

# PERSEVERING

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## AGENDA

- Starter
- The Maze
- The Magic Word
- Make a New Plan, Stan
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

### Objectives

Students will recognize that they do not need to abandon a goal when they meet obstacles or difficulties.

Students will define “perseverance” and discuss its importance.

Students will revise stepping-stone goals in order to overcome an obstacle and achieve a goal.

### Materials Needed

- One copy of “The Maze” activity sheet (Part I)
- A roll of masking tape with which to duplicate the maze on your classroom floor (Part I)

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**Starter (3 minutes)**

Give students an example or two of fictional characters who exemplify perseverance. Choose characters from books, movies, or television who would currently be well known by your students. Call on students to tell what they know about the characters before making your point. Elicit responses that indicate the obstacles that the characters overcame.

Explain that in today's class, students will learn that they don't have to give up on something that is important to them just because they have run into an obstacle. They can find ways around it in order to keep striving for their goal.

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**Part I The Maze (20 minutes)**

Purpose: Students recognize that they do not need to abandon a goal when they meet obstacles or difficulties.

**1. Set up the activity.**

Before class today, recreate "The Maze" activity sheet on the floor of your classroom with masking tape. The maze should be large enough for students to walk through. On a sheet of paper, write the word "Start" and draw an arrow in colored marker. Then, tape the paper to the floor at the entrance to the maze. On another sheet of paper, write the word "End," and tape this to the floor at the exit from the maze.

**2. Students work their way through the maze.**

Call on volunteers to find their way through the maze. Allow students to work at it, one at a time. Make comments only to keep order or to move the process along. Encourage as many students as possible to participate, although most will figure out the correct path after a few volunteers have worked through it.

As students work, observe how they react when they meet a dead end in the maze. (Do they quit or do they back up and keep trying?) Also observe how other students react when this happens. (Do they offer encouragement or help?)

**3. Students make observations about the activity.**

Prompt students to make observations about this activity by asking questions and making comments based on your own observations. You might ask:

- Why was this activity hard to do at first?
- Why did it become easier for you later?
- Was it possible for all of the students to successfully reach the end?
- How did you react when you met a dead end? What choices did you have?
- How did the rest of the class react?
- Did having some encouragement motivate you to keep going?

Be sure that students have verbalized that it was possible for everyone to work through the maze and that the students who didn't give up were successful.

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## Part II The Magic Word (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students define “perseverance” and discuss its importance.

### 1. Students define “perseverance.”

Write the verb “persevere” on the board. Prompt students to discuss and formulate a definition of “persevere.” Have volunteers write ideas and definitions on the board.

At the same time, ask a student to look up the word in the dictionary and read the definitions aloud to the class. (Merriam-Webster defines “persevere” as “to persist in a state, enterprise, or undertaking in spite of counterinfluences, opposition, or discouragement.”) Challenge students to consider the dictionary definition in light of their own definition and to make adjustments as they see fit.

Ask students if they think that perseverance would help them achieve their goals. Call on individuals to explain their answers.

### 2. Students reflect on the obstacles they may face as they strive to achieve a goal.

Point out that no one can accurately predict the future, so it's hard to know exactly what might happen when we make an action plan to achieve a long-term goal. Explain that when students meet an obstacle, their first reaction should not be to give up; it should be to persevere—to keep trying.

Invite students to brainstorm factors that could become difficulties or obstacles to achieving a long-term goal. Prompt students by mentioning obstacles such as the following:

- Time: One stepping-stone goal may take more time than you thought, or there may be other steps you need to take that you didn't know about at first.
- Expenses: Something may cost more than you anticipated, or you may need things that you didn't even know about at first.
- Interest: You may lose interest for a while, or you may choose to do something else temporarily.
- Illness: You may get sick, or you may have to postpone everything for a while because of a health problem.
- Distractions: You may have friends who distract you from your goals.
- Other changes: Your family may move, you may change schools, or individuals who are important to your plan may end their involvement for some reason.

Through discussion, elicit from students the idea that they can overcome these obstacles by revising their stepping-stone goals or by making a new action plan. Remind students that if they persevere, they will overcome obstacles and they will succeed.

### **Part III Make a New Plan, Stan** (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students revise stepping-stone goals in order to overcome an obstacle and achieve a goal.

#### **1. Students set stepping-stone goals.**

Divide the class into groups of four or five students. Assign a long-term goal to each group, and have them make a plan for achieving it. Choose goals such as the following:

- Make a varsity sports team in your sophomore year of high school.
- Get the lead part in the school play this spring.
- Sing and play in a rock band someday.
- Go to college.

Give students about five minutes to work out an action plan for achieving their goal.

#### **2. Students revise their plans.**

After students have completed their plans, explain that they have run into an obstacle. Suggest the following obstacles to overcome:

- You make the varsity team, but break your ankle the summer before your sophomore year in high school.
- You win the lead part in the play, but you get laryngitis.
- You are in a band whose members can't play their instruments very well.
- You go to college, but must earn more money for tuition.

Encourage students to make new action plans based on the difficulties they have encountered. Give them another five minutes to work out their new plans.

When students have finished, invite volunteers from each group to share their new action plans with the class. Encourage other students to offer additional suggestions for overcoming the obstacles presented to each group.

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### Conclusion (2 minutes)

Ask students to explain how they can ensure that their goals are realistic. Ask students to define “persevere.” Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- To overcome obstacles on the road to achieving a long-term goal, revise your action plan.
- Successful people don't give up—they persevere.

### Student Assessment

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1. Explain why perseverance is vital for achieving your goals.
2. Describe a situation in your life in which you faced an obstacle and overcame it.
3. Think of an obstacle that could come between you and your long-term goal. Write down ways that you can overcome or avoid this obstacle; then, revise your plan in a way that lets you still achieve your long-term goal.

## LESSON EXTENSIONS

### Using Quotations

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“Success is failure with the dirt brushed off.”

Have students create posters or collages to illustrate this idea.

### Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

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Have students create a class scrapbook of photos and stories about how they met goals and overcame obstacles.

Allow students to sign the book out to share with friends and family members.

### Writing in Your Journal

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Have students make a list of the goals they achieved in the past week and how it felt to make those goals happen.

Have students share their writing with a partner.

### Using Technology

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Have students use the internet to collect information about people from various fields who struggled and eventually achieved their goals.

Have students assume the role of a TV news anchor reporting on their subject’s failures (or have them write a news blurb to that effect). Have students guess who is being discussed and what they accomplished later in life.

## Homework

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Read Langston Hughes's poem "Mother to Son" aloud. In it, a mother tells her son that "life for me ain't been no crystal stair," advising him to keep on trying even when life gets hard. Have students devise interview questions for their parents/guardians about obstacles they've overcome.

Have students conduct the interviews. After completing the interviews, have students write speeches or letters to the class sharing the advice they've been given.

## Additional Resources

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Have students read "The Hard Way" activity sheet.

Have students role-play an interview with Moochie Norris.





# THE HARD WAY

**Melting snow** is dripping onto the basketball court from a hole in the roof. Empty wooden seats outnumber fans in the upper deck. The hip-hop dancing of nerd entertainer Myron Noodleman gets bigger cheers than the two teams on the basketball court. Welcome to a cold January night in Indiana, as the Fort Wayne Fury battle the Rockford (Ill.) Lightning. Welcome to the NBA's minor league, the Continental Basketball Association.

The Fury's Moochie Norris, a CBA star with NBA dreams, is at the free-throw line. With just seconds left in the tie game, the 6-foot-1 point guard has got one shot at winning. But the ball hits inside the rim and bounces out. Close, but not close enough. It's the same with 25-year-old Norris—too good for the minors, not good enough for the big time. “But if I give up on my dream,” he says, “there’s no use in me playing at all.”

The nine-team CBA has 90 players like Norris, all hungry for the phone call that went to players like John Starks, Mario Elie and Chris Childs: “We want you to come play in the NBA.”

Norris, as the CBA's hottest player, is agonizingly close to achieving the NBA goal that his father instilled in him at the age of 6. After climbing out of his rough Washington, D.C., neighborhood, he bounced around to a few colleges, playing well enough to be drafted by the Milwaukee Bucks as the 33rd pick overall in the 1996 NBA Draft. “I was speechless,” Norris says. But just before the season started, they cut him.

Then the CBA called, a league he'd never heard of before. “I saw it as a second chance to prove myself. It's not the

NBA, but it's professional basketball,” he says. The CBA's week-to-week contracts, however, average \$1,700 and travel is sometimes done by bus. The average NBA weekly paycheck is slightly more, \$140,000, with plenty of private luxury jets to go around. “Friends and coaches from my neighborhood were like, ‘You're gonna make it to the NBA. Just work hard. Don't ever stop,’” Norris says.

Norris played for the CBA's Florida Beachdogs, then the Fury, usually in front of a few thousand fans and two or three NBA scouts. In the past two years, he even played in pro leagues in France and Chile during the CBA off-season. “Every time I take the court, I want to try to get better,” he says.

Fort Wayne Fury coach Keith Smart thinks Norris' work ethic will pay off. “It's a matter of some NBA team saying, ‘We're gonna give him a shot,’” Smart says. “Because he can outplay a lot of the backup players that are there.”

That's all Norris wants. “I don't expect to get called up to the NBA and be a star,” he says. “If I could just get there, the rest will handle itself.”

One week after the Rockford game, the Seattle SuperSonics give him The Call. He tries out and barely makes their roster. In the NBA's opening weekend on an electric February night before a sellout crowd of 17,000, Norris comes off the bench in the fourth quarter, Sonics down by 10. He coolly launches four straight three-pointers. Each shot goes in. “I just needed a chance,” he says. “My dream came true.” Welcome to the NBA.

—by Chris Tauber

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