

Seinfeld's SMART Steps to Success

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Time Frame 1 month

Essential Question(s)

Why is it important to have a goal that is specific?

Summary

Students learn to write personal and academic goals that are SMART, track their habits, review and revise their goals as needed, and reflect on the process.

Learning Goals

Students will be able to:

- Identify an area of personal and academic growth
- Write a SMART goal
- Reflect on their daily progress

Attachments

- Activity Slides—Seinfeld's SMART Steps to Success.pptx
- Habit Tracker—Seinfeld's SMART Steps to Success - Spanish.docx
- Habit Tracker—Seinfeld's SMART Steps to Success - Spanish.pdf
- Habit Tracker—Seinfeld's SMART Steps to Success.docx
- Habit Tracker—Seinfeld's SMART Steps to Success.pdf
- SMART Goal Organizer—Seinfeld's SMART Steps to Success - Spanish.docx
- SMART Goal Organizer—Seinfeld's SMART Steps to Success - Spanish.pdf
- SMART Goal Organizer—Seinfeld's SMART Steps to Success.docx
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Materials

- Activity Slides (attached)
- SMART Goals handout (attached; one per student)
- Habit Tracker handout (attached; one per student)
- Pens/pencils
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils (three colors per student)

Engage

Teacher's Note: Setting Your Own Goals

To make this activity more meaningful for students, consider completing the steps alongside them to create your own personal goal, create your own vision board, track your progress, and share this progress with students.

Use the attached **Activity Slides** to guide activities and instruction. Begin with **slide 2** and introduce the title of this activity. Then ask, "Who is Jerry Seinfeld?" to pique interest in these so-called "SMART Steps to Success" and to activate prior knowledge about Jerry Seinfeld.

Move to **slide 3** and play the video interview of Jerry Seinfeld about his joke writing process for the students. Do not reveal anything about his goals prior to playing.

Embedded video
https://youtube.com/watch?v=itWxXyCfW5s

After the video, ask students to share two things that stood out to them while they were watching.

Respond to students' questions in order to lead into the following questions:

- What is his goal?
- What was he trying to do?
- How did he become so successful?

Move on to **slide 4** and give a brief overview of who Jerry Seinfeld is and what his accomplishments are.

Then introduce the Essential Question and the Learning Objectives for today's activity on **slides 5-6** to the extent you feel necessary.

Explore

Transition to **slide 7** and share the basic outline for writing SMART goals. Depending on students' background knowledge of writing goals, you may choose to play the video explaining SMART goals on **slide 8** or skip it.

Embedded video
https://youtube.com/watch?v=LQ5Uj1nryBc

Follow this video with a preface to the goal brainstorming activity which comes next. Let students know that in this part we are not writing SMART goals just yet, but gathering many ideas. It is okay if some things on their list are too big and ambitious or too small at this point in the process. Later we will narrow them down.

Move to **slide 9** and give each student 2 minutes to write down as many personal goals in any area of their lives they hope to improve. Emphasize that they do not have to commit to any of these goals. They are just aiming to move ideas out of their heads so that they can later refine their focus. Move to **slide 10** and do the same for academic goals.

Next, present **slide 11** and as a whole group have students brainstorm Round Robin style what it is they hope to get out of their time in this club by answering the question, "This club will be a success if..."

- Go around the group one by one having students answer the question above in their own words. As the facilitator, write down their responses on the board or a piece of chart paper.
- Each student should come up with something different than the goals already listed.
- Continue moving around the room until everyone has had a chance to respond. You may go around the room more than once until you run out of ideas to write down.

Then, with **slide 12** displayed, have students reflect on the club goals list to determine one that stands out to them personally and that aligns well with one of their favorite personal and/or academic goals they wrote down for themselves. Provide students with time to restate this goal in a way that reflects the alignment with their club participation. Assure them this is just a first draft, and we will continue to refine their goal.

Next, display **slide 13** and remind students of the different elements of a SMART goal.

When we you have reviewed the elements of SMART goals, begin to work through the process of writing their goals in the SMART format. Pass out the attached **SMART Goals** handout to each student and go through **slides 14-18**, taking a moment to elaborate on each step and providing a few minutes for students to write down ideas for their own goal at each step.

Teacher's Note

Provide an example of measurable progress to help elaborate on what this looks like. For example, if you have set a goal to improve your sleeping habits, milestones might be successfully (a) turning off screens 1 hour before bedtime for a week in a row; (b) successfully getting to sleep by the desired time for x number of days in a row; (c) holding a regular pattern of sleeping 9 hours at night for x number of weeks, etc. If you want to get better at reading comprehension, this might look like intentionally reading from a period text such as *Romeo and Juliet* each day and discussing your reading with a mentor or more knowledgeable peer.

Display **slide 19** and discuss the concept of milestones. Encourage students to set milestones and to write down the steps in the process.

Display **slide 20** and share the following quote from Brad Isaac, a young comedian who asked Jerry Seinfeld for advice about how to be a better comic:

> He said the way to be a better comic was to create better jokes and the way to create better jokes was to write every day.
>
> He told me to get a big wall calendar that has a whole year on one page and hang it on a prominent wall. The next step was to get a big red magic marker. He said for each day that I do my task of writing, I get to put a big red X over that day.
>
> "After a few days you'll have a chain. Just keep at it and the chain will grow longer every day. You'll like seeing that chain, especially when you get a few weeks under your belt. Your only job is to not break the chain."

Move to **slide 21** and pass out the attached **Habit Tracker** handout to students. Explain that over the next few weeks, they will use this sheet to keep track of their goal progress. They will write down one habit in each of the numbered habit boxes. These habits should very closely tied to, or maybe even exactly stated, from one of the steps or milestones they identified for their goal.

Explain

Display **slide 22** and share the instructional strategy Vision Boards with students. Let them know that they are creating a Vision Board for each of their goals. If they have never created a Vision Board, let them know that a Vision Board is a collage of images, words, and short phrases that illustrate a person's goals and vision of their future. By creating Vision Boards, they think about their future plans and create goals to achieve those plans. The Vision Boards are displayed where they can see their board often so that they can stay focused and be reminded of the goals they have set for themselves.

Extend

Next, remind students of their Habit Tracker handout. Each day they engage in the habit, they should color in the number that corresponds to the calendar date. Remind students not to break the chain!

Move to **slide 23** and share the following quote with students on what Jerry Seinfeld says about habits:

> If I don't do a set in 2 weeks, I feel it. I read an article a few years ago that said when you practice a sport a lot, you literally become a broadband: the nerve pathway in your brain contains a lot more information. As soon as you stop practicing, the pathway begins shrinking back down. Reading that changed my life. I used to wonder, "Why am I doing these sets, getting on a stage? Don't I know how to do this already?" The answer is no. You must keep doing it. The broadband starts to narrow the moment you stop.

Teacher's Note: Timing

This portion of the activity will take longer simply because students are doing the work. After about 2 weeks, use **slide 24** to check-in with students and determine how they are doing on working toward their goals. If they need help reflecting, revising, or rewriting their goals, take this time to go back through the steps for writing SMART Goals and guide them in creating milestones.

Evaluate

Once students have been working toward their goals for 1 month, display **slide 25** and instruct them to create a Video in Padlet or record a short podcast using Adobe Podcast. Students record themselves describing their process or how they are feeling and end by answering the question, "How does working toward your goal help you work toward your postsecondary education?"

Research Rationale

Regardless of the focus of the extracurricular activity, club participation can lead to higher grades (Durlak et al., 2010; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Kronholz, 2012), and additional benefits are possible when these clubs explore specific curricular frameworks. Club participation enables students to acquire and practice skills beyond a purely academic focus, as it also affords them opportunities to develop skills such as self-regulation, collaboration, problem-solving, and critical thinking (Allen et al., 2019). When structured with a strong curricular focus, high school clubs can enable participants to build the critical social skills and "21st-century skills" that better position them for success in college and the workforce (Allen et al., 2019; Durlak et al., 2010; Hurd & Deutsch, 2017).

Supportive relationships between teachers and students can be instrumental in developing a student's sense of belonging (Pendergast et al., 2018; Wallace et al., 2012) and these support systems help enable high-need, high-opportunity youth to establish social capital through emotional support, connection to valuable information resources, and mentorship in this club context (Solberg et al., 2021). Through a carefully designed curriculum that can be implemented within the traditional club structure, students stand to benefit significantly as they develop critical soft skills.

Resources

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