

## **Grit Lesson Plan: Setting S.M.A.R.T. Goals**

From "A Bit of Grit" by Amy Lyon

**PURPOSE:** In my experience, students are not often asked to set goals. I would like to be clear: I think there's a balance between asking children to set meaningful goals and learning to work toward them, and setting too many goals, so they become tedious or meaningless. Goal-setting is an important skill that can be foreign to some children; it's not often that one hears of a ten-year-old striving to achieve a goal that is years off. And, let's be realistic, most teachers only have students for ten months out of a year. However, exposing students to the idea of intentionally improving a skill by setting a goal is something educators can do within the time allotted in a school year.

**CLASSWORK:** Have students fill out the first column of the S.M.A.R.T. Goal Worksheet in class. The 'S' in S.M.A.R.T. stands for specific, and suggests that the goal have a narrow focus. For instance, "getting better at math" is very broad compared to "memorizing the 4s, 5s, and 6s times tables." 'M' is for measurable, meaning students should be able to quantify their progress. They might be reading more words per minute, shaving time off ski runs, or learning two more verses of a song on a flute. Attainable is the 'A' part of the chart, and simply means their goal should be reachable within the time frame agreed upon with the teacher. The goal shouldn't be so far off that a student is set up for failure, and it should also be something the student will have the opportunity to work on during the school year. For example, if the student sets a goal of being able to master a certain ski slope without falling and won't be visiting the ski mountain, the goal won't be attainable. 'R' is for relevant, and that reiterates the fact the goal should be set by the student. It should be relevant and meaningful to the student's life. Time Sensitive (or Timely) is the final letter 'T' in the chart and either students, classes, or teachers can choose what time frame that might refer to. Instruct students to continue filling out the final column of the worksheet as their project progresses, noting their strategies for dealing with distractions and frustrations.

**OUTCOME:** When I teach this to my students, they have a month to work on their goals. They must be prepared to give the class an update by the next grit lesson. We then make adjustments and revise goals as needed, and work on them for another month. The time frame can be whatever is appropriate for your class, but at the end of the process, students must share what they are planning to work on, and how that goal is S.M.A.R.T. This worksheet can then be revisited at the end of the school year to see how they progressed.

**NOTE:** The S.M.A.R.T. Goal lesson is incorporated into the second section of my grit curriculum, revolving around the concept of self-control. I emphasize to students the importance of choosing their own goals, rather than working toward the ambitions of others. In order for students to practice and do the work it takes to achieve their goals, they need to be self-motivated and invested. Therefore, the goals they set should be of their own choosing, whether they be academic, athletic, or have to do with the arts or social skills.