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## Students encouraged to meet goals in fitness, finance, service and more

By [Tiffany Erickson](#)

Deseret Morning News

Utah schoolchildren can now get extra perks for setting goals and preparing for the future.

Starting this year opening a savings account, recycling and meeting reading and fitness goals can earn students tickets to sporting events, chances to meet with professional athletes and discounts at a number of stores.

The Deseret Morning News' Newspapers in Education department kicked off the I Am the Future program this year, aimed at getting students to make goals that are proactive about their futures.

Program leaders say they want students to become aware of their potential through achievement and contributions to the community. And the goal-setting program teaches children about the world around them and the part that they can play in it.

"If kids are aware about how much control they have over their own destiny they can become motivated and excited internally and then that opens doors for them as they succeed in school and succeed in life," said Salt Lake City School District Superintendent McKell Withers. "It's a great way for them to focus on where they are at any age."

How it works is students set goals in the areas of fitness and nutrition, finances, service, reading and innovation.

Goals include things like tracking your earnings for a month, planting a tree, keeping a journal of ideas and setting exercise goals for a month.

"It's hard for kids to set a goal that is very far away, but they can set small-scale goals in the program," said Alvina Barnhill, fourth-grade teacher at Cook Elementary, whose class is involved in the program. "They have learned a lot about planing for the future and realizing what you do today affects your future — it helps them get that into their heads."

After students set and achieve a number of goals, they can send in the form signed by a parent or a teacher to NIE to receive an I Am the Future flash button that can clip on a backpack or



Meadowbrook Elementary School students plant a tree near the school.

*Jeffrey D. Allred, Deseret Morning News*

belt.

With that flash button they are eligible for discounts, merchandise and passes in the community. They will also receive recognition in Connect 1-2-3, a newspaper produced by the Deseret Morning News for students that promotes literacy and innovation.



Real Salt Lake's Mehdi Ballouchy entertains Meadowbrook students.

*Jeffrey D. Allred, Deseret Morning News*

Students can get Jazz, Bees and Real tickets and free entrance to local entertainment sites like Dinosaur Park. A growing list of the businesses involved is available on the Web site.

Those students who earn a flash button by July 24 will have an opportunity to march with the Real soccer players in the Days of '47 parade and get a free T-shirt.

Plus, classes where 50 percent of the students receive flash buttons will become an I Am the Future class and receive extra rewards, including a classroom set of books as a bonus.

I Am the Future activities are also held throughout the school year. At a health fair earlier this month, children could receive prizes, gym bags, equipment and learn about staying active and fit. Other planned events include a student inventions fair and a read-a-thon.

"Our whole goal is to bring school, communities and families together and award kids for positive achievement," said Brenda Smith, NIE director.

"We want them to feel that they can take areas they are weak in, and by setting goals and meeting goals, they can do anything they set their mind to — it's finishing something they start and being proud of what they do," she said.

Students can work on the goals as a class or on their own. To get rules and registration information visit [www.connect123.org](http://www.connect123.org) or call NIE at 237-2172.

"I am the Future" I Am the Future is also sponsored by KSL-TV, Chase, ATK and Kennecott Land.

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