



Kentucky Department of

EDUCATION

Clarifying and Sharing Clear Learning

Goals

Evidence-Based Instructional Practices #2

Introduction

Critical to providing equitable learning environments is ensuring that teachers and students have access to a local standards-aligned curriculum supported by evidenced-based instructional practices and high-quality instructional resources. Educators also must create a classroom culture in which students feel safe and supported in meeting the intended learning outcomes. A first step when implementing the local curriculum at the classroom level is to ensure that both the teacher and the students have clarity of the intended learning outcomes for each unit of instruction and what they must do to reach those outcomes.

In defining teacher clarity, Fendick (1990) states that it is a combination of clarity in regards to (1) organization, (2) explanation, (3) examples and guided practice, and (4) assessment of student learning that are all aligned to clear learning expectations. Teacher clarity requires that teachers have a deep understanding of what students must know and be able to do to reach the grade-level expectations outlined in the *Kentucky Academic Standards* (KAS) and then use that clarity to plan meaningful lessons designed to help students reach those expectations.

However, in order to improve student outcomes, the teacher needs to ensure that students also have clarity in what they are learning. Research shows that when teachers help students understand what they are learning, why they are learning it and how they will know if they have learned, student achievement increases (Fisher, Frey, Amador, & Assof, 2019). Teachers help students gain this clarity by consistently clarifying and sharing the learning goals, relevance and success criteria as a part of ongoing instruction each day.

- **Learning goals** clearly describes what students need to know, understand and be able to do by the end of the lesson or a series of lessons.
- **Relevance** helps the students understand the purpose or the “why” behind the learning.
- **Success criteria** describe the evidence students must produce to show they have achieved the learning goals.

Why are clear learning goals critical to student success? How do teachers gain clarity and then share that clarity with their students? This section will focus on (1) **current brain research and the need for clear learning goals** (2) **starting with teacher clarity**, (3) **establishing student clarity**, (4) **developing student understanding of the learning goal and success criteria** and (5) **co-constructing success criteria**.

Brain Research and the Need for Clear Learning Goals

In order for the brain to learn, it must first commit to learning. All learning requires what Kahneman (2011) describes as “effortful thinking.” Essentially, the human brain has two operating systems: a fast-thinking brain and a slow-thinking brain. The fast-thinking brain works quickly with little effort because it utilizes prior knowledge that has become automated. The slow-thinking brain, which is generally in charge, requires a greater level of attention and effort and can become easily distracted. It also is reluctant to invest more energy and effort than is strictly necessary. However, in order to acquire new learning, the brain must maintain focused attention, process information, and reflect on the learning, all of which require intense focus, effort and energy. (Goodwin, 2020).

The first step in the learning process is to actually get students to commit to the learning. When students commit to learning, it signals the brain to pay attention to the information in the sensory register so it can enter the brain's immediate memory and keep the student focused long enough for the information to move into working memory (Goodwin, 2020). How do teachers help students commit to learning and engage their brains in effortful thinking?

In order for students to commit to learning, research shows they must first understand what they are supposed to learn and why they are being asked to learn it. Then, once students see the value in the learning, they must believe they can actually learn it and know what it looks like when they get there. Ultimately, to commit to learning, students need to tell themselves two things: (1) *This is interesting and important*, and (2) *I believe I can learn/master it* (Goodwin, 2020). At the classroom level this can be achieved when teachers share and clarify the **learning goals**, **relevance** and the **success criteria** of the learning with the students and then use those to drive instruction and assessment.

When students know what they are learning, why they are learning it and believe they can meet the expectations, it promotes student ownership in the learning process. Students not only have an understanding of the purpose of the learning, but also how they will be held accountable for making their thinking visible in terms of what they need to say, do, make or write to demonstrate their understanding of the intended learning outcomes (Goodwin, 2020; McTighe & Willis, 2019). This helps students know where to focus their time and energy and where their brain needs to sustain “effortful thinking.” According to Gazith (2021), when students have a clear sense of purpose and direction, it helps them “understand what they’re preparing to learn and how it will be assessed. This facilitates their ability to grasp the material and identify desired outcomes, and also encourages them to effectively develop autonomy” (p. 27).

Additionally, when students can clearly see the path to reaching the intended learning outcomes, it can increase their motivation to engage in the learning because they can see themselves making progress. When students experience a series of small wins as they move along the pathway to mastery, they are more apt to stay committed to the learning. It also provides students with an internal sense of control and helps promote a growth mind-set as they tackle more challenging content (Goodwin, 2020). According to neuroscience, when students have clarity of the learning goal, relevance and the criteria for success, it positively impacts student motivation and their ability to organize and focus their efforts, which leads to increased academic performance. “Conversely, when the goal is unclear or irrelevant to students, it is unlikely that they will maintain attention, try their best, or persist when learning becomes challenging” (McTighe & Willis, 2019; p. 55).

Research shows that clarity in learning also increases student’ sense of self-efficacy. When students believe they can be successful at a particular task or assignment, they are more likely to persist in their work, especially in the face of challenge. It also can help decrease student anxiety and help them better connect new learning to prior knowledge (Alamrode & Vandas, 2018). “When students feel that they understand the criteria by which their work will be judged, they also have some sense of control over their work and are poised to be strategic, self-regulators. It takes both an understanding of the learning goal and an understanding of the success criteria to foster self-efficacy and self-regulation” (Moss & Brookhart, 2009; p. 28-29). Table 4.7 below highlights some of the major differences in the classroom culture when clear learning goals are present or missing as an on-going part of classroom instruction (Grift & Major, 2018; p. 89-90).

Table 4.7 Classrooms Where Learning Goals are Evident vs Missing

When Clear Learning Goals are Evident	When Clear Learning Goals are Missing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher levels of student achievement linked to the opportunity for focused attention on the elements that are most critical to the learning experience • Deeper and richer dialogue in the classroom that centers on the key concepts, knowledge, skills and dispositions being taught • Higher levels of accountability for learning at a variety of levels, including student-to-student, student-to-teacher and teacher-to-student • Fewer justifications for lack of learning success by both the teacher and the learner • More explicit language used by the teacher and the learner in classroom conversations • A greater understanding of what is needed to be successful as a learner • Fewer assumptions by teachers of students’ progress and more success in providing strategies to support them in their individual learning needs • Clear alignment of tasks, activities and assessments that support the learning of the expected outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lack of understanding of why the learning is taking place and the relationship it has to both prior knowledge and expected knowledge acquisition • Higher levels of disengagement in learning processes and tasks, both inside and outside of class • Greater incidents of behaviors that disrupt the learning of self and others • More time spent teaching aspects of the content that should need less time, and less time spent teaching aspects of the content that need more time • Teacher dialogue that centers more on tasks rather than on the key learning that is being explored • Tasks, activities and assessments that are not aligned to the knowledge, skills and dispositions being taught • Students who express doubt about the competence and quality of the teacher and teachers who express doubts in the competence and quality of the learner due to lessened expectations

Starting with Teacher Clarity

In order for teachers to support students in understanding the purpose of the learning and what success looks like, teachers must have clarity around what the standards are asking students to know and be able to do. However, often when teachers are asked about their learning goals for a lesson, they respond with, “I’m going to have the students do...” In this case, the teachers are focused on the activities that students will do rather than on the learning that should result from students engaging

with those activities. When teachers focus on the activities students will do without a clear understanding of the intended learning, it is unlikely students will learn what they need to learn (William & Leahy, 2015).

According to Gazith (2021), even if teachers have a sense of the learning goal, “without a clear articulation of what success looks like, it is very challenging, if at all possible, to create effective lessons that teach students these tacit goals” (p. 27). When teachers can clearly articulate what students need to know and be able to do, why they need to learn it and how they will know they have learned it, they can then use that clarity to plan effective lessons that focus on helping students reach those expectations. Teachers need to shift their thinking from what they will teach to a focus on what students will learn and then plan effective lessons that help students reach those goals (Gazith, 2021).

The first step in teachers gaining this level of clarity is to analyze the [KAS](#) to identify what students must know and be able to do within each unit of instruction to meet the grade-level expectations. This analysis helps teachers determine the content, concepts and/or skills students must master on their way to meeting the full depth of a standard or group of standards. This process is best achieved when teachers work collaboratively in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to address two critical questions: (1) What do students need to know and be able to do? and (2) How will we know they have learned it? When teachers work together to answer these questions, it helps to promote equitable learning environments in which all students are held to the same grade-level expectations, as well as access to grade-level learning experiences and tasks aligned to helping students reach the full depth of the standards.

As teachers analyze the [KAS](#) for the grade-level standards in each unit of instruction, they need to focus in on the critical components within each document. The purpose of the critical components is to provide greater clarity in what the standards are specifically asking students to know and be able to do to meet the expectations of the standards. Examples of the components include multidimensionality, clarifications and progressions. For example, within the *KAS for Reading and Writing*, the multidimensionality component highlights the three dimensions built within each standard: Content, comprehension and analysis. By specifying the three dimensions separately, the standards document better communicates the intent of each standard so that local instruction and assessment will align to the intended depth.

The PLC should focus on examining each component and the connections between the components and the standards, as well as how those components can support teachers in designing standards-aligned instruction, grade-level assignments and classroom assessments. [The Breaking Down a Standard Resources](#) are available from the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) to assist teachers in analyzing content area standards.

Once teachers have an understanding of the standards, they should then organize those standards into around big ideas and/or questions to help deepen student understanding and engagement with the content in a more meaningful, relevant way. This helps to avoid students seeing the content as a set of isolated information, skills or processes. When students are tasked with answering big, significant questions, it taps into their curiosity and increases their motivation to engage in the learning. According to Goodwin (2020), the key is to develop open-ended questions that are challenging and provoke deep thought, or even debate, among the students. Whether the questions are provided by the teacher or

developed in collaboration with the students, they should require students to learn and analyze new information, evaluate pros and cons, or make a personal decision grounded in the evidence.

Based on the analysis of the standards and the big ideas or questions that will drive the unit, teachers then derive the learning goals and success criteria that guide teachers as they design questions, tasks and activities aligned to the intended learning outcomes. In order for teachers to develop a deep understanding of the learning goals and the success criteria in a way that impacts student learning, they need to be able to answer questions such as (Ruiz-Primo & Brookhart, 2018; p. 36-37):

- What is to be learned?
- Why am I teaching this content?
- Why is this learning important for my students in the context of the unit/module/topic?
- How are these learning goals to be achieved? What instructional activities and tasks will help my students make progress in their learning?
- Why are the activities in this unit sequenced the way that they are?
- How does each activity contribute to the achievement of the overall learning goals?
- What specific evidence will show that those foundational elements have been built? How will I know that students have learned what I intend? What evidence do I need to demonstrate that the learning goals have been met?

Establishing Student Clarity

Once teachers have gained clarity on what students need to know and be able to do to meet the standards' expectations, they must help students develop that same level of understanding. This starts with teachers sharing the learning goals, relevance and success criteria with the students. Often times teachers themselves may be clear on the learning goals when planning lessons, but when learners remain unaware of them, it can negatively impact student outcomes (Fisher, Frey & Hattie, 2016). To help students gain the clarity needed to engage in the learning process, research recommends three questions students should be able to answer in regards to their learning each day (Fisher, Frey, & Hattie, 2021):

- What am I learning?
- Why am I learning it?
- How will I know I have learned it?

Fisher, et al. (2021), argues that students should be able to articulate the answers to these questions regardless of where they might be in the learning process. When teachers and student use these questions to guide classroom practice and assessments, students will have a better understanding of the learning expectations and what is required for success. Each question focuses on a specific component of student clarity needed for the brain to commit to learning. When students have a clear vision of the end point, when they are required to do something to learn, and have specific criteria to use to monitor and adjust along the way, it makes the journey to the intended learning outcome possible and increases the likelihood of success in reaching the goal. Students have a greater sense of what they can and should do to make their work measure up to the criteria and the goal. "Students can meet goals only if they are actually working toward them, and they can't work toward them until they understand what they are"

(Moss & Brookhart, 2009; p. 28). Table 4.8 summarizes the three clarity components and their characteristics that empower students to answer the three clarity questions.

Table 4.8 Components of Student Clarity and Their Characteristics

Three Clarity Questions	Clarity Component	Characteristics
What am I learning?	Learning Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Also referred to as learning intentions, targets, objectives or purpose • Brief statement that describes clearly what students need to know, understand and be able to do by the end of the lesson or a series of lessons • Represent the “destination” of where students are going • Can focus on knowledge, skills and/or concepts and should be aligned to the grade-level standards • Focus on the intended learning, not a list of activities that students will do
Why am I learning it?	Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addresses the “why” behind the learning • Can link to learning outside the classroom, learning about yourself as a learner, and/or needed for future learning
How will I know I have learned it?	Success Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statements that describe the evidence students must produce to show they have achieved the learning goals • Provide a “map” to the learning destination • Act as major checkpoints along the way for teacher and students to know how they are progressing • Specific, concrete and measurable and become the foundation for classroom assessment • Used as the basis for teacher feedback, peer feedback and student self-assessment • Are supported, when necessary, through questioning, modeling, and analysis of student work examples

The Role of Learning Goals – What am I learning?

As learners move throughout the day, the brain is constantly predicting and evaluating each situation based on previous experiences and the current context. This allows the brain to budget the body’s energy resources accordingly and to prepare for action. When students know the goal of the learning and are able to zero in on that goal, the brain knows where to focus and how to direct the body’s resources needed for attention, planning and action (Posey, 2019). Understanding the learning goals prevents students from falling back to the lowest rung on the ladder - compliance. Learning goals allow students to see the relationship between the tasks they are completing and the purpose for the learning (Frey, Hattie, & Fisher, 2018).

Teachers need to establish the learning goal with students for each lesson or series of lessons, revisit the goal throughout the lesson and use it to formatively assess where students are to determine next steps in instruction. **Learning goals don't have to be used exclusively at the outset of the lesson and may be withheld until after a period of exploration or discovery has occurred** (Fisher, et al., 2019). Yet, truly establishing the learning goal requires ongoing investment to ensure students understand what they are learning and what they will be asked to do with that knowledge. It is the ongoing act of making the learning meaningful and relevant to the student. Effective teachers reestablish the learning goal multiple times during a given lesson, particularly during transitions and when students need redirection back to the purpose of the learning (Fisher, et al., 2016).

Learning goals should clearly convey what students will be learning and should be used to drive classroom instruction and assessment for both the teacher and the students. There are a variety of ways to write learning goals including using sentence stems such as, "I am learning..." or "We are learning..." Whichever style a teacher chooses should remain consistent to provide structure for the students. (Fisher, et al., 2021).

The Role of Relevance - Why am I Learning It?

Once students understand the learning goal, it is important to help them see the relevance of the learning. Emotion is at the core of the brain's decision to engage in "effortful thinking." When teachers connect the learning goals to authentic and relevant experiences, it can spark curiosity in a student, which causes the brain to take notice and want to explore the topic more (Posey, 2019). "When we instruct students to learn facts, details, and procedures, but don't explain why this knowledge is essential, why they need to learn it, and who uses this knowledge in real life, the learning has limited value for the students" (Gazith, 2021; p. 31)

When teachers take the time to address the relevancy of the learning, it not only fosters student motivation, it also helps to deepen student learning as they make connections between the learning goals and the larger concepts within the discipline. Below is a list of three approaches teachers might use to make learning relevant for students (Fisher, Frey, & Quaglia, 2018):

- **Application Outside the Classroom Walls:** This is when students see that the content, concepts and/or skills can be used outside the walls of the classroom. This might include ways in which it is used in other disciplines or by other people in different aspects of life. It can't be too far in the distance but understanding that learning has utility beyond the confines of the four walls of a classroom can guide students' attention.
- **Learning About Yourself:** This involves students learning more about themselves as learners and making personal connections between the learning and their own identity. Due to students' own unique background and experiences, what may be relevant to one person may not be relevant to another. Allowing students opportunities to make those personal connections to the content helps increase their motivation to engage in the learning.
- **Needed for Future Learning:** This is when the teacher helps students to see that the current learning will be used to help prepare them for upcoming content either within that specific course or in a future course.

A possible strategy for addressing relevancy in a lesson is adding a sentence frame such as, “this will help me to...”, when presenting the learning goal and success criteria. The teacher can then open up a dialogue with students in order to co-construct relevancy. To help students connect back to the relevancy at the end of a lesson, teachers can ask students questions, such as, “Based on today’s learning, what are you curious about? Has this content raised any questions for you?” (Fisher, et al., 2019).

The Role of Success Criteria – How Will I Know I Have Learned It?

Once students understand what they are learning and why it is important, they also must know what success will look like when they achieve the goal. While the learning goal provides the destination, success criteria provide a map for how to reach the destination with clear checkpoints along the way. Fisher, et al. (2018), argues that too often what success looks like is kept a secret from students, which can cause anxiety as they struggle to understand what the teacher expects. However, when students have a clear understanding of the success criteria, it empowers them to monitor their own progress and not to be overly dependent on the teacher to tell them when they have reached the goal. They are able to use the criteria to set their own goals, which helps to increase student motivation and investment in the learning process.

According to Fisher, et al. (2019), success criteria work because they tap into some of the basic principles of human motivation. People tend to compare their current performance or ability to a clear goal and when there is a gap between where they are and where they want to be, it creates cognitive dissonance. The brain is then motivated to close the gap and get rid of the dissonance by working to assimilate or accommodate information and ideas needed to reach the goal. “Ultimately, when students use success criteria to set and achieve their own goals for learning, the real magic happens in the classroom. When we achieve goals we’ve set for ourselves, our brains fill with the chemical dopamine. In short, achieving goals feels good and forms a positive addiction” (Goodwin, 2020; p. 42).

Success criteria are typically framed from students’ perspectives and can be written as “I can” statements that help students understand and visualize what mastery will look like and feel like. Goodwin (2020) offers the following sentence starters that can help teachers draft their success criteria and invite students to engage in deep learning.

- I can explain...
- I understand and can discuss...
- I can teach...
- I can defend...
- I can test and prove...
- I understand and can show...
- I can restate...
- I can use...to...
- I can discuss and explain how...
- I can model how to...
- I can demonstrate how to...
- I can draw a diagram that...
- I can choose...
- I can illustrate and explain

Examples of Learning Goals and Success Criteria

The learning goals and success criteria provided in Table 4.9 are meant to help teachers better understand the difference between the two components and how they work together to support student learning. Please note that these are possible suggestions. They are not the only pathways and are not comprehensive to obtain mastery of the standards.

Table 4.9 Examples of Learning Goals and Success Criteria

Learning Goal	Success Criteria
We are learning to use patterns from our observations to place different materials into groups based on ways they are the same and different	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can explain how I will find patterns in different materials. • I can name the patterns I see in different materials. • I can sort different materials into categories based on the patterns I see.
We are learning to identify the central idea of a text.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can define central idea. • I can list key details of a text. • I can analyze key details to determine the central idea of a text. • I can analyze how the central idea is reflected in a text and cite relevant evidence to support thinking around the central idea.
We are learning to compare fractions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can draw models to make fraction comparisons. • I can use the symbols $>$, $<$ and $=$ when making fraction comparisons. • I can explain how the size of equal parts can be used to compare fractions. • I can construct a viable argument and/or critique the reasoning of others to prove whether a fraction comparison is correct or incorrect.
We are analyzing the structure of the U.S. government, including separation of power and its system of checks and balances, through inquiry practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can ask compelling and discipline-specific supporting questions about the structure of the U.S. government. • I can identify the three branches of government and describe the function and roles of each branch. • I can describe the limitations of each branch established by separation of powers. • I can analyze how the system of checks and balances creates a balance of power among the branches of government. • I can use and integrate information from primary and secondary sources to develop claims that answer compelling and supporting questions, while noting key similarities and differences in the perspective the sources represent. • I can construct explanatory products to convey the diverse perspectives that impacted the founding of the United States. • I can explain different approaches people can take to address local, regional and global problems, using examples from U.S. history.

Developing Student Understanding of the Learning Goals and Success Criteria

In harnessing the power of learning goals, relevance and success criteria, teachers must ensure that students have a deep understanding of each. Simply telling students the learning goal and posting a list of success criteria on the board does not equate to effectively developing student understanding of each component. Effective teachers use multiple modes to share the learning goals and success criteria with students (Ruiz-Primo & Brookhart, 2018).

Moss & Brookhart (2009) state that “the single most important method for routinely sharing the purpose is using assignments that match - really match - the learning goals. It is in the assignment that the teacher translates the learning goal into action for the student. The student will strive to do the assignment, not the abstract goal. When we say the assignment or activity must “embody” the learning goal, we mean that the assignment and the activity is such a close match with the goal that the student would be able to think, “If I can do [this assignment], then I can do [the learning objective]” (p. 25). Other possible strategies for developing student understanding of the learning goals and success criteria include questioning and using examples of student work.

Questioning

One strategy for helping students to gain clarity in their learning is to ask students questions related to the learning goal or success criteria or asking them to explain each in their own words. The teacher also can ask students to share their own attitudes, experiences and prior knowledge that come to mind in relation to the topic of the learning. Teachers can then use students’ responses to help students connect to the relevance and to inform and adjust instruction as needed (Moss & Brookhart, 2009).

McTighe and Willis (2019) suggest that at the beginning of a unit, the teacher might invite students to pose questions about the topic of the unit and have them explore those ideas. One way to do this is to have students create a KWL chart in which they:

- Activate their prior knowledge by asking them what they already **K**now about the topic;
- Pose questions and identify those aspects of the topic about which they are curious and **W**ant to learn; and
- Reflect on and record what they have **L**earned as they move throughout the unit.

Goodwin (2020) offers the following questions teachers can pose to students to help them see the relevance in their learning (p.37-38):

- How can I apply this knowledge or skill in my own life?
- What might I gain personally from mastering this learning?
- How might I use this new learning to help others?
- How do adults use this knowledge or skill in the real world?
- How is this knowledge or skill an important building block for my later learning?

Examples of Student Work

When teachers provide students with examples and have students assess and describe them in terms of the success criteria, students develop a deeper understanding of the learning goal and criteria for success (Moss & Brookhart, 2019). William & Leahy (2015) point out two immediate benefits of getting students to look at examples of student work. “First, students are better at spotting mistakes in the

work of others than they are at their own work. Assessing one's own work, as well as assessing the work of one's peers in the classroom, is emotionally charged, and the emotional resonances can often interfere with engaging in the demands of the task. However, assessing the work of anonymous others is emotionally neutral, so students are able to focus more effectively on the task. Second, when students notice mistakes in the work of others, they are less likely to make the same mistakes in their own work" (p. 42). The list below provides possible ideas for using examples of student work:

- Provide students with top quality examples that meet all the success criteria and have students brainstorm a list of what makes them quality examples (Moss & Brookhart, 2009).
- When using top quality examples, use more than one example to show different styles or ways of meeting the success criteria to inspire student creativity (Almarode & Vandas, 2018).
- Have students analyze a range of examples, sort them into quality levels, discuss the qualities and develop a description of what quality looks like aligned to the success criteria. When using a range of examples, Moss and Brookhart (2019) recommend using examples from anonymous sources or teacher-created examples.
- Show multiple versions of a student's work that has progressed over time until the student's work met the success criteria. Ask students to notice how the student improved over time, highlighting the success criteria that the student achieved in each piece of work (Almarode & Vandas, 2018)

Co-Constructing Success Criteria

As teachers move through each unit of instruction, there are different times in which teachers will develop and share the learning goals and success criteria with students. As mentioned earlier, learning goals and success criteria don't have to be used exclusively at the outset of the lesson and may be withheld until after a period of exploration or discovery has occurred.

Yet, based on the learning goals, there also are times when teachers may want to co-create success criteria with students. **When students are involved in co-constructing the success criteria, it deepens their understanding of what quality looks like, increases student ownership in the learning process and promotes self-regulation** (Clarke, 2021).

When determining whether or not to co-construct success criteria with students, Almarode and Vandas (2018) suggest to **first consider the complexity of the goal**. The amount of time a teacher spends clarifying quality and expectations increases with the complexity of the goal and the time spent in class working toward that goal. If the teacher plans to spend a few weeks on a topic, it would be beneficial to spend significant time co-constructing success criteria with students. In addition, investing time on the front end co-constructing an understanding of the success criteria often saves significant time on the backend because students start with a deep understanding of what success looks like. It also is important to note that co-constructing success criteria does not have to be accomplished in a single lesson. Often, co-construction continues throughout a series of lessons or unit, as teachers provide mini-lessons, modeling and additional examples to further clarify the expectations as students' learning deepens.

Below is a list of steps to consider when constructing success criteria with students (adapted from Almarode and Vandas, 2018; p. 81-82):

1. Determine **when** to co-construct success criteria with students.
2. Gather the tools students will use: Worked examples, exemplars and/or models.
 - a. Examples of attainment of the learning goal(s)
 - b. Non-examples or works in progress in relation to the learning goal(s)
 - c. Process, steps or multiple approaches to attain the learning goal(s)
3. Determine the method that will be used to share the tools with students.
 - a. Studying and differentiating among the examples of student work in small groups to generate success criteria
 - b. Modeling by teacher or students – demonstration with a think-aloud about the thinking process they are using to make decisions about quality
 - c. Worked examples (step-by-step demonstration of how to perform a task or how to solve a problem) modeled and then posted for reference
 - d. Compare success criteria exemplars to other examples that do not fully meet the learning goal or nonexamples to determine which is better and why
4. Generate initial success criteria with students.
 - a. Allow students to share criteria after modeling, examples and exemplars have been shared.
 - b. Add any missing success criteria (i.e., teacher noticing if anything is missing and needs to be added, based on the standards and expectations).
5. Categorize and organize agreed upon success criteria using tools. This might include:
 - a. A t-chart
 - b. A checklist
 - c. An anchor chart
 - d. Other ways of representing the success criteria
6. Have students model/practice using the success criteria to provide feedback and set personal goals as to which criteria to work toward next.
7. Revisit and revise success criteria and goals over time as student learning deepens.

Almarode and Vandas (2018) recommend that the co-constructed success criteria are agreed upon by the class and written in student-friendly language. They should always be paired with examples of student work, exemplars and models of success for student reference. In addition, they need to be organized in a way that is easy for students to monitor their own progress and determine their next steps in reaching the intended learning goals.

General Resources to Support Implementation of Evidence-Based Instructional Practice #2: Clarifying and Sharing Clear Learning Goals:

- [Model Curriculum Framework](#)
 - **Professional Learning Communities Section:** This section of the *Model Curriculum Framework* is designed to provide guidance on creating a culture of continuous improvement through the implementation of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). It takes a closer look at the rationale for the need for PLCs as well as providing clarity on the ongoing work of the PLC process. This section also takes a closer look at how teachers can clarify around the standards as they work collaboratively to address the first two driving questions of a PLC: “What do we expect our students to learn?” and “How will we know they are learning?”

- **Balanced Assessment Section:** This section of the *Model Curriculum Framework* is designed to provide guidance on how teachers and leaders can implement a comprehensive, balanced system of assessments to ensure equitable, high-quality and reliable assessment practices. It focuses on developing an understanding of the formative assessment process how clear learning goals and success criteria are used to drive the process as teachers continually elicit, interpret and act on evidence of student learning.
- [Balanced Assessment Professional Learning Series Module 3:](#) In this module, participants will focus on how to elicit meaningful evidence of student learning through clarification of learning progressions, learning goals and success criteria.
- [Clarity for Learning Book Study:](#) This self-paced study focuses on how teachers gain clarity through constructing learning intentions and success criteria aligned to the standards that allow students to identify where they are going, how they are progressing and where they will go next. The study focuses on answering two critical questions: (1) How can clarity improve teaching and learning? and (2) How does clarity serve as the foundation for other powerful, evidence-based practices?

References

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