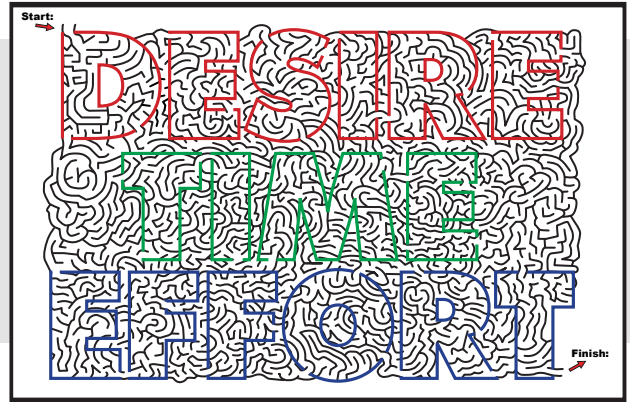


## Spotlight Lesson: Hard Work & Determination (Desire, Time, & Effort)



### Lesson Summary:

This lesson uses a series of experiences to help students understand that success requires both physical and mental effort. Students will engage in the MAZE activity, a focus exercise, and a real-world example (Steph Curry) to explore how desire grows through time and effort.

Students will then apply these principles by creating a Vision Board to help them identify goals and stay motivated to achieve them.

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### Learning Objectives:

- I can explain the importance of desire, time, and effort in achieving goals
  - I can explain how both mental focus and physical effort are required for success
  - I can explain how desire increases after putting time and effort into something
  - I can identify ways to stay focused and persist through challenges
  - I can create goals and a plan for working toward them
  - I can share lessons I've learned from the past, goals for my future, and create an action plan for the present.
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### Lesson Tools:

**Printed “Desire, Time, & Effort - Maze” for each student**

**Story Example:** Video Clip - Kung Fu Panda

**Activity:** Focus (no props needed)

**Story Example:** Video Clip - Steph Curry

**Activity:** Vision Board (list of optional materials included)

**Optional:** Music for transitions/during activity work

## ATTENTION GETTER / SETTING THE CLASS (5-10 minutes)

### Question of the day:

“If you knew you could not fail... what is something you would be willing to work really hard to accomplish?”

Take a minute at the beginning of class and discuss the Question of the day. Let student share some of their responses and then say: “today we’re going to talk about What motivates us to work hard and what we are willing to put effort into in life.”

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## Metaphor Processing Guide (Desire, Time, & Effort Maze)

### Metaphor Introduction:

Hand out copies of the maze to each student, keeping them face down. Instruct students to turn the maze over and say:

“As you can see, this is a maze with the words Desire, Time, and Effort inside. You have to start in the upper left corner and finish in the lower right corner. There is only one way to successfully complete the maze.”

“Notice that the letters are part of the maze. You’re not allowed to go over the lines of the letters. You can only cut through when there is a gap.”

“It usually takes people around 15 minutes. Let’s see if you can make it through.”

“On your mark... get set... go!”

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### Facilitator Notes (While Students Work):

As students work through the maze, play music and observe how they respond.

Pay attention to:

- Are they frustrated, confident, confused, or angry?
- Did they give up or keep trying?
- How long did it take for students to get through the maze?
- What did they do when they came to a dead end?
- How did they react when they finished?
- Did they smile and seem proud of their accomplishment?
- Did they say anything or boast about finishing?
- Facilitator Intervention (Optional but Powerful)

As you notice some students getting close to finishing the maze, walk up and take the paper from

them right before they finish. (**Note:** You may need to be quick and take it when they're not expecting it.)

Usually this causes them to become upset, frustrated, or even a little angry. They may say something or react strongly. Try to keep cool and not to say anything at first—just observe their reaction.

After a moment of them reacting, you can give the maze back to them and observe what they do next. (In most cases, they will go right back to finishing it.)

**Side Note:** (optional approach)

This strong response is exactly what you want, because it makes the processing more impactful. However, if you are concerned about how students might react, you can instead say:

“Stop time’s up!” Then pause for a minute and observe their reaction.

Then say: “Just kidding— you can keep going.”

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## Closing the Activity:

As students begin to finish:

- Congratulate them
- Encourage others to keep trying
- Offer small hints if needed

When most students have finished, or after your set time, say: “Stop, time’s up”

Ask students to turn their maze over and write down what they were thinking and feeling:

- At the beginning
- During the activity
- After they finished

Then have students share their responses.

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## Processing:

Go back to the students whose maze you took from them before they finished.

**Ask:** “How did you feel when I took your maze right before you finished?”

They will likely say they felt frustrated, confused, or even a little angry.

**Follow up with:** “Why did you feel that way?”

They will often say something like: “Because I put a lot of effort into it and you took it right before I finished.”

**Say:** “You see that feeling you had in that moment?”... “That is what we call the Accomplishment Zone.”... “It’s the feeling we get when we’ve worked hard at something and we’re about to finish—or we accomplish it.”... “It feels really good!”... “The reason you were upset is because I took that away from you right before you got to experience it.”

**Emphasize:** “Isn’t it interesting that something as simple as this maze created such a strong emotion?”

Expand to the Group:

**Ask other students:** “How did you feel when you finished the maze?”

If you noticed specific reactions (celebrating, smiling, telling others), call those out:

“I saw some of you smile... some of you sat back... some of you told the person next to you.”... “What were you feeling in that moment?”

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## Discuss The Words in the Maze

### “Desire”

**Say:** “Let’s talk about the first word in the maze—Desire.”

**Ask:** “When you first started the maze, where was your desire?”... Did anyone think, “Ugh! - Do we really have to do this?” (Allow honesty)

**Then ask:** “How did your desire change as you got closer to finishing?”

**Emphasize:** “You’ll probably notice that your desire increased a lot as you got closer to finishing.”... “We saw that clearly when I took some of your mazes right before you finished.”... “Your desire to finish was really strong at that point.”

**You may even ask:** “How many of you went right back and finished the maze after I gave it back?”

(Most will raise their hands)

### Key Point:

“As you put in time and effort, your desire increased.”

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### “Time”

**Say:** “The second word is Time.”... “There are three ways we can think about time: the past, the

present, and the future.”

## “Past”

**Ask:** “How can it be helpful to look at the past?”

Allow students to respond.

**Emphasize:** “We learn from the past—our experiences and the experiences of others.”... “That helps us avoid mistakes and repeat things that work.”

**You could also ask:** “Why do we study history?”

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## “Future”

**Ask:**

“Why is it important to think about the future?”

Allow responses.

**Emphasize:**

“It’s important to have goals and a vision for your future.”

“If you don’t have a direction, it’s hard to feel motivated about what you’re doing today.”

“If you don’t think about your future, you might end up somewhere you didn’t plan—and wonder how you got there.”

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## “The Present” - (Most Important)

**Say:** “But here’s the most important part.” ... “We don’t live in the past, and we don’t live in the future.”  
... “We live in the present.”

**Emphasize:** “That’s where your effort goes.”... “You can learn from the past and plan for the future.”  
... “But your hard work happens today.”

**Build This Idea:** “What you do today—and then repeat tomorrow, and the next day—is what builds your future.” ... “When you stack days, one after another that are full of effort, time becomes a very powerful tool.”

**Final Emphasis:**

“Anything worthwhile in life takes Desire, Time, and Effort.”... “There are no shortcuts—just like this maze.”... “And what you experienced today is exactly how success works.”

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## Story Example: Video Clip “Kung Fu Panda”

**Frame:** How many of you have seen the movie kung fu panda? I wanna share with you a little clip from the movie. See if you can see a connection from this clip to what we just talked about?

Show the video clip in its entirety and ask the following questions. Feel free to substitute or add questions of your own:

- What did Master Ugly say that was so important?
- Have you ever looked at today as a gift? What do you think he meant by that?
- In what ways can today be a gift?

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## Activity: “FOCUS” (10–12 minutes)

### Introduction:

Students will participate in a guided focus exercise designed to help them experience how effort applies not only to physical tasks, but also to mental focus. This activity helps students recognize that staying focused is a skill that requires time, effort, and practice. By experiencing how difficult it can be to maintain focus—and how quickly it improves with intentional effort—students will better understand how focus impacts their ability to complete challenging tasks and achieve their goals.

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### Activity Instructions:

Explain to students that they will be participating in a short experiment to observe how their brain works when trying to focus.

#### Round 1: Baseline Focus (30 seconds)

Ask students to sit still and choose one thing to focus on. Options may include:

- Their breathing
- A number
- A word

#### Instruct students:

“Your job is to stay focused on that one thing for 30 seconds. Try not to think about anything else.”

**Begin timing for 30 seconds.**

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### Processing (Round 1):

After time is up, ask students:

- What did you choose to focus on?
- How did it go?
- Be honest—did your mind wander at all?
- About how long did it take before your mind drifted?

Allow a few students to share their experiences.

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## Mini Teach (Facilitator Explanation):

**Explain:** “What you just experienced is normal.”... “At any moment, your brain is taking in a lot—what you’re seeing, hearing, and feeling. All of that information is being processed at the same time, which makes it easy for your mind to get pulled in different directions.”

“That’s why your focus drifts—not because something is wrong, but because your brain isn’t trained yet to stay on one thing.” ... “Your ability to focus is a skill. And just like any skill, it takes time, effort, and practice to improve.”

### You may add an example:

*“For example, a Formula One race car driver travels over 200 miles per hour and has to stay completely focused on the track. Their ability to focus is one of the most important skills that helps them succeed.”*

*“You may not be driving a race car, but when you’re in class or working on something difficult, your ability to focus determines how much effort you actually give.”*

## Focus Coaching (Strategies):

Before the second round, teach students simple strategies to improve focus:

- Pick one clear focus (your “anchor”)
- Slow your breathing or counting
- If your mind wanders, calmly bring it back
- Don’t get frustrated—the effort is in returning your focus
- Sit up and stay physically still to help your concentration

**Emphasize:** “The effort is in bringing your focus back.”

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## **Round 2: Trained Focus (45–60 seconds)**

**Say:** “Now we’re going to try it again, using those strategies.” ... “You can choose the same thing to focus on or something different.” ... “Your goal is to stay with it the entire time.”

**Start a timer for 45–60 seconds.**

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### **Instructions (Continued):**

As students complete the second round, encourage a quiet and focused environment. Allow a brief pause after the timer ends before transitioning into discussion. Remind students that improvement—not perfection—is the goal.

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## **Processing the Experience:**

Use the following questions to guide discussion:

- What felt different the second time compared to the first?
  - What helped you stay focused longer?
  - When your mind wandered, what did you do?
  - Which round took more effort? Why?
  - What does this teach you about focus and effort?
  - How does this connect to things in your life—like schoolwork, challenges, or the Maze?
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## **VIDEO: Story Example- Steph Curry (5–7 minutes)**

### **Setup:**

Show a picture of Steph Curry. Ask students if they know anything about him? What is he famous for? What are some of his accomplishments?

**Say:** “We’re going to watch a short clip about Steph Curry.”... “As you watch, think about this: What makes him so successful?”

## Some Of His Significant Accomplishments:

4× NBA Champion (2015, 2017, 2018, 2022)

2× NBA MVP (2015, 2016) - First unanimous MVP in NBA history (2016) - NBA Finals MVP (2022)

10×+ NBA All-Star (and counting)

Olympic Gold Medalist

## Impact on the Game

Revolutionized basketball by: Making deep 3-point shooting a primary weapon, forcing defenses to extend far beyond the arc.

Widely credited with changing how the entire sport is played—from the NBA down to youth basketball

## Lesser-Known Facts

He was lightly recruited out of high school and played at a small school Davidson

Led Davidson to the Elite Eight in the NCAA Tourney (2008) — a Cinderella run

Son of former NBA player Dell Curry

Known for elite conditioning—runs miles every game due to constant movement

He has far exceeded expectations at every level, proving all his doubters wrong

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## Processing Questions:

- What stood out to you about how he trains?
- How much of his success comes from talent vs effort?
- What kinds of effort does he put in? (physical + mental)
- Why is it important that he practices the same things over and over?
- How does his preparation affect what happens during the game?

## Key Take Away Points:

- His success is not an accident
- Skills are built through repetition and effort
- Mental focus + physical effort = mastery
- Practice creates confidence
- What you do in practice shows up in performance

**Bridge Statement:** “The things that look amazing in the game... were built through effort long before anyone was watching.”

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## Activity: Vision Board (15–25 minutes or Homework)

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## Introduction:

Students will create a collage that represents the different goals they have for themselves in various areas of their lives. The purpose is to help them develop a clear vision of their potential and the future they would like to work toward. Creating a vision board can also help students stay motivated and focused on the goals they want to achieve.

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## Materials:

- 1 board per student (this could be a piece of cardstock or poster board) This activity could also be completed using digital apps and art tools if those resources are available.
  - Materials for creating the collage. These may vary depending on available resources and could include colored pencils, markers, paint, pictures, magazines, printed digital images, stickers, scrapbook materials, small objects, etc.
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## Activity Instructions:

The first step in creating a vision board is brainstorming the content. Provide prompts for students to consider. Students can write their ideas on sticky notes or in a journal to reference during the activity. Here are four example prompts that could help students develop ideas for their vision board:

- Something I want to accomplish in school
- Something I want to do when I'm older
- Something I want to get better at outside of school (a hobby or interest)
- Something I can do to be a better friend

Another option is to ask students to create a list of goals, desires, and dreams they have for themselves. During this step, it is helpful for you to have an example of your own vision board to share with the class. Allow students to brainstorm for a few minutes first before showing your example. Then pause the class and briefly share your board.

Once students have had enough time to think about their ideas, explain that their vision board should be something they can hang up or place somewhere visible to remind them of their goals.

Explain what materials they will have available and how much time they will have to work. Then begin the activity.

As students work, move around the room and interact with them. You may need to help them generate ideas, think about how to represent those ideas visually, or encourage them to put enough effort into the project. Playing music in the background can help create a calm and creative atmosphere.

Some students may finish much earlier than others. One strategy is to let students know they will be sharing or presenting their vision boards. Fast finishers could also write a short description explaining the meaning behind their board.

When the boards are finished, give students an opportunity to share their work. One option is a silent museum walk, where students display their boards and spend five minutes walking around quietly

looking at each other's work. Afterward, facilitate a discussion where students can comment on what they noticed or ask questions.

Another option is sharing in small groups or partnerships, which can also help develop presentation and communication skills.

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## Processing the Activity:

- How do you think it will feel when you accomplish the goals you set for yourself?
  - How can you avoid getting distracted from accomplishing your goals?
  - What can we do to make sure we stay focused on our goals (the finish line)?
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## Lesson Wrapup - Final Processing

### Ask:

- What did today teach you about effort?
  - How does focus affect your ability to succeed?
  - Why does desire grow after you start something?
  - What is one goal you are willing to put effort into?
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### Final Thought:

“Success is not about talent alone.”

“It’s about putting in time, effort, and focus—especially when something is difficult.”

“When you train your focus and keep working, you give yourself the ability to finish what you start.”

## End of Lesson

Thank students, reinforce effort, and encourage them to continue working on their goals.