Establishing Clear Learning Targets to Ensure Clarity and Learning for All: From Standards to Targets to Formative Assessment

Peter Noonan
& Tico Oms
Establishing Clear Targets
to Ensure Learning for All
From Standards to Targets to Formative Assessment

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Middle School Deputy Principal, International School of Bangkok

Facts

• Teachers are hard-working, dedicated individuals.
• Despite all of our hard work, we struggle to help all students learn at high levels.
• The work is never easy and becoming more difficult every year.

The Question

What is the most important work that will result in high levels of learning for all students?
“The most promising strategy for sustained, substantive school improvement is building the capacity of school personnel to function as a professional learning community.”

—Milbrey McLaughlin

In Fact …

There is now conclusive, compelling research stating that acting as a PLC is the most powerful and effective process to systemically change school culture and improve student learning.

Outcomes for This Session

• Understand how a team puts the four PLC questions into action.
• Understand the reasons for unpacking and deconstructing the essential outcomes.
• Practice developing essential outcomes.
• Use data to plan next steps.
### Critical Questions for the Team

1. What do we want our students to learn?  
   (essential, guaranteed, and viable curriculum)

2. How will we know they are learning?  
   (frequent, team-developed, common formative assessments)

3. How will we respond when they don’t learn?  
   (timely, directive, systematic intervention)

4. How will we respond when they do learn?  
   (timely enrichment and extension)

### Begin with the end in mind.

### We have standards.  
Now what?
What Comes Next?

• Clarify standards and agree on what they mean with team members.
• Understand embedded learning targets.
• Agree on the depth of knowledge and thinking levels that students need.
• Set the foundation for knowing what to assess and do next with students.

Deconstructing and Unpacking Essential Outcomes Into Student-Friendly Learning Targets

Deconstructing and Unpacking

• The purpose of this process is to clarify for all what the standard means.
• Teacher teams should agree on which targets are included in the standard and what proficiency looks like.
What Are Learning Targets?

- Learning targets are any achievement expectation for students on the path toward mastering a standard.
- They can be explicit or implied.
- They clearly state what we want students to learn and what teachers and students understand.
- Learning targets should be formatively assessed to monitor progress toward an essential outcome.

What Is a Target?

Write an effective research paper which cites appropriate sources and synthesizes the major information they contain.

Understand how to search for and evaluate sources. Can understand and summarize information. Write coherently, with style and voice.

Essential Outcomes and Targets

Outcome

Target Target Target Target Target Target Target Target Target Target Target

Assessment

Curriculum

Instruction

(Wiggins & McTighe, 2000)
Standards to Learning Targets

• Circle the verbs [skills].
  (Students will be able to …)
• Underline the nouns [content].
  (Students will know …)
• Double underline any prepositional phrases.
  (In what context …)
• Write each verb and noun combination as a separate learning target.
• Include the prepositional phrase in the target.
• Are there any targets that are implied but not stated?

Standard

Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from those that are not.

Essential Outcome

Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text; distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from those that are not.
**Standard:** Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from those that are not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Thinking Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trace</td>
<td>The argument and specific claims</td>
<td>In informational text</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate</td>
<td>The argument and specific claims</td>
<td>In informational text</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinguish</td>
<td>Claims that are supported from those that aren’t</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe [Implied]</td>
<td>Claims supported by reason</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe [Implied]</td>
<td>Claims supported by evidence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Vocabulary:** claim, argument, reason, evidence

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**Ask These Questions**

- What would it look like to teach this target?
- What would it look like if the students could do this at the proficient level?
- Is this skill measurable? What would the assessment look like?

**Hint:** Sometimes the verb needs to be changed to make it more measurable.

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**Thinking Levels**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy</th>
<th>Marzano’s Taxonomy</th>
<th>Webb’s DOK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remember, understand</td>
<td>Retrieval</td>
<td>Recall and reproduction (DOK 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply</td>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>Skills and concepts (DOK 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze</td>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Strategic thinking (DOK 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate, create</td>
<td>Knowledge utilization</td>
<td>Extended thinking (DOK 4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It’s All About the Verb—Really?

• The verb often indicates the level of thinking we expect from students.
• Sometimes verbs are ambiguous and need to be defined clearly, like understand.
• The important questions are: What would this look like if students could do it? What thinking is required to get there?
• There are many taxonomies: Bloom, Anderson, Marzano, Webb DOK. Choose one.

Depth of Knowledge
It’s More Than the Verb

What are levels of thinking that a student must engage in to understand this learning target?
### Standard:
Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from those that are not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Noun</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Thinking Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trace</td>
<td>The argument and specific claims</td>
<td>In informational text</td>
<td>DOK 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate</td>
<td>The argument and specific claims</td>
<td>In informational text</td>
<td>DOK 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinguish</td>
<td>Claims that are supported from</td>
<td></td>
<td>DOK 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>those that aren't</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe [Implied]</td>
<td>Claims supported by reason</td>
<td></td>
<td>DOK 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe [Implied]</td>
<td>Claims supported by evidence</td>
<td></td>
<td>DOK 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Vocabulary:** claim, argument, reason, evidence

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### Focus on Key Words:

**Standard:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Will Students Do? (Skills or verbs)</th>
<th>With What Knowledge or Concept? (nouns or direct instruction)</th>
<th>In What Context?</th>
<th>Level of Thinking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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### Your Turn

With a partner …
- Choose a standard from the sample list.
- Deconstruct or unpack it into its underpinning learning targets.
- Use the template provided.
Misconception Alert!

When you deconstruct or unwrap an essential outcome, you analyze what the student should know and do, not how you will assess it.

(Stiggins, Arter, Chappuis, & Chappuis, 2004)

Teams are clarifying PLC Question 1.

Why Deconstruct or Unpack?

• Clarify what the standard means.
• Identify underpinning learning targets to be assessed.
• Determine what method of assessment is most appropriate.
• Map an assessment plan.

How does a team use learning targets to create common assessments?

Teams are answering PLC question 2.
For Example …
ELA Grade 4 Standard
- Compare and contrast a firsthand and secondhand account of the same event or topic.
- Describe the differences in focus and the information provided.

For Example …
ELA Grade 4 Essential Outcome
- Compare and contrast a firsthand and secondhand account of the same event or topic.
- Describe the differences in focus and the information provided.

| Standard: Compare and contrast a firsthand and secondhand account of the same event or topic; describe the difference in focus and the information provided. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Noun | Context | Thinking Level |
| Compare | A firsthand and secondhand account | Of the same event or topic | DOK 2 |
| Contrast | A firsthand and secondhand account | Of the same event or topic | DOK 2 |
| Describe | The difference in focus each account provided | | DOK 3 |
| Describe | The difference in information each account provided | | DOK 3 |
| Vocabulary | Firsthand account, secondhand account, compare, contrast | | |
Mapping an Assessment

- Identify the targets to be assessed.
- Determine the level of thinking.
- Make the target method match.
  - Selected response for knowledge, application, analysis
  - Constructed response for higher levels

| Standard: Compare and contrast a firsthand and secondhand account of the same event or topic; describe the difference in focus and the information provided.  
**Summative Assessment** |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Noun</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Compare | A firsthand and secondhand account | Of the same event or topic | DOK 2  
Formative Assessment |
| Contrast | A firsthand and secondhand account | Of the same event or topic | DOK 2  
Formative Assessment |
| Describe | The difference in focus each account provided |  | DOK 3  
Formative Assessment |
| Describe | The difference in information each account provided |  | DOK 3  
Formative Assessment |
| Vocabulary | Firsthand account, secondhand account, compare, contrast |  | |

What Targets Should We Assess?

- Targets that are absolutely essential to know.
- Targets that are difficult or are often identified as misconceptions.
- Targets that are prerequisite skills or concepts.
Assessment Mapping/Planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content/ Targets</th>
<th>Knowledge Behavior DOE 1</th>
<th>Comprehension Application DOE 2</th>
<th>Analysis DOE 3</th>
<th>Evaluation/ Knowledge Utilization DOE 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compare and contrast a firsthand and secondhand account of the same event.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Describe the differences in information provided between the two.</td>
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</table>

Your Turn

With a partner:
- Use the standard you just unpacked.
- Determine the thinking levels.
- Use the template to map and plan the assessments.

Assessment is an instructional tool.
John Hattie, *Visible Learning*

After a meta-analysis of thousands of studies:

“A major theme (of excellence in education) is when teachers meet to discuss, evaluate, and plan their teaching in light of the feedback evidence about the success or otherwise of their teaching strategies and conceptions about process and appropriate challenge.”


Use Data to Know What to Do Next.

- Plan a differentiated lesson the next day based on assessment results.
- Students requiring more time and support should be retaught using an instructional strategy different from the first strategy used.
- Students who learned it initially might need additional practice or extension activities.

“Educators can create professional learning communities, but there are no easy shortcuts for doing so. It will require a staff to find common ground and exert a focused, coherent, consistent effort over time.”

—DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2005, p. 11
Embracing Accountability

Professional learning teams embrace accountability and see content mastery as their personal responsibility.

- They redesign the way they define their curriculum.
- They engage students in their own learning.
- They systematically track progress in their classrooms.

(Muhammad, Transforming School Culture: How to Overcome Staff Division, 2009, p. 18)

Thank You!

To schedule professional development at your site, contact international@solution-tree.com.
Protocol for Unwrapping Standards
Finding the Learning Targets to Teach and Assess

1. Circle the verbs (skills).
2. Underline the nouns (concepts) to be taught.
3. Double underline any prepositional phrase (context).
4. Write separately each verb (skills) and noun (concept) combination as a separate learning target.
5. If a prepositional phrase (the context) is included at the beginning or the end of the standard, include it in the target.
6. **Examine** each learning target, asking the following questions:
   - What are the instructional and assessment implications of this target?
     - What would it look like to teach this target in the classroom (setting, materials, strategies)?
     - Is the skill measurable?
     - What would the assessment look like?
     - Do we need to change the verb to make it more measurable?
7. After examining the instructional and assessment implications, are there any targets that are **implicit** or not directly stated in the standard that should be included?
## Unpacking and Deconstructing

**Focus on Key Words:**

**Standard:**

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**Bloom’s (revised) Taxonomy**

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<td>Analyzing</td>
<td>Strategic thinking (DOK 3)</td>
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<td>Evaluating, creating</td>
<td>Knowing, utilizing</td>
<td>Extended thinking (DOK 4)</td>
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Sample Standards

**Grade K Math:** Solve addition and subtraction word problems, and add and subtract within ten, e.g., by using objects or drawings to represent the problem.

**Grade 1 ELA:** Explain major differences between books that tell stories and books that give information, drawing on a wide reading of a range of text types.

**Grade 2 ELA:** Compare and contrast two or more versions of the same story (e.g., Cinderella stories) by different authors or from different cultures.

**Grade 3 Math:** Solve two-step word problems using the four operations. Represent these problems using equations with a letter standing for the unknown quantity. Assess the reasonableness of answers using mental computation and estimation strategies including rounding.

**Grade 4 ELA:** Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character’s thoughts, words or actions).

**Grade 5 ELA:** Analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent.

**Grade 7 Math:** Locate positive and negative rational numbers on a number line, understand the concept of opposites, and plot pairs of positive and negative rational numbers on a coordinate grid.

**Grade 8 ELA:** Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well inferences drawn from the text.

**Grade 9 Math:** Distinguish between functions and other relations defined symbolically, graphically, or in tabular form.

**Source:** National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers (2010).
## Unwrapping and Deconstructing

### Focus on Key Words:

**Standard:**
Compare and contrast a firsthand and secondhand account of the same event or topic; describe the difference in focus and the information provided.

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<tr>
<td>Compare</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrast</td>
<td>Firsthand account, secondhand account</td>
<td>Of the same event or topic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Know)</td>
<td>Firsthand account, secondhand account</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe</td>
<td>The difference in focus each account provided</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Analyzing</td>
<td>Analyzing</td>
<td>Strategic thinking (DOK 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating, creating</td>
<td>Utilizing knowledge</td>
<td>Extended thinking (DOK 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bloom’s Taxonomy</td>
<td>Webb’s DOK (Depth of Knowledge)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge</strong></td>
<td><strong>Recall</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The recall of specifics and universals, involving little more than bringing to mind the appropriate material”</td>
<td>Recall of a fact, information, or procedure (e.g., What are three critical skill cues for the overhand throw?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comprehension</strong></td>
<td><strong>Skill or Concept</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Ability to process knowledge on a low level such that the knowledge can be reproduced or communicated without a verbatim repetition”</td>
<td>Use of information, conceptual knowledge, procedures, two or more steps, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Application</strong></td>
<td><strong>Strategic Thinking</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The use of abstractions in concrete situations”</td>
<td>Requires reasoning, developing a plan or sequence of steps; has some complexity; more than one possible answer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Analysis</strong></td>
<td><strong>Extended Thinking</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The breakdown of a situation into its component parts”</td>
<td>Requires an investigation; time to think and process multiple conditions of the problem or task</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Synthesis and Evaluation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Putting together elements and parts to form a whole, then making value judgments about the method”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Mapping</th>
<th>Content and Targets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level of Cognitive Demand</strong></td>
<td><strong>Knowledge Retrieval</strong> DOK 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Comprehension</strong> Application DOK 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Analysis</strong> DOK 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Evaluation, Knowledge Utilization</strong> DOK 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References and Resources


