Talking About Learning Intentions, Success Criteria and Feedback

Making the learning focus clear and scaffolding activity towards that learning is something that all effective teachers do. Although it is often done orally, visually representing those critical elements helps to focus student attention more effectively. To take more responsibility for their own learning, students need to know: what they are going to learn; why they should learn it; and how they will recognize when they have succeeded.

Learning Intentions, Goals, or Targets tell students *what* they're going to learn. They may be based on the knowledge that needs to be acquired or on a skill that must be learned. Helping students understand *why* it is important to learn it improves motivation and effort.

> **Turning Expectations into Learning Intentions** After selecting the expectation think about *how students will use this skill or knowledge*. Then write it in short and concise student friendly language. For example, the Grade 6 Writing 2.1 "write longer and more complex texts using a wide range of forms (e.g., an "autobiography in the role of a historical or contemporary person, based on research; a journalist's report on a real or imagined event for a newspaper or a television news broadcast; an explanation of the principles of flight; an argument in support of one point of view on a current global issue affecting Canadians; a made-up legend or fantasy, based on themes from their reading, to entertain younger children)" becomes the Learning Intention *"We are learning to write a persuasive argument."*

Success Criteria show students *how* to recognize successful attainment of the Learning Intention. They are both the targets and the measure of success. Although teachers will pre-think the Success Criteria that are needed in relation to a specific Learning Intention, the criteria will actually be co-created by encouraging and supporting students to determine them after viewing examples of successful work. The Success Criteria will then be written in student friendly language. Establishing the criteria for success helps clarify expectations and motivate students to do their best rather than be focused on Level attainment. Quality Success Criteria are characterised by these features:

- are linked to the Learning Intention;
- are specific to an activity;
- are discussed and agreed upon with students prior to undertaking the activity;
- provide a scaffold and focus for students while engaged in the activity; and
- are used as the basis for feedback and peer and self-assessment

Exemplars or Mentor Texts Students need to see specific examples of successful work prior to starting a task in order to have a meaningful discussion about co-creating the Success Criteria.
Format 1: Give them a successful example of the work they will be doing and ask what features it has. Co-construct a list of the features (criteria) that make the work successful.
Format 2: Show 2 contrasting pieces of finished work (example and non-example of success) and ask which is best and why. The analysis will generate the Success Criteria by focusing on what the poorer example could include to be as good as the better example.

Learning Intention	Success Criteria
We are learning to write a persuasive argument.	• state the reason for your writing • express your point-of-view • state reasons for your argument • add supporting evidence for your argument • include your personal statement/conclusion
I am learning to write a persuasive argument.	I will be successful if I: • state the reason for my writing • express my point-of-view • state reasons for my argument • add supporting evidence • include my personal statement/conclusion

Formative Feedback/Progress Monitoring (clear, concise and immediate) is provided for successes and areas for improvement, referenced against the Success Criteria. It is important to align supportive comments with the Success Criteria and the Learning Intention so the focus remains on the learning. After students receive feedback, they should immediately respond to the improvement prompt and carry out the suggestions for improvement. To provide formative feedback we need to "feed forward" suggestions for further success:
- relate the feedback to the Learning Intention and Success Criteria;
- identify where success has occurred;
- set a goal for improvement;
- show where and how improvement could take place;
- allow time for students to make improvements.

Written Feedback: Students often do not read the comments teachers write, particularly when they are paired with marks. When they do read them, they may not understand the marks or comments. Teachers do not need to write a lot; symbols can be used instead, for example "two stars and a wish" or "stars and arrows". A Strategy for Written Feedback:
- find 2 successes against the Success Criteria;
- find the part of the work that has most potential for an immediate 'jump';
- write a short prompt telling the student exactly what to do to this part of their work (depending on the amount of scaffolding a student needs, the prompts may be reminders, scaffolds or examples);
- provide time for them to read, process and respond to your prompt.

Rubrics: The Achievement Chart can guide the development of assessment tasks and tools, but it is meant for evaluative decisions based on a "body of evidence over time". Students need *numerous and varied* opportunities to demonstrate their achievement of the curriculum expectations across all four categories of knowledge and skills. Conversations about the attainment of the Success Criteria provide effective and relevant feedback that will further student learning; but perhaps we need to think of the rubric as a teacher tool to assess a body of knowledge over time.

This isn't new but we need to be more systematic about using this approach in our classrooms so that our students can become actively engaged in their own learning and the assessment process.
1. Identify what students will be learning. (We are learning to . . .)
2. Explain the reason for the learning. (This is because . . .)
3. Co-determine what success will look like. (Success Criteria)
4. Put it all in student friendly language.
5. Revisit the Learning Intention and Success Criteria throughout the activity or lesson.
6. Provide feedback related solely to the Success Criteria.
7. Provide time for improvement.

Diana Hirsh
Near North District School Board, January 2010