CREATING & USING LEARNING GOALS & PROFICIENCY SCALES

HOW TEACHERS MAKE BETTER INSTRUCTIONAL DECISIONS

Carla Moore
Libby H. Garst
Robert J. Marzano

With Elizabeth Kennedy and Deana Senn

Hawker Brownlow
EDUCATION

Table of Contents

Introduction

This guide, *Creating & Using Learning Goals & Proficiency Scales: How Teachers Make Better Instructional Decisions,* is intended as a resource for improving a specific aspect of instructional practice: creating and using learning goals and proficiency scales.

Your motivation to incorporate this strategy into your instructional toolbox may have come from a personal desire to improve your instructional practice through the implementation of a research-based set of strategies (such as those found in the Marzano instructional framework) or a desire to increase the rigour of the instructional strategies you implement in your classroom so that students meet the expectations of demanding standards such as those found in the Australian Curriculum F–10 and the Senior Secondary Curriculum, as well as state standards based on or influenced by the Australian Curriculum.

This guide will help teachers of all year levels and subjects improve their performance of a specific instructional strategy: creating and using learning goals and proficiency scales. Narrowing your focus on a specific skill, such as creating and using learning goals and proficiency scales, permits you to concentrate on the nuances of this instructional strategy to deliberately improve it. This allows you to intentionally plan, implement, monitor, adapt and reflect on this single element of your instructional practice. A person seeking to become an expert displays distinctive behaviours, as explained by Marzano and Toth (2013):

- breaking down the specific skills required to be an expert
- focusing on improving those particular critical skill chunks (as opposed to easy tasks) during practice or day-to-day activities
- receiving immediate, specific, and actionable feedback, particularly from a more experienced coach
- continually practising each critical skill at more challenging levels with the intention of mastering it, giving far less time to skills already mastered

This series of guides will support each of the previously listed behaviours, with a focus on breaking down the specific skills required to be an expert and giving day-to-day practical suggestions to enhance these skills.

Building on the Marzano Instructional Model

This series is based on the Marzano instructional framework, which is grounded in research and provides educators with the tools they need to connect instructional practice to student achievement. The series uses key terms that are specific to the Marzano model of instruction. See Table 1, Glossary of Key Terms.

Table 1: Glossary of Key Terms

Term	Definition
AC	The Australian Curriculum, which sets out consistent content descriptions and achievement standards developed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) designed to provide a base for future learning, growth and active participation in the Australian community.
Desired result	The intended result for the student(s) due to the implementation of a specific strategy.
Monitoring	The act of checking for evidence of the desired result of a specific strategy while the strategy is being implemented.
Instructional strategy	A category of techniques used for classroom instruction that has been proven to have a high probability of enhancing student achievement.
Instructional technique	The method used to teach and deepen understanding of knowledge and skills.
Content	The knowledge and skills necessary for students to demonstrate standards.
Scaffolding	A purposeful progression of support that goals cognitive complexity and student autonomy to reach rigour.
Extending	Activities that move students who have already demonstrated the desired result to a higher level of understanding.

The educational pendulum swings widely from decade to decade. Educators move back and forth between prescriptive checklists and step-by-step lesson plans to approaches that encourage instructional autonomy with minimal regard for the science of teaching and need for accountability. Two practices are often missing in both of these approaches to defining effective instruction:

1) specific statements of desired results and 2) solid research-based connections. The Marzano instructional framework provides a comprehensive system that details what is required from teachers to develop their craft using research-based instructional strategies. Launching from this solid instructional foundation, teachers will then be prepared to merge that science with their own unique, yet effective, instructional style, which is the art of teaching.

Creating & Using Learning Goals and Proficiency Scales: How Teachers Make Better Instructional Decisions will help you grow into an innovative and highly skilled teacher who is able to implement, scaffold and extend instruction to meet a range of student needs.

Essentials for Achieving Rigour

This series of guides details essential classroom strategies to support the complex shifts in teaching that are necessary for an environment where academic rigour is a requirement for all students. The instructional strategies presented in this series are useful for effectively teaching the Australian Curriculum, or standards designated by your school system, state or territory. They require a deeper understanding of content, more effective use of strategies and greater frequency of implementation for your students to demonstrate the knowledge and skills required by rigorous standards. This series includes instructional techniques appropriate for all year levels and content areas. The examples contained within are year-level specific and should serve as models and launching points for application in your own classroom.

Your skilful implementation of these strategies is essential to your students' mastery of the AC or other rigorous standards, no matter the year level or subject you are teaching. Other instructional strategies covered in the Essentials for Achieving Rigour series, such as examining reasoning and engaging students in cognitively complex tasks, exemplify the cognitive complexity needed to meet rigorous standards. Taken as a package, these strategies may at first glance seem quite daunting. For this reason, the series focuses on just one strategy in each guide.

way through the three examples, noting that the verbs (procedural knowledge) are bold and the nouns (declarative knowledge) are underlined. When you are working with a selected standard from your year level or subject area, circle the verbs and underline the nouns. Although these examples may not illustrate the specific year level or content you teach, the process is identical for any subject or year level. Figure A displays a primary example of identifying declarative and procedural knowledge.

Figure A: Primary Example of Identifying Declarative and Procedural Knowledge

Primary – English	Year: Foundation
(ACELT1578): Identify some features of texts including events and characters and **retell** events from a text.	

Figure B shows a secondary school maths example in which the verbs (procedural knowledge) are circled and the nouns (declarative knowledge) are underlined in two secondary school content descriptions.

Secondary – Mathematics	Year: Eight
(ACMMG197): Investigate the relationship between features of circles such as circumference, area, radius and diameter. **Use** formulas to **solve** problems involving circumference and area.	

Figure B: Secondary School Example of Identifying Declarative and Procedural Knowledge

Figure C is a secondary school example identifying declarative and procedural knowledge from several secondary biology content descriptions.

Figure C: High School Example of Identifying Declarative and Procedural Knowledge

Secondary – Science	Year: Ten
(ACSIS204): Use knowledge of scientific concepts to **draw** conclusions that are consistent with evidence **(ACSSU185):** The theory of evolution by natural selection **explains** the diversity of living things and is **supported** by a range of scientific evidence	

The teacher introduces his lesson as follows:

> Good morning, class. Today we will spend a little time talking about the target learning goal for our unit of interpreting persuasive texts. Yesterday, I introduced two different documents about zoos. One was an article, and the other was a blog post, but they both provided information about zoos and painted a picture as you read. Our target learning goal for the unit is for you to be able to compare and contrast two different texts, focusing on the validity and credibility of sources and the author's viewpoint of the piece.
>
> I want you to spend some time in your small groups talking about the 3.0 learning goals on the scale. I want you to discuss your understanding of the goals and what you think you are expected to do to show that you can compare and contrast two persuasive texts. Then, I want you to put the goals written at level 3.0 in the scale into your own words. When every group has had time to discuss and reword the goals, I will ask everyone to share, and then together as a class we will create a student-friendly version of the 3.0 target learning goals. You can refer to this version as often as needed to ensure you understand what you are expected to learn and do in this unit. Feel free to refer to the documents introduced yesterday in class or use them as examples as you write.

The teacher guides and supports the student discussion and revisions as needed, staying vigilant to ensure the cognitive integrity of the standard and original goals transfer to the newly created student-friendly version.

Notice in this example that the teacher does not ask the students to revise every goal. As the lessons build throughout the unit, the teacher asks students to revise each of the goals and add them to the student-friendly classroom scale posted at the front of the room. The final version of the student-friendly scale with every teacher-created goal reworded by students is in Figure 3.3.