

## Growth Guide for 3.1A

### Communication of the Learning Objectives of the Lesson

*These Growth Guides give guidance in effective teaching practices for specific indicators on the College-Ready Teaching Framework. The suggestions are not all-inclusive – there may be other effective, relevant practices. Also, “Individual results may vary.” Often, multiple cycles of planning, implementation, and reflection are needed to reach proficiency.*

#### Description:

A key academic behavior imperative for college success is self-monitoring, including the ability to assess one’s current level of mastery and understanding, reflect on what worked or needed improvement, and apply learning from a given setting or situation to a new one. Clear learning objectives make this self-monitoring possible and include three components:

1. Effective teachers clearly communicate the learning objectives in **language that students can understand** in order to engage students in the learning and set up their progress monitoring.
2. **Students can state what they are expected to learn.** To do this well, effective teachers foster in students a desire to master the objective by piquing their curiosity and helping them to see how the current topic is connected to their prior and future learning experiences and to their lives and the world outside of school (related to 3.1B).
3. Teachers **reference the learning objective throughout the lesson** (usually including at the close of the lesson, often when asking students to reflect on their learning).

#### Connection to College Readiness:

As noted above, a **key academic behavior** that successful college students exhibit is self-monitoring of their learning. Research has shown that effective learners tend to monitor actively, regulate, evaluate, and direct their own thinking. (Richhart, 2002, cited in Conley, p.16) This metacognition includes evaluating themselves against the learning objectives. Teachers must ensure that students have a clear goal in mind in order to monitor their progress.

#### How to Communicate the Learning Objectives:

##### At a level 3,

Teachers clearly state the learning objective in language that students can understand and relate to, often referencing a place on the board where the learning target or a focus question for the day is posted. Such clear objectives create for students an image of what they will know or be able to do when the day’s instruction is over. For example, when an English teacher

prepares a lesson to address the writing standard, “Support all statements and claims with anecdotes, descriptions, facts and statistics, and specific examples” and shares with her students a learning target such as, “Determine the most effective way to persuade a reader to agree with your point of view,” she has used terms her seventh grade students can truly sink their teeth into. When she asks them why they might want to meet this objective (as she would at level 4 of practice), her students should have no problem thinking of uses for this new skill.

At a level 3, students themselves can state what they are expected to learn if someone asks them. In some classrooms, teachers ask students to tell a partner or share with the class what they are aiming to learn for that day. Other teachers ask students to create and post questions for which they hope to have answers by the end of class. Yet others will share the objective and ask students to hypothesize how the objective will help them with a bigger project on which

students are working. (See Bennett reading, listed below).

Teachers refer back to the learning target throughout the lesson. They may call attention to the objective at the beginning of class and reference it later, often at the end of the class period before students reflect on their learning for the day. In doing this, teachers remind students of the purpose for their learning and help them to think about next steps they might take to master the objective or deepen their understanding. For example, the English teacher described above went on to have her students read a persuasive editorial, and she concluded the students' discussion by pointing to the learning target on the board and exhorting students, "You all agreed that this writer knocked it out of the park in convincing you. You were sold! Now, as you begin to work on your own persuasive piece, you will try to do the same thing. First, you need to determine the most effective way to persuade your reader to agree with your point of view." Later, when students were outlining their own arguments, the teacher reminded them of the larger purpose for writing persuasively: "Good writers have a message to deliver. Remember that you are trying to get your readers to take your side. Think carefully about who your audience is."

At a level 4, students themselves explain not only what they are learning but also why it is important. Teachers at this level make time to discuss why the objective is worthwhile. If classroom visitors were to ask students the purpose of their learning, the students would be able to explain how their work that day will help them succeed in the discipline, in college or in their personal or professional lives. .

#### **Common Misconceptions or Difficulties:**

*Robotic Repetition:* Many teachers have established solid routines around learning targets, such as having students copy the learning target down each day or having a student read the target from the board. These practices are a great start to helping students begin to self-monitor. However, be wary of robotic repetition or reading. Consider modifying these routines to include time for students to talk about how the objective will help them in their coursework or in college or to turn the objective into a question they will be able to answer by the end of class.

*Articulation without Investment:* Students may be able to explain the learning target but may seem disengaged in the topic. If students make comments such as, "We are learning this because it's a standard," or "We are learning this because it's on the test," they may not be as invested in the topic as they need to be for long-term retention and application in other situations. To get better "buy in" to learning, help students understand what the day's learning will help them accomplish as readers, writers, mathematicians, artists, or anthropologists. Frame the objective in terms of a bigger application, such as, "You will be able to determine if lying is ever okay, using examples from *The Pearl*," or, "You will be able to determine if your drink is safe to consume!" (See Prorise, listed below).

#### **Professional Development Strategies:**

##### As in individual or group

- Create a list of learning objective routines specific to your grade and subject. "Strategies to Try: Communicating the Learning Objective to Students" (listed below) offers a few

- routines to explore.
- If you are not sure how a topic prescribed in the standards is related to the broader discipline, read your state framework or talk to teachers with strong content expertise to help clarify the bigger purpose of the objectives.
  - Observe a peer, focusing on how your peer introduces the learning target at the beginning of the class and references back to it throughout the lesson, and describe promising practices.
  - Incorporate these practices into instructional plans.
  - Request support and feedback from a colleague or coach. Work with this person to script the opening of several lessons in which you communicate what students will learn and ask students to make connections to their learning or articulate the purpose.
  - Video your practice and reflect, possibly with a colleague or coach.

#### As a group

- Discuss the indicator and this Growth Guide in the context of your school goals and any opening and closing procedures that are common at your school site, such as Do Nows and end-of-class reflections.
- Review existing practices related to this indicator and brainstorm new practices.
- Conduct a peer observation or use video to look for specific evidence of this indicator.
- List steps toward implementing this indicator with proficiency.
- Talk to your grade level team about how your current unit connects to their disciplines. Use their ideas to help you communicate the importance of your learning targets to your students.

#### **Resources:**

##### Videos

- [PUC Teaching Clip, “Define Speed”, 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Science](#)  
In this clip, a middle school science teacher clarifies the learning target for the day, acknowledges students’ prior knowledge of the topic, and explains its importance. This short clip can help teachers of any subject see an example of teacher talk connecting review questions from the Do Now activity to their upcoming learning.
- [PUC Teaching Clip, “Aztecs”, 7<sup>th</sup> Grade History](#)  
In this clip, a 7<sup>th</sup> grade history teacher explains the learning objective, which he has crafted to help students master a California Social Studies standard for grade 7, in language that is easy for students to understand. He uses the last question on the Do Now to bridge to the communication of the learning objective, connects it to prior learning, and uses guiding questions to extend the learning target beyond the state standard to develop analytical tools and discipline-specific thinking skills.
- Real World Applications Website from the Santa Clara County Office of Education  
<http://www.sccoe.org/rwa/default.asp>  
Teachers sometimes struggle to articulate why a topic is relevant to students. Using this resource may help them deepen their understanding of the content and its relevance. This website links to other websites (organized by content) that help clarify how different subjects are used in the real world.

##### Readings

- Prorise, Mark (October 27, 2011) "What Drives Instruction?" Educational Leadership. Vol 7:2.  
<http://www.ascd.org/ascd-express/vol7/702-prorise.aspx>  
This short article gives a powerful rationale and examples for framing learning targets in ways that are engaging for students using inquiry-based questions.
- Marzano, Robert (2011). "Objectives That Students Understand." Educational Leadership. Vol. 69, No. 9. Retrieved at:  
[http://tcrpalliance.files.wordpress.com/2011/07/objectives\\_objectives-that-students-understand.pdf](http://tcrpalliance.files.wordpress.com/2011/07/objectives_objectives-that-students-understand.pdf)
- Jackson, Robyn. "Know Where Your Students are Going." *Never Work Harder Than Your Students and Other Principles of Great Teaching*. Retrieved at:  
[http://tcrpalliance.files.wordpress.com/2011/07/objectives\\_know-where-your-students-are-going.pdf](http://tcrpalliance.files.wordpress.com/2011/07/objectives_know-where-your-students-are-going.pdf)  
This article explains the importance of clearly identifying learning goals and using those goals to plan instruction, as well as offering tips for effectively communicating the objectives to students.
- Bennett, Samantha (2011). "Fulfilling the Promise of 'All Students Can'" in Daniels, Harvey (ed.). *Comprehension Going Forward*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. Bennett describes the routines in a science class involving students discussing the daily learning target and explaining what it means and how it will help them with their real-world class project.
- Lemov, Doug and Atkins, Norman (2010). "Post It." *Teach Like a Champion: 49 Techniques that Put Students on the Path to College*. Hoboken, NJ: Jossey Bass.
- Marzano, Robert, Pickering, Debra, and Pollock, Jane (2001). "Chapter 8: Setting Objectives and Providing Feedback." *Classroom Instruction That Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement*. Alexandria, Va: ASCD. pp.92-103. In this article, the authors share research on the power of setting objectives and discuss the importance of not being too prescriptive in communicating the objectives to students.

#### Planning Resources:

The documents below can be found on the intranet:

#### [Growth Goals Resources/3.1A Communicate Learning Objectives](#)

- "Strategies to Try: Communicating the Learning Objective to Students"  
This short menu offers strategies to use in the classroom to help students articulate the learning objective and meaningfully connect it to their prior learning and broader learning goals.
- "Communicating My Learning Objectives: Scripting Guide"  
This planning template will guide you to script out how you will communicate the learning objective at the beginning, middle, and close of your lesson.