in a way that protects the well-being of your relationship?
- 2. Both your response and what your response might imply are important.** What are the short-term and long-term consequences of the way you choose to handle the situation?
- 3. Communicate from a place of personal honesty.** How can you effectively communicate with your scholar the importance of the boundary in question in a way that honors your needs without blaming them?

**BE! A SUPPORTIVE LISTENER** if your scholar is dealing with a difficult situation and shares that with you. If your scholar brings up delicate topics such as peer pressure, alcohol and drugs, self-image here are some **tips**<sup>18</sup> (p. 30-35) so you can be prepared. Seek our support. There is a difference between issues of concern and a crisis requiring intervention. If you aren't sure, always ask us!

**TIP:** Everything may not fall into place immediately. You will likely need time for relationship-building and some perseverance. But, seeing your mentorship through is very important. Almost half of mentors surveyed said a particular challenge could have been improved or overcome by spending more time with the young person. Your time with them is so very valuable! [Read](#)<sup>19</sup> (p 7) to help you set boundaries.

**HIGHLIGHTS and 'AHA' MOMENTS. How can you apply two of the things you learned?**

1. Explore interests and connect scholars to opportunities to learn more about those interests.
2. Set goals and break them down into manageable chunks.
3. Youth development is important to growth and life transitions.
4. So much of what a mentor does and doesn't do reflects back on connecting and communicating. How you communicate is permeated throughout your journey with your scholar and whether it is a successful mentor/scholar relationship.

## APPENDIX A: Goal Setting Examples

GOALS	
LONG-TERM	SHORT-TERM
What is your long-term vision?	What short-term goals will help you achieve your long-term vision?
Ex: get accepted to Brown University	Ex: Receive a B in Math by October
Goal 1	Goal 1
Goal 2	Goal 2
Goal 3	Goal 3

\*Try to help them choose three goals they want to focus on.

Goal Activities	Date Achieved By
Activity 1	
Activity 2	
Activity 3	

## APPENDIX B: Self-Assessment Questions<sup>20</sup>

### 1. CHILDHOOD

What’s an activity you could spend hours doing when you were younger?

What are your favorite subjects?

Who are your heroes?

What activities do you engage in that make you feel alive (i.e. happy, excited, etc.)?

## **2. SCHOOL**

What are some of things you like about school and are related to your strengths?

What are some things you like at school and are not necessarily strengths?

## **3. INTERESTS and PASSIONS**

What kinds of books, magazines, or websites do you gravitate toward?

What social or political issues are you passionate about?

What types of conversations do you eavesdrop on because the topic interests you?

What would your friends and relatives say are your greatest strengths (if you're not sure, ask them)?

What are some things you wish you could do more often?

If you won the lottery, what would you do (after your initial celebration)?

If you could trade places with anyone in the world for a day, who would it be and why?

## **4. NATURAL INCLINATIONS**

What you are doing when you feel the most alive and like yourself?

What is so interesting to you that you can become engrossed in it for hours on end?

When you have held a job or done an activity that was not a "fit", how did you realize this did not fit you?

What type of job would you avoid at all costs? Why?

What issues are you most passionate about?

## **5. BIG WINS and BEST MEMORIES**

Think about a time you were really excited about life and what you were doing and how you felt. What made this moment so exciting?

Do you have any “defining moments” in your life? A turning point that shaped who you are, or a decision that you made that shaped who you are today? If yes, how did it affect you? Did it tell you anything about possible leadership paths for you?

## **6. STRENGTHS and GROWTH AREAS**

What are things I would like to be talented at?

What gaps in knowledge do I have?

What do you need to do projects of interest?

How will I strengthen these areas?

## **7. THINK BOLDLY**

What would your ideal job description be? As you answer this, don't worry about whether the job exists – you can create it.

What kinds of things are you curious about or want to learn more about?

What are big ideas or dreams that you've never shared with anyone?

What jobs would you pursue if you had three lifetimes to pursue them? Why?

What leadership path would you pursue if you knew you could not fail? What draws you to this path?

How could you uniquely contribute to your community, country, or the world?

# END NOTES.

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- <sup>2</sup> Idealist.org. "27 questions to ask yourself to figure out your passion". 2016. <<http://idealistcareers.org/27-questions-to-ask-yourself-to-figure-out-your-passion/>>.
- <sup>3</sup> Myers-briggs personality test, 2016. <<http://www.myersbriggs.org/>>.
- <sup>4</sup> Michigan.gov, "The Dream Career". (2016). <[http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mentormichigan/Middle\\_Activity\\_-\\_Your\\_Dream\\_Career\\_354679\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mentormichigan/Middle_Activity_-_Your_Dream_Career_354679_7.pdf)>.
- <sup>5</sup> Education Northwest. Video, "Infusing Creativity Into Your Mentoring Program", 2010. <<https://vimeo.com/7188520>>.
- <sup>6</sup> Education Northwest, "Resources for Building Creativity into Mentoring Programs". 2016. <[http://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/resources/webinar10\\_handout1.pdf](http://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/resources/webinar10_handout1.pdf)>.
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- <sup>8</sup> "Ongoing Training for Mentors", (2006). 54-55.
- <sup>9, 11</sup> Mentoring Resource Center, "Making the Grade". (2005).
- <sup>10, 12</sup> Search Institute, 40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents. 2016. <http://www.search-institute.org/content/40-developmental-assets-adolescents-ages-12-18>
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- <sup>14</sup> Mentoring Resource Center. Fact Sheet: "Making the Transition to Middle School: How Mentoring Can Help". (2008). <<http://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/making-the-transition-to-middle-school.pdf>>.
- <sup>15</sup> Sylvan Learning. "Middle and High School Transition: Parent Resource Center". 2016. <<http://www.sylvanlearning.com/docs/default-source/resources/middle-and-high-school-transitions.pdf?sfvrsn=0>>.
- <sup>16</sup> Community Toolbox, 2016.
- <sup>17, 18, 19</sup> "Ongoing Training for Mentors", (2006).
- <sup>20</sup> Teach For America, Career and Leadership Center at TFA. James, Rachel. Self-Reflection, 2013.