From the Editor’s Desk

Welcome to our first Project GPS newsletter! We will use this monthly newsletter to keep you informed about our research and other resources or opportunities to help you promote thriving in young people. This first issue of our newsletter includes an in-depth focus on a specific GPS skill, answers to frequently asked questions about setting goals, a spotlight on a program that uses Project GPS, and several quick links to point you to blogs, articles, and other pieces of interest.

At Tufts, the Project GPS team is busy moving our research forward. We are continuing data collection, and we have a diverse set of youth-serving organizations using Project GPS this fall. In addition, many programs completed Project GPS last spring and over the summer, and we have begun to organize and analyze the information we collected. We look forward to sharing the results of our research with you!

With great excitement,

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GPS Skill: Goals That Help Others

The second column of our Goal Selection rubric emphasizes that strong goals help the individual youth and also help others. Such goals have a “dual purpose,” that is, their purpose is both to improve the individual in some way and to improve the community in some way. Our research has shown that youth with dual-purpose goals have higher levels of positive development and lower levels of risky behavior. Work by Bill Damon, a researcher at Stanford, has also emphasized the benefits of having a positive purpose in life. Youth can find lots of creative ways to impact others and connect to their communities as they pursue their goals.

Helping others can be a specific element of a larger goal, or it can be a central part of the goal itself. Some youth may select goals that will already directly improve the community in some way, such as starting a recycling program or running a food drive. However, most youth will select goals mainly about personal accomplishment. When a youth is selecting a goal, a mentor can ask, “How can you connect with others while pursuing this goal?” The youth will have many options for helping others and impacting their community as they pursue a personal goal. Here are just some examples:

With a goal to…
Get a high SAT score
Get an A in English class
Earn a sports scholarship
Exercise 5 times a week

They could help others by…
Tutoring someone or forming an SAT study group
Practice writing: submit an op-ed or find a pen pal
Be a team captain or coach younger athletes
Start a walking club with friends

Circle Urban has their Project GPS instructions and materials in these bins, ready to go.
**FAQ: What type of goal should a youth set?**

Setting a realistic, meaningful, and demanding goal is the first step to goal management. Activity 1 and Activity 2 in the Project GPS mentor manual will address this question about how to guide youth through the process of goal selection. Remember that we have two activities to correspond with each "column" on the GPS rubrics. These first two activities correspond to "Choosing Your Destination," which is the first column on the Goal Selection rubric.

We recommend setting goals with youth that can be completed within one month to one year. It might make sense to frame these tangible goals within a bigger picture such as getting to college or setting out on a certain career path. However, it is also important for youth to be working on a goal that is relevant and meaningful to them right now.

The ideal is to set a goal that could be achieved "this semester" or "this term," but that time frame might not be applicable to everyone or to every goal. We use that time frame as an example because it emphasizes that the goal should feel immediately important and related to what the youth is doing each day and each week right now.

Another option is for youth to start with a shorter-term goal in order to allow for focus on developing GPS skills before taking on longer-term goals. For example, youth new to the goal management process may start with one-month goals. This condensed process may help them stay focused and motivated and also may provide more immediate opportunities for experiencing success in goal achievement, which could motivate future goal management behaviors. After this one-month "warm up" period, a youth may be ready to try a timeframe of two or three months.

Keep in mind that the Project GPS rubric assessment does not measure whether or not the youth has achieved the goal. Rather, it measures the skills the youth uses while working towards that goal. Youth do not need to reach their goal necessarily to promote their positive development. However, they do need to strengthen their competence in using GPS skills as they work towards their goals.

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**Organization Spotlight**

**Circle Urban Ministries** is a faith-based organization in the Austin neighborhood of Chicago. Among other important services, Circle Urban provides a community-based mentoring program to students from fourth through twelfth grade. We spoke to Dan Hogan, the Program Coordinator for Mentoring and College Readiness, about how Circle Urban implemented Project GPS in this mentoring program.

Why did you choose Project GPS?

Choosing Project GPS was fairly easy. A few years ago, we read a publication about the five C’s (confidence, competence, character, connection, and caring) of Positive Youth Development and decided that these would be the model for our mentoring program’s youth outcomes. We want our mentors to develop a trustful and caring relationship with their matches and, at the same time, have there be a purpose to the time they spend together through goal-setting activities. So participating in Project GPS was a perfect fit for strengthening our program’s approach while measuring our desired outcomes.

What strategies did you use to incorporate Project GPS into your program?

Our matches have a variety of activities that they can do, and we made the Project GPS activities some of the many choices available. One of the most important things we did was to create a Project GPS activity resource shelf (see picture on page one). On the shelf are bins featuring the instructions and materials for each of the Project GPS activities. The fact that these bins have been easily accessible has been critical to our mentors’ use of Project GPS activities.

How have you seen Project GPS being used?

One particular match always starts off their time together by doing a GPS activity before anything else, which creates a structure for the activities that follow. Matches are still using the Project GPS activity bin, even now that our participation in the study is over, which speaks to how useful the strategies are.

Do you have any advice to other programs that are interested in using Project GPS?

Have someone on staff who is well versed in how Project GPS works and can help a match come up with a suitable activity. It is important to have many activities in your back pocket to be able coach mentors. Also, making the activity materials easily available by creating an activity bin or a project shelf makes it more likely that they will be used.