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1

How Will I Identify and Communicate Learning Goals to Students?

If you don't know where you're going, you might not get there.

– Yogi Berra

What is the intended learning? That one question should drive all planning and assessment in schools today.

– Rick Stiggins, Judith Arter, Jan Chappuis and Stephen Chappuis, *Classroom Assessment for Student Learning: Doing It Right – Using It Well*

Good teaching and good learning start with well-defined outcomes. These outcomes go by various names in the assessment literature, most commonly *learning goals* and *learning targets*. Regardless of what we call these outcomes, one thing is certain: In order for the assessment and instruction processes to work, both teachers and students need to be unmistakably clear about where the learning is headed and what its ultimate results will be.

In this chapter, we present five tools that help teachers establish learning goals/targets and share them with students:

- 1. Learning Window** helps teachers unpack and convert their standards into four distinct types of learning goals.
- 2. Student-Friendly Learning Targets** helps teachers ensure that learning targets are clear and easy for students to understand.
- 3. Vocabulary Knowledge Rating (VKR)** introduces students to the critical vocabulary terms that they will encounter and need to master over the course of an upcoming unit.
- 4. Review/Preview** helps students see where they are within an instructional sequence by highlighting what's been covered (review) and what's coming next (preview).
- 5. Backwards Learning** has students analyse culminating assessment tasks at the start of a unit to determine what they'll need to know and be able to do by the end of that unit.

Learning Window

What is it?

A framework for transforming complex standards into classroom-level learning goals – specifically, knowledge goals, understanding goals, skill-acquisition goals and dispositional goals/habits of mind

What are the benefits of using this tool?

Standards are often too broad and complex to provide a clear focus for instruction and assessment. This is why it's so important to 'unpack' and convert them into smaller, more specific learning goals/targets. A Learning Window facilitates this unpacking process by helping us determine what our students will need to know, understand, be able to do and be like in order to achieve the standards in question. It does this by having us respond to five simple questions, each of which is framed within a pane or sill of a window-shaped organiser like this one:

What will students need to KNOW?	What HABITS OF MIND will I try to foster?
What will students need to UNDERSTAND?	What SKILLS will students need to develop?
What TERMS will students need to know?	

What are the basic steps?

1. Identify the standards that you intend to address during an upcoming lesson or unit.
2. Begin to unpack them by scanning for useful information. Underline words or phrases that point to knowledge, understandings, skills and habits of mind that students will need to acquire.
3. Use the questions on the reproducible Learning Window (p. 11) to help you complete the unpacking process.

Note: The Skills pane is typically reserved for *general* thinking/learning skills (see the upper panel of Figure 4 on p. 198 for examples). Content-specific (procedural) skills like adding fractions or using a pH meter should be listed in the Knowledge pane.


4. Refer to your completed Learning Window as you map out your lesson or unit. Use it to guide the development of assessments, assignments and activities. (If you want, you can record lesson-planning ideas directly on your window.)
5. *Optional:* Use your completed Learning Window to generate a list of student-friendly learning targets. See the Student-Friendly Learning Targets tool (p. 12, especially Step 2) for guidance.

How is this tool used in the classroom?


- ✓ To unpack standards, identify learning goals and focus instruction/assessment

Teachers use Learning Windows to help them unpack their standards and design their lessons and units. Two sample windows are shown here.

EXAMPLE 1: Prior to developing a lesson on the interdependence of living things, a Year 4 teacher used a Learning Window to unpack the content descriptions that she wanted to address. She then used her completed Learning Window to develop and focus her lesson plans.

<p>Content descriptions that I intend to address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science Understanding: Living things, including plants and animals, depend on each other and the environment to survive (ACSSU073). • Literacy: Use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning to expand content knowledge, integrating and linking ideas and analysing and evaluating texts (ACELY1692) • Literacy: Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive texts containing key information and supporting details for a widening range of audiences, demonstrating increasing control over text structures and language features (ACELY1694) 	
	
<p>LEARNING WINDOW</p>	
<p>Lesson title: Honeybees, Ants and Plants...Oh, My!</p> <p>Purpose: 1. To have students practise main idea identification skills while acquiring critical content knowledge 2. To address literacy needs (lesson is organised around an informational text called 'Animals and Plants Working Together')</p>	
<p>What will students need to KNOW?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animals depend on plants for food and shelter. • Plants depend on animals for pollination, seed dispersal and access to nutrients. <p>(Students should be able to give specific examples for each point.)</p>	<p>What HABITS OF MIND will I try to foster?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Communicating with clarity and precision</u> I'll encourage students to focus on clarity and accuracy while writing their paragraphs. • <u>Thinking about thinking</u> I'll have students reflect on and describe the processes that they use to identify main ideas.
<p>What will students need to UNDERSTAND?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That living things help and depend on each other (the main idea of the lesson/reading assignment) • That good readers try to identify main ideas both as AND after they read something – and that they look for details/examples to support those ideas 	<p>What SKILLS will students need to develop?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Identifying literal and inferred meaning</u> • <u>Writing an informative paragraph</u> I'll have students write a paragraph about how living things help each other (main idea should be supported with details/examples from the text).
<p>What TERMS will students need to know?</p> <p>basic needs, shelter, pollinate, interdependent, main idea, seed dispersal, explanatory paragraph</p>	

EXAMPLE 2: After identifying the standards that she wanted to address during an upcoming unit, a Year 5 history teacher used a Learning Window to unpack those standards and design her unit. Before beginning the unit, she converted the information on her Learning Window into a list of student-friendly learning targets (not shown) and then shared those targets with students.

THE AUSTRALIAN COLONIES	
<p>Content standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse the conditions/factors/motives (political, economic, social) that stimulated British colonisation of Australia. Understand the consequences and significance of colonisation, e.g. the impact on Indigenous Australians. <p>Australian Curriculum content descriptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Historical Knowledge and Understanding: The Australian Colonies - Reasons (economic, political and social) for the establishment of British colonies in Australia after 1800 (ACHHK093).</u> <u>Historical Skills: Historical questions and research - Identify and locate a range of relevant sources (ACHHS101).</u> <u>Historical Skills: Analysis and use of sources - Compare information from a range of sources (ACHHS103).</u> 	
	
LEARNING WINDOW	
<p>What will students need to KNOW?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conditions/factors (political, economic etc.) that stimulated colonisation Consequences of colonisation, including impact on Indigenous Australians 	<p>What HABITS OF MIND will I try to foster?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeking out reasons, explanations and evidence Considering different perspectives and viewpoints Evaluating the quality of ideas and information
<p>What will students need to UNDERSTAND?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> That one person's coloniser can be another person's conqueror How political, economic and social factors can impact the course of history That colonisation happens for a reason <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why did the colonisation of Australia happen when it did? 	<p>What SKILLS will students need to develop?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Researching and reporting</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather relevant information from multiple sources. Take accurate notes, summarise key points. Quote or paraphrase properly; avoid plagiarism. <u>Analysis and use of sources</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comparing different sources of evidence to identify similarities and differences. Putting information into historical context according to publication date.
<p>What TERMS will students need to know?</p> <p>colonialism, penal colonies, The First Fleet, Convicts, Indigenous Australians, Abel Tasman, James Cook, Matthew Flinders, resistance, imperialism</p>	

Title or topic:

Purpose:

Learning Window

What will students need to KNOW?

(terms,* facts, formulas, events, procedures etc.)

What HABITS OF MIND will I try to foster?

*Record key terms in the 'windowsill' portion of the organiser.

What will students need to UNDERSTAND?

(big ideas, concepts, principles, 'hows & whys')

What SKILLS will students need to develop?

(general thinking and learning skills like summarising, note taking, justifying with evidence, analysing)

What TERMS will students need to know?