About This Unit

Setting and pursuing goals is an essential part of adolescence, a period when students are actively exploring the world.[1] Having a growth mindset—the belief that you can improve with practice and effort—can help students set goals, develop positive attitudes toward school, and generally respond more effectively to setbacks and difficulties.[2] In addition, individuals' motivation—the energy behind our actions—is closely linked to one's task and activity choice, performance, and engagement in the chosen activities.[3] When students are motivated, they are more likely to put in effort, persevere through challenges, and be successful.[4]

This unit introduces a number of strategies to help students enhance their motivation and effectively achieve goals in developmentally appropriate ways as they progress through middle school.[5, 6, 7] It teaches students how to set and achieve personal and collective goals, learn from challenges, and increase motivation when one is not motivated. Refer to the Second Step® Middle School Review of Research for additional information.

Progression of Skills and Knowledge Across the Grades

Unit 1 begins with an engaging, stand-alone introductory lesson in all three grades. These lessons use fun and interactive activities to help students ease into the school year, connect with their classmates, and engage in discussions about motivation and goal-setting. These activities set the stage for deeper learning throughout the unit.

In Grade 6, students explore how their brains grow and change when they tackle new challenges. They learn how to set specific goals, break them into smaller steps, and monitor their progress. By the end of the unit, students create a personal action plan to help them achieve a goal.

In Grade 7, students build on these skills by focusing on obstacles and motivation. They learn that overcoming challenges is an essential part of learning and explore how internal and external obstacles can have an impact on goal achievement. To help them navigate these obstacles, they develop strategies for overcoming challenges, including creating an If–Then Plan to anticipate and respond to obstacles.

In Grade 8, students continue developing these skills while also deepening their understanding of motivation. They explore what drives their actions, how motivation works, and how they can use strategies to stay motivated when working toward goals. By the end of the unit, students apply what they've learned by developing a personalized motivation plan for an upcoming task.

This progression across Grades 6–8 builds students' confidence in their ability to set, adjust, and achieve their goals—helping them develop the persistence and problem-solving skills they need for success.

See table on page 2.

Progression of Skills and Knowledge Across the Grades, continued

<table>
<tr><th>Grade 6</th><th>Grade 7</th><th>Grade 8</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Creating a welcoming and supportive community</td></tr>
<tr><td>Exploring how music can be a motivator in difficult times. Recognizing emotions and discussing ways to create a supportive environment.</td><td>Reflecting on goals and motivations through a vision board activity. Understanding how internal and external challenges have an impact on community support.</td><td>Engaging in a persistence and improvement challenge. Exploring how motivation and persistence contribute to building a supportive community.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Identifying strategies and resources for supporting themselves and others when facing challenges</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Developing a growth mindset</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Understanding that the brain grows and changes when trying something new. Recognizing the importance of effort and practice.</td><td>Understanding how motivation has an impact on effort and persistence. Identifying factors that influence motivation and learning.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Identifying strategies to try when they struggle with learning something new</td><td>Recognizing how obstacles and setbacks contribute to learning and growth</td><td>Recognizing how motivation and persistence contribute to developing interests, skills, or abilities</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Setting goals and pursuing interests</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Identifying personal goals based on strengths and/or interests</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Creating plans for achieving goals or developing interests</td></tr>
<tr><td>Writing specific goals and breaking them into smaller steps. Monitoring progress and adjusting strategies when needed.</td><td>Learning to anticipate and plan for obstacles using If–Then Plans. Recognizing obstacles and developing strategies to overcome them.</td><td>Developing personalized motivation plans to increase persistence. Evaluating motivation strategies for long-term success.</td></tr>
</table>

Grade 8 Lessons at a Glance

The Unit 1 lessons in Grade 8 are designed to help students develop a growth mindset, strengthen their motivation, and build strategies for overcoming challenges. Throughout the unit, students explore how persistence and reflection can help them improve, as well as the key factors that influence motivation and success.

Students begin by engaging in a self-selected challenge, learning firsthand how effort and reflection drive improvement. As the unit progresses, they explore what motivation is, why it matters, and how expectations, value, and cost influence their motivation levels. They also learn research-based strategies for increasing motivation and then apply them to real-life situations.

The unit ends with Lesson 7, a performance task, where students demonstrate their understanding by selecting an upcoming task and creating a personal motivation plan. This plan allows students to apply the strategies they've learned to boost their motivation and follow through on their goals. A performance task rubric is included as a part of the lesson to help you assess student learning and progress. To learn more about the benefits of performance tasks and how to use them in Second Step® programs, refer to **What Are Performance Tasks?** on SecondStep.org.

By teaching students all components of each weekly lesson, in this order, they will develop the knowledge and skills needed to meet the goals of this unit. The lesson presentations are required to teach all lessons, along with the materials listed below. In addition, each lesson is guided by a lesson plan, and student handouts are available to help students organize their responses to prompts during the lesson.

	Title	Objective	Vocabulary*	Lesson Materials
Lesson 1	**Adjust and Achieve**	By the end of this lesson, students will be able to attempt a self-selected challenge multiple times and reflect on ways to improve between each attempt.		• Setup area for challenges • Bean bags or paper balls, baskets, and drawing paper • Timer
Lesson 2	**Motivation**	By the end of this lesson, students will be able to explain what motivation is and why it's important, as well as analyze the factors that influence why individuals feel motivated to engage in some activities over others.	**Motivation (n.)** the energy that drives a person's actions, pushing them to start and persist in tasks, goals, or activities	

Grade 8 Lessons at a Glance, continued

	Title	Objective	Vocabulary*	Lesson Materials
Lesson 3	**Motivation Factors 1**	By the end of this lesson, students will be able to explain how success expectation and value influence motivation.	**Success expectation (n.)** a person's belief in their ability to succeed at a task, which influences their motivation and effort **Value (n.)** the importance or usefulness a person assigns to a task or goal, based on factors such as enjoyment and personal significance	
Lesson 4	**Motivation Factors 2**	By the end of this lesson, students will be able to explain cost as a factor that affects motivation and describe its three components.	**Cost (n.)** the effort, time, or emotional strain required to complete a task, which can have an impact on a person's motivation	
Lesson 5	**Strategies for Motivation**	By the end of this lesson, students will be able to identify strategies to increase their motivation levels.		• Sticky notes, chart paper, or whiteboard
Lesson 6	**Increasing Your Motivation**	By the end of this lesson, students will be able to choose a strategy to increase motivation and develop a plan to implement it.		• Prep corners of the classroom for task selection activity
Lesson 7	**Performance Task: Your Motivation Plan**	By the end of this lesson, students will be able to select an upcoming task and create a plan to increase their motivation to complete it using specific strategies.		• Student handout, or paper for students to create their own

* In this unit, some vocabulary words appear in multiple lessons. The table above lists them in the lesson in which they're first introduced.

References

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