



Turning an Idea Into a Goal

From big ideas to a clear plan!



EXPLORE



DISCUSS



PLAN



CREATE



APPLY



Grade Range

K – 5



Estimated Time

35 – 50 minutes



Key Concept

Opportunity Identification
Goals and Success Criteria



STEM Connection

Engineering Design
Creative Problem Solving

Teacher Overview

Ideas are the starting point for projects, but an idea becomes much easier to plan when students can describe what they want to accomplish. This lesson introduces opportunity identification, goals, and simple success criteria. Students practice moving from “I have an idea” to “Here is what we want to achieve.”

Learning Objectives

- Explain the difference between an idea and a goal.
- Identify the opportunity, need, or problem behind a project idea.
- Turn a broad idea into a clear, age-appropriate project goal.
- Describe simple success criteria that tell the team when the goal has been achieved.

Penny's PM Concept

Penny says:
“Big ideas are exciting! A goal tells our team what we are trying to accomplish. When everyone understands the goal, we can start figuring out how to get there.”

Key Vocabulary

Word	Kid-Friendly Meaning
Idea	A thought about something we could create, change, improve, or solve.
Opportunity	A chance to make something better or create something useful.
Need	Something people require or would benefit from.
Goal	A clear statement of what the project is trying to accomplish.
Success Criteria	The things we can check to know whether the project achieved its goal.
Outcome	The result or change created by the project.

Lesson Plan: Turning an Idea Into a Goal

1. Idea Storm - 5 minutes	Ask students to name things they would like to create, improve, organize, or solve at school, at home, or in their community. Record several ideas without judging them.
2. Find the Why - 7 minutes	Choose one idea and ask: Why would we do this? Who would it help? What would be better afterward? Explain that project managers look for the opportunity or need behind an idea before deciding what the project should accomplish.
3. Idea vs. Goal - 8 minutes	Compare broad ideas with clearer goals. Idea: "Make the playground better." Goal: "Create a plan for two new playground activities that students in our class can safely enjoy." Discuss what makes the second statement more useful to a team.
4. Goal Builder Challenge - 15 minutes	Teams choose one idea and use the Goal Builder worksheet. They identify the opportunity, write a goal, and create three simple success criteria.
5. Share and Improve - 5 minutes	Teams read their goals aloud. Classmates offer one question: Is the goal clear? Do we know what the team wants to accomplish? Revise goals if needed.

Discussion Questions

- Can two teams start with the same idea but have different goals? Why?
- Why should we understand the problem or opportunity before choosing a solution?
- How can success criteria help a team make decisions?
- What makes a goal easy for everyone on a team to understand?

Student Worksheet: My Goal Builder

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. MY BIG IDEA

What would you like to create, improve, organize, or solve?

2. WHY DOES IT MATTER?

What opportunity, need, or problem does your idea address? Who could it help?

3. MY PROJECT GOAL

Complete the sentence: Our goal is to

4. HOW WILL WE KNOW WE SUCCEEDED?

Write three things you could check.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

5. GOAL CHECK

Is our goal clear? YES / ALMOST / NOT YET Can our team explain what success looks like? YES / ALMOST / NOT YET

Reflection & Quick Assessment

Duke's Goal Check:

A great project goal should help the team answer three questions: **What are we trying to accomplish? Why does it matter? How will we know we succeeded?**

Exit Ticket

What is the difference between an idea and a goal?

Write one example of a project goal.

What is one question you can ask to understand why an idea matters?

Circle one: I can turn an idea into a clear goal: YES / ALMOST / NOT YET

Teacher Check for Understanding

- Student can distinguish an idea from a project goal.
- Student can identify a need, problem, or opportunity behind an idea.
- Student can write or explain a clear project goal.
- Student can identify at least one success criterion.

Extension Activities

STEM Extension: Present a design opportunity such as keeping a paper object dry during a simulated rainstorm. Before students design anything, require them to write the goal and two success criteria. Then build and test.

Home Connection: Ask students to choose a family idea, such as organizing a game night or improving a shared space, and interview someone at home about the goal and what success would look like.

Teacher Tip: Encourage students to describe the outcome before selecting the solution. “We need a safer way to store supplies” leaves room for creativity; “we need a blue plastic bin” has already selected the solution.

Next Resource: Meet the Stakeholders — helping students identify the people affected by a project and understand different needs and perspectives.