

Setting Challenging Goals & Breaking Them into Steps

Lesson Objective:

Students will learn how to set meaningful and challenging goals and break them into manageable steps using the S.T.A.R. strategy.

Materials Needed:



- Copy of Chapter ##: Chapter title.
- Paper and pencils
- S.T.A.R. Strategy Poster
- Goal Setting Worksheet
- Home Connection Letter

Introduction to the Topic (10 minutes)

Greeting Outline:

- Welcome the children and have them sit in a circle (if applicable)
- Briefly discuss the concept of setting goals

Greeting and Circle Time Teacher Script

Warm Welcome and Opening Discussion:

- "Today, we'll talk about setting goals—especially those that feel challenging—and how to break them into smaller steps. Goals give us direction, but the key to achieving them is knowing how to take things step by step. We'll also use the S.T.A.R. strategy to help us stay on track."

Discussion Starter

- "Can you think of a time when you set a goal for yourself? How did it feel to accomplish it?"
- "Why do you think it's important to break big goals into smaller steps?"

Read the Chapter (15 minutes)

Story Time Outline:



- Read Chapter 27 aloud.
- Ask questions during key parts of the story.

Story Time Teacher Script:

Prepare the Children for the Story:

- “Now let’s read a chapter from *The Star Squad: Navigating Fifth Grade Adventures* where the squad learns to set challenging goals and the steps to achieve those goals.”

(Read the chapter aloud, pausing at key moments to ask questions and engage the children.)

Read the Chapter with Emphasis on Key Moments.

While reading, pause during key moments.

Ask Questions:

- Why did Mr. Jenkins encourage the class to set personal goals?
- What made Ollie’s goal of public speaking feel challenging for him?
- How did Harriet plan to reach her goal of running a 5K?
- Why did Bennie choose reading as his personal goal?
- What strategy did Sammy use to learn his guitar song?
- What setbacks did Buzz face with his birdhouse project?
- How did Maya’s value of perseverance help her keep practicing her dance routine?
- What did the group learn from breaking their goals into smaller steps?
- How did reflecting on their progress help the friends stay motivated?
- How did the friends support each other during setbacks?

Chapter 27: Setting Challenging Goals and Breaking Them Into Steps

With the end of the school year fast approaching, Mr. Jenkins decided to challenge the class with a final project that would require them to set personal goals. “This project isn’t about getting the highest grade,” he said. “It’s about choosing a goal that’s challenging for you and working out a plan to achieve it, step by step.”

The friends were excited but also a little nervous. Setting a challenging goal meant stepping out of their comfort zones, and they wondered how to choose a goal that was both realistic and ambitious.

Choosing Challenging Goals

The friends met after school to talk about their goals. They each wanted to choose something that mattered to them and would help them grow in different areas.

Ollie wanted to improve his public speaking skills. “I get really nervous speaking in front of the class,” he admitted. “My goal is to give a presentation without feeling like I’m going to forget what to say.”

Harriet decided she wanted to run in a 5K race for charity. “I’m not the best runner,” she said, “but I think I could get better if I practice.”

Bennie set a goal to read five chapter books before the end of the school year. “I’ve always found reading challenging,” he said. “I want to see if I can get better at it and enjoy it more.”

Sammy chose to learn how to play a new song on the guitar. “It’s a difficult song with lots of tricky parts,” he explained. “But I think if I break it down, I can figure it out.”

Buzz set a goal to build a birdhouse for his backyard. “I’ve never done woodworking before,” he said, “so I’ll need to learn some new skills.”

Betty decided to write and illustrate a short story. “It’s something I’ve always wanted to do,” she said, “but I’ve never finished one before.”

Maya chose to learn a dance routine she’d seen online. “It looks hard,” she said, “but I think it’ll be fun to learn.”

Breaking Goals Into Achievable Steps

The friends realized that big goals could feel overwhelming, so they needed to break them down into smaller, manageable steps. They used the S.T.A.R. strategy to help them with this:
Stop: They took a moment to think about the overall goal and what made it challenging.

Think: They considered what smaller steps would help them make progress toward their goal. What could they do each day or week?

Act: They made a plan with specific tasks and deadlines to keep them on track.

Reflect: They would check in regularly to see how they were doing and adjust their plans if needed.

Creating Step-by-Step Plans

The friends worked together to map out their step-by-step plans:

Ollie decided to start by practicing his speech in front of a mirror, then in front of his friends, before presenting in front of the class. Each week, he would practice a little more.

Harriet planned to begin with short runs and gradually increase the distance. She set a goal to run a little farther each week and track her progress.

Bennie broke down his reading goal by choosing shorter books at first and setting daily reading time. As he got more comfortable, he would move on to longer books.

Sammy decided to learn the guitar song one section at a time. He set a goal to master one part each week and then put the whole song together.

Buzz started by drawing up plans for the birdhouse and then gathered materials. He set weekly goals for cutting, assembling, and painting the pieces.

Betty outlined her story and set a goal to write one chapter each week. She also planned to draw one illustration for each chapter as she finished writing it.

Maya broke the dance routine into sections and practiced each part separately. She set a goal to add one new move every few days and then put the whole routine together.

Reflecting on Their Progress

A couple of weeks into their projects, the friends met to share how things were going. “It’s been harder than I thought,” Ollie said, “but I feel like I’m getting a little more confident each time I practice.”

Harriet agreed. “Some days I don’t feel like running, but then I remember my goal, and it helps me get out there. I’m getting closer to running the full 5K.”

The friends realized that progress wasn’t always steady, but breaking their goals into smaller steps made the challenges feel more manageable.

Learning from Setbacks

The group also talked about the times when things didn't go as planned. Buzz shared that he had made a mistake while building the birdhouse and had to redo part of it. "I was frustrated," he said, "but then I thought about what I could learn from the mistake."

Maya admitted that she had missed a few days of dance practice. "It made me feel behind," she said, "but then I remembered that I could just pick up where I left off."

The friends encouraged each other to keep going and reminded themselves that setbacks were a normal part of working toward challenging goals. The important thing was to keep moving forward, one step at a time.

Moving Forward with Determination

As they continued working on their goals, the friends noticed that each small achievement gave them a boost of confidence. They realized that even if they didn't reach their goal right away, the progress they made was still valuable.

"Challenging goals can feel scary at first," Sammy said, "but when we break them down, it's like we're climbing a ladder. Each step brings us closer to the top."

Ollie added, "And it helps to remember that it's okay if we don't get there perfectly. It's about trying our best and learning along the way."

The friends felt more determined than ever to keep working toward their goals, knowing that with patience, persistence, and a step-by-step approach, they could achieve things they once thought were out of reach. And as they looked ahead to the final weeks of the school year, they were ready to keep climbing, one step at a time.

Post-Chapter Teacher Script

- **Teacher:** "This story shows us that setting big goals is doable, with the right steps."

Post-Chapter Questions

These questions encourage children to think deeply about what they listen to and to understand that they can use the S.T.A.R. Strategy in many different situations.

- Why do you think it's important to set goals that feel challenging?
- What happens when we break goals into smaller steps?
- How can setbacks help us grow?
- How do friends and family help us stay on track with our goals?
- What makes it easier to stay motivated when working toward a goal?
- How does reflection help us see progress more clearly?
- Why is it okay to adjust a goal along the way?
- How does using the S.T.A.R. strategy make achieving goals easier?
- What's something new you'd like to try that feels like a challenge?
- How can you celebrate small achievements along the way?

Do an Activity (20 minutes)

- Students will practice setting challenging goals and determining the steps to achieve those goals.



Activity: Setting a Challenging Goal and Planning the Steps

Introduce Activity

“Today, we’re going to talk about **challenging goals**—the kind that might take time and effort, but feel amazing to complete.

Think about something you’ve always wanted to achieve—maybe it’s something in school, a hobby, a sport, or a skill you want to grow.

I’m going to write ‘Challenging Goals’ on the board. Let’s brainstorm:

What’s a goal that might feel hard but exciting to work toward?”

Write students’ responses on the board. Examples you can offer if needed:

- Complete a 1,000-piece puzzle
- Learn a song on an instrument
- Run a mile without stopping
- Read five chapter books
- Cook a full meal for your family
- Improve in math or writing

“Now, you’ll choose one goal—something that’s meaningful to you—and you’ll plan out how to work toward it using our *Goal-Setting Worksheet*. Let’s think like problem-solvers and dreamers!”

“Your worksheet has five sections.

- First, write down your goal.
- Then think about why it's important to you—what makes it exciting or meaningful?
- Next, list four small steps you can take to work toward your goal.
- Think ahead about any challenges you might face and how you can stay motivated.
- And finally, decide: *How will you know you've achieved your goal?*

Take your time and be honest. You're building a plan that can help you succeed!"

Instructions

- Teacher Leads Brainstorming: Write "Challenging Goals" at the top of the whiteboard or chart paper.
- Ask Students to Contribute:
"What are some goals that might feel challenging but exciting?"
Encourage students to think of goals related to school, hobbies, sports, or personal development.
- Write Down Their Ideas:
Example goals:

Complete a puzzle with 1,000 pieces
Learn to cook a meal for the family
Finish a personal art project
Improve in a sport or physical activity
Read a book series
- Complete the Goal-Setting Worksheet (20 minutes)
Distribute the Goal-Setting Worksheet (template below).
Students Choose One Goal from the brainstorming session or their own idea.
Students Complete the Worksheet: They identify steps they can take and plan how they'll track their progress.
- Sharing Goals and Steps (10 minutes)
Students share their goal and one or two steps with a small group or partner.
Encourage them to offer supportive feedback to each other.

Closing Discussion (5 minutes):

Sharing



- “Now that you’ve written your goals, I want you to share them with a partner or small group.
Tell them what your goal is, and share one or two of the steps you wrote down.
As you listen to others, try to give positive feedback—maybe something like, ‘That’s a great goal,’ or ‘I like your step—it sounds like a smart idea.’
We all have different goals, but we can cheer each other on.”
- *Encourage students to ask questions or show support, and model positive peer feedback as needed.*

Wrapping It Up

- “Today you did something important—you chose a challenge, thought about how to face it, and created a plan to reach it.
- Goals don’t happen overnight, and that’s okay. What matters is that you know where you want to go and you’re ready to take the first step.
- Every time you try, adjust, or keep going—even when it’s hard—you’re building confidence and strength.”

Wrap Up the Lesson (5 minutes)

Review and Reflection Overview:

- Have students reflect on their experiences and what they learned.

Review and Reflection Teacher Script

Gather in a Circle for Reflection:



- “Let’s come together in a circle to reflect. Circles remind us we’re all in this together.

When it’s your turn, you can finish this sentence:

‘One thing I’m excited to work on is...’

You can share your goal or something you heard from a classmate that inspired you. If you’d prefer to pass, that’s totally okay.”

Closing

- “Big goals take time, effort, and a little courage—but they also bring big rewards.
- Keep your goal in mind this week. Start small, keep trying, and don’t forget to celebrate the progress you make.
- You’re capable of amazing things—and it all starts with a plan, just like you made today.”

Home Connection Letter

Sending Information Home:

- “Before you go, I have a letter for you to take home. It explains that students participated in a goal-setting activity focused on identifying and planning a challenging personal goal. Using a step-by-step worksheet, students reflected on why their goal matters, the steps they’ll take, and how they’ll overcome challenges.
- Hand out the letters as the children prepare to leave.

Parent Letter

Sending Information Home:

- Provide each child with a letter to take home to their parents explaining the lesson.

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

Today, your child participated in a lesson on setting challenging goals and breaking them into smaller steps. They learned how to use the S.T.A.R. strategy to plan and stay motivated when working toward their goals



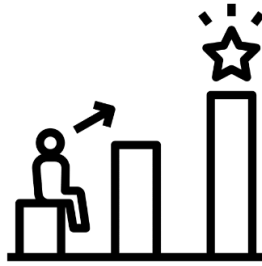
Here are some ways you can continue the conversation at home:

- Ask your child to share their goal and the steps they've planned to achieve it.
- Talk about goals you've worked toward and how you overcame challenges.
- Encourage your child to reflect on their progress regularly and celebrate small achievements.

Thank you for supporting your child's journey in learning to set and achieve meaningful goals!

With Gratitude,

My BIG Goal



My Goal: _____

1. Why is this goal important to me?

2. Steps I'll Take to Achieve My Goal:

- Step 1: _____

- Step 2: _____

- Step 3: _____

- Step 4: _____

3. What challenges might I face?

4. How will I stay motivated?

5. How will I know I've achieved my goal?

S.T.A.R. Strategy



Stop -Take some deep breaths.

Think -What solutions are there?

Act -Pick the best solution.

Reflect -How did it go?



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