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editors: gene v glass gustavo e. fischman melissa cast-brede

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Stronge, James H. & Grant, Leslie W. (2009) *Student Achievement Goal Setting: Using Data to Improve Teaching and Learning*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

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Reviewed by Melissa Castañeda
University of Texas at Brownsville

Eye on Education has developed a new book series focused on teaching and learning. James H. Stronge and Leslie W. Grant co-authored the first book in the series, *Student Achievement Goal Setting: Using Data to Improve Teaching and Learning*. Their work addresses a realm of educators including teachers, educational specialists, teacher leaders, administrators, and staff development specialists. Rather than an attempt to impose their personal theory on their readers, the authors provide research to support the notion of academic goal setting and consistent data progress monitoring to promote student growth. While the book is primarily focused on documenting student achievement, suggestions are also provided for other stakeholders such as program developers and specialists that, through their services, provide support for students. Within the preface of the book, the authors provide an introduction and underline their intended goal:

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to offer their audience “with a solid plank in the bridge connecting research and good practice” (p. xii). Thereafter, Stronge and Grant follow with a discussion of the organization of the book, and briefly describe how their intended audience can utilize their recommended practices.

The framework of the book is comprised of three succinct parts. The publication is user-friendly with individual chapter introductions, subsections, and bulleted highlights. Within the text are boxed panels that delineate key ideas including definitions and research findings. Each chapter contains figures ranging from templates to examples of documentation for the student achievement goal-setting process that help the visual learner have a better understanding of the recommendations provided. Stronge and Grant bring a closure to each chapter with a summary and a reference list that would benefit any practitioner or scholar searching for supplemental resources on the concept of student achievement.

They dedicate four chapters to Part I: “How Student Achievement Data Can Be Used to Improve Student Learning”. This first section furnishes a conceptual framework of student achievement goal setting. In the context of chapter one, the authors address these essential questions: (1) What is it?; (2) How does it work?; (3) Why use it?; and (4) What does the research say about it? Stronge and Grant provide a well-written foundation for the subsequent chapter that provides a more in-depth description of the components of student achievement goal setting.

The second chapter provides a breakdown of each step with data and documentation from two teachers. Teacher A serves as an example of how to properly implement the goal-setting process, while Teacher B serves as a non-example. Through this demonstration, the reader gets a better understanding of each component. One of the best features of this chapter is the “SMART” mnemonic device utilized to recall the criteria in step two: (S)pecific; (M)easurable; (A)ppropriate; (R)ealistic; and (T)imebound. This chapter also includes various templates to support readers as they develop their goal-setting forms and progress through the five steps.

The foci of chapter three is to address the following: Guidelines for selecting assessment; methods of assessment; interpretation of assessment data, origination of assessments; and organizing and displaying data for interpretation. In this context, Stronge and Grant provide descriptions that differentiate norm-referenced, criterion-referenced, and authentic assessments. Additional figures provided in this chapter provide examples of assessment measures in a variety of subjects for elementary, middle level, and high school teachers. They also use tables and graphs to display gathering and documenting of student data. I commend the authors for their repeated elicitation to the fact that their method is not the *only* way, but merely an example of how to partake in student achievement goal setting. In the next chapter, they acknowledge that not all teachers are equipped with the skills to use data to guide their instruction. Therefore, administrators should provide the support and training through professional development opportunities to help meet these needs. Personally, I feel that sharing this book with other colleagues—perhaps within a professional learning community—is a good starting point for teachers and instructional leaders seeking to develop a better understanding of how to implement goal setting in their classrooms, schools, and districts. Part II, “Practice with Student Achievement Goals: Samples to Consider” is a compilation of samples for a variety of educators in a range of educational positions from core subject teachers to physical therapists. The templates are filled with the information required to complete the seven components of the five-step process. My favorite part of the entire book is the last part, the annotated bibliography. If you are looking for additional resources, this section is exactly where you need to go. It provides keywords and a detailed summary of all the literature referenced within the text.

Stronge and Grant assert, “Given the extraordinary complexity of teaching and learning, if we are indeed to change the lives of our students in positive and lasting ways, we must find what works best with our students” (p. 73). I must say, the authors have successfully managed to develop a useful resource for educators interested in making that change through data-driven instruction. Overall, the text was both engaging and informative. I highly recommend this text to any educator seeking to

improve student achievement in their own educational setting.

About the Reviewer

Melissa Castañeda is an elementary bilingual teacher. She earned her B.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies and her M.Ed. in Educational Administration. Melissa is currently pursuing an Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instruction with a specialization in Educational Leadership at the University of Texas at Brownsville.

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Editors

Gene V Glass

glass@edrev.info

Gustavo Fischman

fischman@edrev.info

Melissa Cast-Brede

cast-brede@edrev.info
