

# Co-Constructing Success Criteria

Success criteria are the measures or qualities of learning used to determine how well, and to what level, students are meeting the learning intentions (or goals) in class.

These criteria can have a profound impact on student learning because criteria:

- ▶ clarify expectations,
- ▶ provide a sense of awareness for where a student is currently in their learning and,
- ▶ direct how they can improve.

To maximize the impact on student learning, success criteria should be co-constructed with students and used throughout the learning process to develop a shared understanding of what success looks like.

When co-constructing success criteria with students, some important points to consider include the following:



Use student-friendly language and invite student feedback and/or edits to ensure the language is understandable.



Provide clear descriptions for the expectations. If it is too vague or unclear, it could be meaningless or confusing to students.

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*Example:* A success criterion stating “shows strong leadership” could mean any number of things to students. Instead, consider outlining specifics of what might constitute *strong leadership*, such as “encourages and supports peers when/if needed,” “follows rules and guidelines in learning activities,” and other related criterion that would help students better understand what is being looked for in their efforts.

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The success criteria should help students to answer questions like, “How will I know if I have been successful in my learning today?” or “How am I doing with my learning?”



Use an “I can...” statement and take a strengths-based approach to allow students to identify where they are currently with their learning versus where they are not.



Use and refer to success criteria throughout the class, not just at the start or end.

## Ways to

## Co-Construct Success Criteria

### PROVIDE SAMPLES

Provide samples of previous work and/or demonstrations of learning at different levels and have students discuss the strengths of them and what, if anything, can be improved for each sample.

### LIVE DEMONSTRATION

Provide a live demonstration of what is being learned at different levels and have students discuss the strengths of each and what could be improved upon.

#### NOTE

It is recommended that teachers demonstrate physical and health education skills, but if a student is asked to demonstrate, the teacher should ask them ahead of time to ensure they are comfortable with performing in front of their peers. If for any reason the teacher and students cannot demonstrate what is being learned, online videos might be an option.

## COMPARE

Compare two examples of the same skill/concept being learned in class, and at different levels. Have students explain what makes one more successful than the other.

### NOTE

It can be helpful to use the highest and lowest levels of success in the examples as the differences between them will be obvious and easier to discuss.

## SHARE AND DISCUSS AN ESTABLISHED LIST OF SUCCESS CRITERIA

Share and discuss an established list of success criteria with students. After reviewing the success criteria, provide students with a demonstration and/or samples, at different levels of quality. Have the students compare these with the success criteria and explain their decisions.

### NOTE

When first introducing this to students, it might be beneficial to do one or two samples as a large group so all students have an opportunity to experience the appropriate process. After a few samples, it is recommended to use small groups and/or allow students the chance to complete this individually.

## INTENTIONALLY LIST SUCCESS CRITERIA INCORRECTLY

Intentionally list success criteria incorrectly within different levels of quality and have students discuss in small groups what changes should be made and why.

### TIP!

When there are no pre-existing success criteria available, explain to students that you will co-develop the criteria with them and the list can be revised based on their experiences with it. The criteria do not have to be perfect, but they must be useable for both the teacher and the students.

Co-developing and using success criteria with students throughout the learning process will have a profound impact on their learning experience – both in their engagement levels and in their progression of learning. As students come to understand what it means to succeed in their learning and how the established success criteria can guide their efforts, they can effectively participate in one of the best displays of learning – self and/or peer assessment.

To engage effectively and meaningfully in self and/or peer-assessment (also known as assessment as learning), a student must be comfortable and knowledgeable about the success criteria. This means students can accurately articulate which level of success somebody (e.g., themselves and/or a peer) is currently at, what might be missing, and what could be done to improve the learning. This may include forming personalized goals and action plans to make improvements or providing feedback to peers about what worked and what might need more attention. When students can effectively do this, they have come to experience the full benefit that co-constructed success criteria can have on their learning.

For more information on ways to help students become more autonomous learners, see the *Assessment as Learning* resource.

