

OUR HOPES & DREAMS TREE

Materials Needed:

- Large butcher paper (brown for the trunk, green/yellow/orange for leaves)
- Pre-cut paper leaves (2-3 per student to allow for mistakes or multiple goals)
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- Stapler, tape, or glue dots for assembly
- Optional: A read-aloud book about goal setting (e.g., *The Magical Yet* by Angela DiTerlizzi or *Salt in His Shoes* by Deloris Jordan)

Activity Objectives

Goal Setting: Introduce students to setting realistic, achievable academic and social goals for their third-grade year.

Classroom Ownership: Co-create a meaningful piece of classroom decor that reflects the students' voices.

Growth Mindset: Establish the understanding that learning takes time and practice, and that it is okay to be working toward something.

Pre-Lesson Preparation

Construct the Trunk: Before the lesson, cut out a large, bare tree trunk with branches from brown butcher paper. Staple it to a prominent bulletin board or a large, empty wall space.

Prep the Leaves: Cut out leaf shapes (about the size of an adult hand so there is enough room for third-grade handwriting). You can use standard green, or mix in fall colors depending on your classroom theme.



Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

1. Introduction & Read-Aloud (10 Minutes)

Gather students on the rug and introduce the concept of "Hopes and Dreams" for the school year.

Say: "At the beginning of every school year, we all have things we hope will happen and things we dream of learning. Today, we are going to set goals for our third-grade year."

If using a read-aloud, read it now. Discuss how the characters had to work hard and practice to reach their goals.

2. Brainstorming Goals (10 Minutes)

Third graders often need help distinguishing between a "wish" ("I want to go to Disney World") and a "school goal" ("I want to learn my times tables"). Create an anchor chart together.

3. Drafting & Decorating (15 Minutes)

Send students back to their desks and pass out the paper leaves.

Have them write their name on one side, and their goal on the other. Encourage them to write in dark marker or pencil first, and then trace over it so it can be seen from a distance.

Allow them to lightly color or decorate the edges of their leaves.

4. The Planting Ceremony (10 Minutes)

Call students up one by one, or table by table.

Have each student read their goal out loud to the class.

Allow the student to staple, tape, or glue their leaf onto a branch of the bare tree.

Say: "Look at our tree! Right now, it's covered in our goals. As we work together this year, we will help each other grow and reach every single one of these."

Keeping the Tree "Alive" All Year

Don't let the tree become invisible wallpaper! Here are a few ways to keep it active:

Quarterly Check-Ins: At the end of each quarter, take 10 minutes to review the tree. Ask, "Who feels like they have reached their goal? Who is halfway there?"

Adding "Fruit": When a student masters the goal on their leaf, let them add an apple, acorn, or flower cutout next to their leaf to signify that their goal has "bloomed" or "grown."

Spring Update: In January, after winter break, you can have students set a new goal for the second half of the year, adding a second layer of leaves to the tree to make it look even fuller!