

Social Emotional New Year's Resolutions and Life Goals



Grades 4–12



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PREFACE

For 20 years, I taught New Year's resolutions on the first day of the new calendar year. The lesson always generated hopeful energy and students were excited for 24 hours. Unfortunately, the energy dissipated after a day as almost no one kept their resolutions, myself included. Keeping resolutions is far more difficult than declaring them.

For my 21st year of teaching, I set out to do something different. I have learned new strategies for achieving goals and resolutions as a community through being certified as a life coach. I dropped the pretense that everything could be done through willpower and created a growth mindset environment in which we learned from our failure and supported each other as a community to develop strategies for goal achievement. Every day, I went through the same process that I asked my students to go through, sharing both my successes and failures. That changed everything. Why? I stepped out of the traditional teacher role of telling kids what they needed to do and stepped into a different type of leadership: modeling being human. I also made space for group support by posing questions about how to solve problems to the community rather than possessing all of the solutions. Only then did my students experience success in achieving their goals.

Students needed the support of a community. Daily accountability was necessary to increase success. Planning and executing small steps was crucial. And evaluating your mindset, feelings, and beliefs could free you from unseen obstacles. There was so much more to teach than simply make a resolution.

Social Emotional New Year's Resolutions and Life Goals shares this recipe for success. Through student-centered lessons and experiential games, a transformational experience awaits you and your students. Enjoy the adventure, the self-discovery, and the special connection you feel when you embark on goal achievement as a community.

INTRODUCTION

The new year is a great opportunity to reflect upon the past year and resolve to do something new. The problem is resolutions are easy to make, but are hard to do. *Social Emotional New Year's Resolutions and Life Goals* is a curriculum for transforming the New Year's resolution experience with engaging activities, crucial coaching, and sets to achieve individual goals as a community. The approach is entirely different from a traditional New Year's resolution experience.

Traditional New Year's resolution experience	Social Emotional New Year's curriculum
Hasty resolutions	Reflective resolutions
Based out of shame	Based out of considering what you want
Relies solely on willpower to achieve results	Considers conditions and support to achieve results
Isolated	Communal
Vague milestones	Specific milestones assessed dally
Lacks planning	Utilizes evidence-based strategies
Outcome-based	Process and outcome-based

Social Emotional New Year's Resolutions and Life Goals not only serves as a transformative approach for learning goal achievement in schools, but also lays the foundation for lifelong skills that extend far beyond the classroom. Socially, the curriculum fosters a sense of community by encouraging authentic sharing, facilitating experiential learning, and incorporating community building games. Emotionally, the curriculum delves into the exploration of feelings, thoughts, beliefs and inner experiences, empowering students with a deeper understanding of their emotional well-being. Through this process, students master the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) standards of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and

responsible decision-making. Your leadership in spearheading this initiative is instrumental in positively transforming the lives of students, providing them the invaluable tools for navigating the complexities of both their academic journeys and future endeavors.

All of the lessons are excerpted from the book *50 Social Emotional Learning Lessons Vol. 1* with permission from the author and publisher.

WHAT IS SEL?

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) describes SEL as “The process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.”

They divide SEL into five standards with corresponding learning objectives:

Self-Awareness:

- Identifying emotions
- Self-perception
- Identifying personal, cultural, and linguistic assets
- Body-mind awareness

Self-Management:

- Regulation of emotions, thoughts, and behaviors
- Self-motivation
- Goal setting
- Growth mindset

Social Awareness:

- Empathy
- Perspective-taking
- Respect for others
- Understanding one’s role and contribution within a community

Relationships Skills:

- Communication
- Negotiating conflict constructively
- Teamwork
- Relationship building

Responsible Decision-Making:

- Ethical Responsibility
- The ability to use values to guide actions
- Consideration of self and others
- Analyzing problems and brainstorming solutions

If you are new to SEL, the standards and learning objectives can be overwhelming. How do you address these crucial concepts and skills in addition to everything else you do? No worries! That is why I wrote the book. The curriculum meets these standards organically.

If you are familiar with these standards and learning objectives, name them at the end of every lesson. SEL language allows students to become intentional about implementing SEL into their lives. The discussion of SEL communicates their importance, which will translate into students valuing them as well.



LESSON 1: Starting with Goals

SEL Standards: Self-Management

SEL Objectives: Goal Setting

ACTIVITY 1: Opening Question

Time: 5 mins

Ask: “What does the New Year mean to you?”

ACTIVITY 2: New Year’s Resolutions

Time: 5 mins

Instructions:

1. Ask, “What is a resolution?”
2. Ask, “What is a New Year’s resolution?”
3. Ask, “What New Year’s resolutions have you made in the past?”
4. Ask, “What worked and didn’t work?”
5. Ask, “What have you learned from this experience?”
6. Share your own experiences, both positive and negative.
7. Say, “We are going to do New Year’s resolutions again, but this year, we are going to do it differently. We are going to check in

with each other every day, offer support, study success methods, and I will do it with you!”

8. Say, “Another difference in our approach is that we are going to think about what we want, not simply what we want to do better. Sometimes, we need an incentive to pull us forward to achieve a goal. Focusing on a goal and being clear about what we want can do that.”

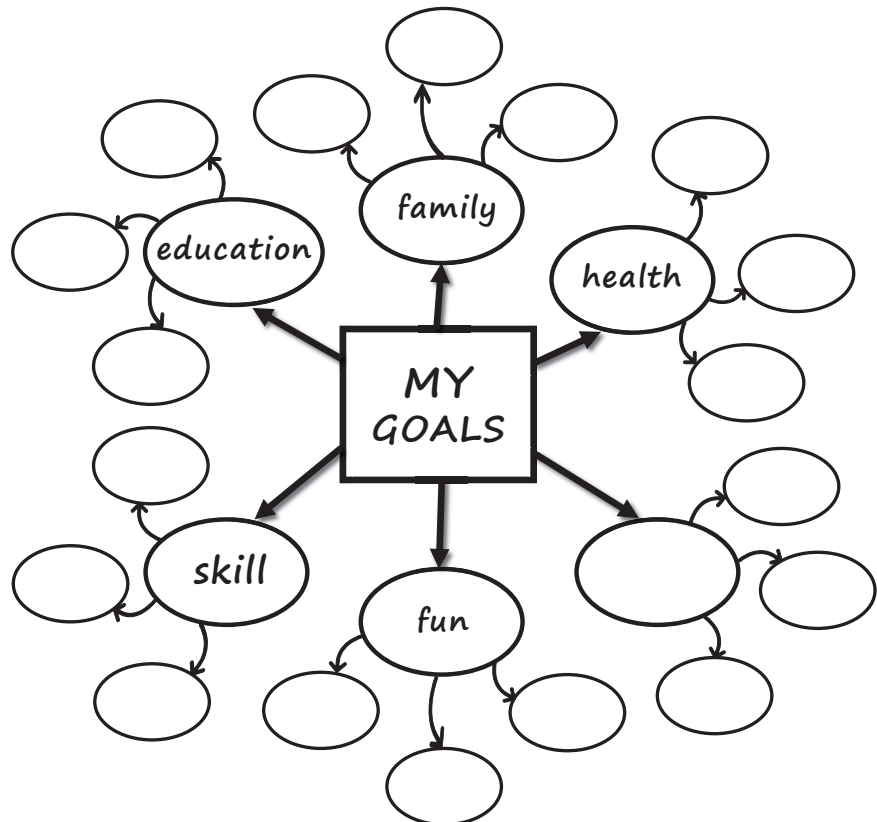
ACTIVITY 3: Goal Planning

Time: 15 mins

Materials: Class set of Mind Map worksheets

A full size version of this worksheet is available in the appendix.

NAME -



Instructions:

1. Say, “We are going to study how to achieve what we want in life.”
2. Ask, “What is something you want? Nothing is too small or too big. It could be world peace, an extra plate of spaghetti, or a better math grade. It could also be a resolution, something you want to do better. If you choose a resolution, just be clear about what you want.”
3. Give a copy of the Mind Map to each student.
4. Say, “We are going to use the Mind Map to brainstorm ideas for what you want. Use the categories to think about different areas of your life. Even if you think of a goal that seems unattainable, write it down.”
5. Say, “Be as specific as possible. If you are struggling to think of goals, it’s okay to think of things you don’t want in your life. This will lead you to what you want.”
6. Give students 10 minutes to fill out the Mind Map.
7. Ask students to choose an easy goal they can start working on in this unit of study.

Reflection:

What does it feel like to think about all the things you want in life?

ACTIVITY 3: SMART Goals

Time:

15 mins

Instructions:

1. Say, “It is now time to transform your goal and resolutions into a SMART goal. A SMART goal is an acronym that stands for specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timed. SMART goals help you be clear about what you want and track how close you are to getting it.”
2. Say, “S stands for SPECIFIC. Being specific gives you a clear target to focus on. To be specific, think of the details of your goal.”