



# GOAL DIRECTED BEHAVIOR

## Stepping Stones

“Thirty years ago my older brother, who was ten years old at the time, was trying to get a report written on birds that he’d had three months to write, which was due the next day. We were out at our family cabin in Bolinas, and he was at the kitchen table close to tears, surrounded by binder paper and pencils and unopened books about birds, immobilized by the hugeness of the task ahead. Then my father sat down beside him, put his arm around my brother’s shoulder, and said, “Bird by bird, buddy. Just take it bird by bird.”

- Anne Lamott, Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life



### TEACHER NOTES

Harvard Business School professor Teresa Amabile’s research on the “Progress Principle” says that of all the things that drive people, and make them feel good about their work, the most powerful is simply making progress. She writes about how important it is to make even incremental progress each day on meaningful work, and to be able to extract some learning and some value from the setbacks we encounter.

Her research drew on business managers from around the world, reporting on what they felt were the most effective motivators. 95% got it wrong. Recognition, incentives, clear goals, and personal support all are important, but are not the key factor. Making progress toward something that is personally meaningful made the biggest impact on being able to stick with projects and sustain positive feelings about work.

The most effective managers she studied supported their employees in four ways:

- Catalyst: supporting clear goals, with autonomy in how to reach them
- Removing obstacles: taking action that helps keep the work environment optimal for getting the job done
- Nourishment: coming into the work area to encourage and expressed appreciation for the workers and their work
- Camaraderie: finding ways to help employees bond interpersonally as a team

The parallel to classrooms or groups of young people outside of school is a strong one. How can teachers and facilitators play those same four crucial roles, as our students learn to grapple with and achieve their goals?

We can guide young children in learning about the importance of setting and achieving meaningful goals with these supports:

- Catalyst: make clear group goals, with some autonomy in how to reach them
- Removing obstacles: creating a classroom environment that is optimal for getting the job done
- Nourishments: encouraging students individually and as a group, and by expressing appreciation for the students and how they are working toward the shared goal
- Camaraderie: providing experiences every day that help students bond interpersonally and work together as a team to achieve goals



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**DURATION:** 30 minute

[Teacher/Facilitator and Student/Participant Goals](#)

## MATERIALS

- Sesame Street [“Don’t Give Up”](#) video
- Or Classic Sesame Street [“Keep Trying”](#) video
- Chart paper or board for capturing student responses



**MAIN POINTS** Introduce Goal Setting Strategies (10 minutes)

- Introduce the importance of setting goals, of having a clear idea of what you want to learn or achieve, and a specific plan for getting there within a particular amount of time.



## GUIDING LANGUAGE

*Today we’re going to learn about setting a goal and sticking to it until we achieve it. “I think about what I want to accomplish or learn, and how I can make that happen.” That’s pretty much goal-setting in a nutshell! You’ve probably heard other people talk about goals they have in life, and you might have some goals of your own. Sometimes they are goals that are especially important for us personally, like learning to read or ride a bike. Sometimes they are goals that also help others, like getting myself ready in the morning without being reminded, or learning the names of all the kids in our group.*

*What really matters about a reaching a goal is that we need to keep trying – and making progress, even if it’s in small steps. It really helps people of all ages to see that they’re making progress, and getting at least a little bit closer to their goals, step by step.*

*We’re going to watch a very short video about sticking with our goals. Sesame Street [“Don’t Give Up”](#) video or Classic Sesame Street [“Keep Trying”](#) video*

*Why is it important to keep trying? (PAUSE for discussion)*

*What makes it hard to keep trying, sometimes? (PAUSE for discussion)*

*Think about some things or people that help you keep trying, and help you feel like you really can do what you set your mind to do. (PAUSE)*

*Turn to a neighbor and tell each other what you thought about that helps you keep trying and stick with things, even when they are challenging. (PAUSE for discussion) (Debrief with student volunteers. Chart responses.)*



**MAIN POINT:** Set a Group Goal with “Stepping Stone” Action Steps (10 minutes)

- Collaborate to create a meaningful group goal
- Design three action steps to help reach it
- Decide on a timeline and accountability structure





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## GUIDING LANGUAGE

*What are some goals that we might have as a group?*

Brainstorm a list with your students.

(Examples: cleaning up quickly and well after work or play time; being lined up and ready to go at the end of recess; everybody remembering to do our welcoming routine; everyone learning a particular game or piece of academic content...)

*Next, we'll design three action steps – 'stepping stones to success'. If we were trying to cross a river without getting wet, we'd be appreciative if there were big stones we could use as our personal bridge. In the same way, a plan of action steps can help us reach our goal, one step at a time. We want our stepping stones to be practical and helpful. (Create a visual list or graphic to publicly share the three action steps you decide on. Example: Goal: Cleaning up quickly and well after work or play time (1) As soon as we hear/see the signal, we start following the direction/plan. (2) If others around us need help, we help them without talking. (3) Always do a 'look back' to see if there's one more thing that needs attention or needs to be done.)*

*Finally, we need to make a check-in plan. (Establish three progress check-in times to help build the habit.) When we check in about our goals, we'll pay attention to: did we make our goal? If yes, what helped? If not yet, what could we do differently? I'm eager to notice how we get better and better at reaching our goal!*

## MAIN POINT: Reflection (3 minutes)

- Recap main learning points for students
- Provide encouragement and enthusiasm for their venture into goal setting

## GUIDING LANGUAGE

*Today we've talked about how powerful it is to set important goals and to keep trying until we are successful. There's a saying, that to get someplace in life, it's really helpful to know where you want to go!*

*Think again about our class goal that we're reaching for, and the plan we made today for working toward it. Close your eyes, or let them rest on a spot on the floor, and picture, for a few quiet moments, our group having achieved that goal. (PAUSE) See us proud, and smiling, and surrounded by people we respect, who are all so pleased and impressed by our persistence and steady work toward our goal. (PAUSE)*

## CLOSURE (2 minutes)

*Turn to someone near you, and offer them some encouraging words for working towards our new goal. When it's your turn to talk, be sincere. When it's your turn to listen, be appreciative.*



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## Teacher / Student Goals

*Goal-Directed Behavior: A child's initiation of, and persistence in completing, tasks of varying difficulty.*

**My students are able to:**

- Identify an academic, social skill, or personal goal
- Plan action steps for reaching their goal
- Evaluate personal progress
- Create new action steps or adjust timeline as appropriate

**I am aware of my individual student's abilities to:**

- Set and work toward effective learning goals
- Verbally share personal and/or team progress toward meeting goals

**The environment I create supports my students' growth related to:**

- Understand how their efforts contribute to success with learning goals
- Building a collaborative community that supports setting and achieving goals

**Student / Participant Goals: Goal Directed Behavior**

**Students will:**

- Identify an authentic goal that is meaningful to them
- Create an action plan (stepping stones)
- Engage in peer coaching and mutual support strategies
- Reflect on personal level of successive approximations of goal achievement
- (notice and name ways they are getting closer and closer to their goal)

**DESSA GOAL DIRECTED BEHAVIOR INDICATORS**

(Highlighted indicators are directly addressed in this lesson.)

I can:

Keep trying when unsuccessful
Take steps to achieve goals
Try to do her/his best
Seek out additional knowledge or information
Take an active role in learning
Do things independently
Ask to take on additional work or responsibilities
Show creativity in completing a task
Seek out challenging tasks
Work hard on projects

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Due Date \_\_\_\_\_

## "SMART Goals"

*It is not enough to take steps which may some day lead to a goal;  
each step must be itself a goal and a step likewise.*

- Goethe

Specific    Measurable    Attainable    Relevant    Time Sensitive

To set a goal, I think about what I want to accomplish or learn, and how I can accomplish it...

My goal is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Supports and Helpers: \_\_\_\_\_

My Action Plan:

### **Stepping Stone #1**

By when:

Buddy Check \_\_\_\_\_



My Action Plan:

### **Stepping Stone #2**

By when:

Buddy Check \_\_\_\_\_



My Action Plan:

### **Stepping Stone #3**

By when:

Buddy Check \_\_\_\_\_

