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LOOK-FORS AND LISTEN-FORS IN TEACHER CLARITY



It's helpful to know what to look for and listen for as you support teachers' efforts. Simply writing some learning intentions and success criteria on the board is not sufficient. Teachers also must talk about them, parse them with students, and find out what it is students know and don't know about the skills or concepts mentioned. Typically, these discussions last 2–3 minutes. Great discussion starters at the beginning of the lesson include:

- ➔ How much do you know about today's topic?
- ➔ Why is this topic important?
- ➔ What strategies will you need to use today to be successful?
- ➔ What do you expect to be easy about today's lesson? What will be hard?

Teachers should refer to the learning intentions and success criteria throughout the lesson. Many teachers do this before they shift to another instructional arrangement. A teacher who says, "Before we move back to the tables to work with your classmates, let's look again at what the purpose is," is doing just that.

Some use a mid-lesson technique called the muddiest point (Angelo & Cross, 1993). Pause the instruction and ask students, "What's been the muddiest point so far for you? What has been confusing or unclear?" This provides the teacher with feedback, but it also spurs students to reflect on their learning.

These same learning intentions and success criteria come back again near the end of the lesson to check in with students. It might be an exit ticket that again invites students to reflect on the lesson itself and their own learning:

- ➔ What do you need to know next? What wonderings do you have that I haven't addressed?
- ➔ What new knowledge did you acquire today?
- ➔ What strategy worked best for you today, and why?

Invite teachers to do similar reflections in the form of self-assessment. The Teacher Self-Reflection and Planning Guide provides a way for teachers to engage in the same kind of metacognitive thinking we know is so important for our students.

Include learning intentions and success criteria in your meeting agendas and in professional learning.

TEACHER SELF-REFLECTION AND PLANNING GUIDE

Learning Intentions

Teacher Practices Learning Intentions	Beginning B	Progressing P	Consistent C	Next Steps
1. Learning intentions are visible and usable for students.				
2. Learning intentions are discussed at the beginning, middle, and end of the lesson.				
3. Students are given time to reflect on and discuss the learning intentions.				
4. Connections are made to the learning intentions while students are engaged in the learning.				
5. Students are asked to monitor their progress using the learning intentions.				
6. Learning intentions are directly connected to the standard(s).				

Success Criteria

Teacher Practices Success Criteria	Beginning B	Progressing P	Consistent C	Next Steps
1. Success criteria are visible and usable for students.				
2. Success criteria are shared and clarified with students before, during, and after learning.				
3. Success criteria communicate <i>I will know I have learned it when I can . . .</i> with specific parts or steps needed for success.				
4. Success criteria include worked examples, exemplars, or models for clarity.				
5. Students are asked to use the success criteria to self-assess learning progress.				
6. Students are asked to provide feedback to peers using success criteria.				
7. Teacher uses success criteria to provide feedback to students.				

As an instructional leader, you want to know what to look for and what to listen for. In doing so, you enact Mindframe 8: “I explicitly inform teachers and students what successful impact looks like from the outset.” Your ability to articulate your expectations in material ways assists teachers in understanding what success looks like. But let’s not forget another vital mindframe in your leadership: “I build relationships and trust to make it safe to make mistakes and learn from others” (Mindframe 9). Make sure that you are leading by example. Include learning intentions and success criteria in your meeting agendas and in professional learning. Demonstrate to others that you are learning shoulder-to-shoulder with them. Solicit the same kind of feedback you’d like to see in classrooms. Instead of asking them about what they liked and didn’t like (which often garners comments about the temperature of the room or the quality of the snacks), ask them about their learning. In the process, you’ll also deepen your own understanding of the nuances of teacher clarity.