

Clarifying and Sharing Learning Intentions and Success Criteria

Learning Intentions and Success Criteria – What is the difference?

Learning Intentions

A learning intention:

- is what pupils should know, understand or be able to do by the end of the lesson or series of lessons
- should focus on what we want pupils to learn as opposed to what we want them to do (the task) or how we want them to do it (the activity)
- should put greater emphasis on the process of learning over the completion of a task or the end product
- should encourage pupils to think about their learning
- should be written in the first tense because it's more personal and more likely to engage pupils e.g. I / We are learning to
- should be linked closely to the standards and expectations set out in the experiences and outcomes
- should be important, clear and learner friendly.

Skills or knowledge based learning intentions are easier to create. Concept based learning intentions are more difficult. Technical terms can also cause a problem, but pupils need to learn to cope with these across all subject areas so they should be used and explained regularly.

Success Criteria

Success criteria:

- should be clear, relevant and measurable definitions of success
- describe how the teacher and pupils will know they have been successful in achieving the learning
- use words that emphasise knowing, learning, thinking or using skills
- can be specific descriptions of 'products' or 'performances' or the 'means' or 'learning strategies'
- should be linked closely to the learning intention but separate from it
- should match closely the evidence of learning i.e. what learners say, write, make do
- should be negotiated with the pupils from the outset to help them engage better in their own learning and give them ownership
- should provide a scaffold and focus for pupils while engaged in the activity
- should be used as the basis for feedback and self and peer assessment.

In generating success criteria teachers should avoid:

- repeating the learning intention in the success criteria
- describing the task as the success criteria
- naming the end product as the success criteria
- giving the answer to the problem in the success criteria`
- giving the number of right answers you want
- using words like state, know or understand in success criteria as they don't give any evidence that pupils know or understand, nor do they give pupils clues about how they might come to know or understand.

Teachers find generating success criteria much harder than writing learning intentions. But it well worth the effort, both for pupils and for teachers themselves. The main purpose of

success criteria is not to track improvement over time, but to help bring about that improvement.

The main rationale for learning intentions and success criteria is that they can support and enhance the conversations we have with each other and with ourselves in our heads on a daily basis. Therefore, we should never forget that we learn by having conversations. Engaging with pupils through dialogue and discussion e.g. asking how they know they have achieved success is very formative.

Practical Ideas for Writing Learning Intentions

Writing learning intentions is not easy because it forces teachers to think about what they want pupils to learn, rather than simply accepting statements handed on by others. Asking the following questions can help – What is it you want children to learn?

- Is it knowledge or understanding? Mastering content so you not only know it but understand it?
- Is it the ability to use knowledge and understanding to think, reason, work things out and to solve problems for themselves?
- Is it performance skills such as the ability to count accurately, to conduct an experiment, to play an instrument, read aloud, speak in another language, play a sport or be a good team member?
- Is it the ability to create quality products such as a poem, a cake, an artwork, a PowerPoint presentation or a piece of furniture?
- Is it about developing attitudes and dispositions? Being self-aware? Developing an empathy with other people? Realising what motivates you? What you believe in?

Use Words Associated With Learning

Words like knowing learning, thinking and using (the senses, skills or tactics) emphasise the focus on learning:

- We are learning to
- We are learning to know that
- We are learning to understand that / how
- We are learning to know how to work out
- We are learning to know what strategies to use for

Use SMART Learning Intentions

Use SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-limited) criteria to set learning intentions which focus on specific things that pupils can achieve:

- We are learning to recognise multiples of 2, 5,10
- We are learning to put the days of the week in the right order
- We are learning to write sentences using capital letters and full stops.

Separate the Learning Intention from the Context

To avoid describing the learning intention separate the intention from the context in which it is to be learned. For example:

- Learning intention: We are learning to use colours to create an effective painting.
Context: The sea.
- Learning intention: We are learning the ways in which a mammal gains and loses water.
Context: How the human kidneys work.

By separating the learning intention from the context, teachers can help pupils to generalise skills and recognise that they can be applied or transferred to different topics and different situations.

Consider the Phrasing and Tone of Learning Intentions

The wording of a learning intention affects the willingness of pupils to engage with it. Teachers need to consider the best phrasing and tone for the pupils.

Learning intentions can be phrased as:

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| - Instructions | 'Use capital letters when writing sentences.' |
| - Affirmations | 'I am going to use capital letters when writing sentences.' |
| - Achievements before the event | 'I can use capital letters when writing sentences.' |
| - Goals | 'To be able to use capital letters when writing sentences.' |
| - Learning | 'I am learning to use capital letters when writing sentences.' |
| - Prompts | 'Remember to use capital letters when writing sentences.' |
| - Extra efforts | 'I will try harder to use capital letters when writing sentences.' |

Devise Focused 'Whole Task' Learning Intentions

Even when the learning relates to a task covering more than a single 'bit' of learning, make sure that the learning intention is not too broad (e.g. to write a good story).

More focused learning intentions might be We are learning to:

- write a mystery story using mysterious phrases and suspense
- plan and write a persuasive letter
- write in sentences
- use effective adjectives in a story
- develop a character using descriptive words and phrases
- write a letter of thanks
- use adverbs and adjectives in a description.

Use the Standards and Expectations Set Out in the Experiences and Outcomes

It may be helpful to pick out actual words and phrases from the experiences and outcomes of *Curriculum for Excellence*. You will not necessarily be covering all of a particular experience and outcome so focus in on the particular part that you want to include in the planned learning. This should help you to develop learning intentions that link closely with the experiences and outcomes. Think about how to express that part in the language pupils will be able to understand.

Practical Ideas for Generating Success Criteria

Use the action Verb 'I can'

Use of the action verb 'I can' will help to show how pupils will use their knowledge and demonstrate their understanding.

I can describe

I can give explanations for

I can give examples of

I can identify ways in which

I can plan

I recognise ways in which

I can tell the difference between

I can explain that / what / how / why

I can identify strategies to
I can use scientific names for
I can recognise issues of
I can show ways of / ways in which
I can recognise the value of
I can classify
I can discuss
I can sort
I can predict that

I can suggest
I can make links between
I can interpret
I can construct
I can clarify
I can decide
I can present
I can determine the key points from
I can use evidence to work out.

The ERC Skills Framework provides a mechanism for making the skills being developed more overt to both teachers and learners. As such, the skills statements can be used to shape success criteria.

Classify Skills as Open or Closed

Skills are either predominantly open or closed.

The more closed the skill, the more likely it is that the success criteria will be a checklist of steps you have to go through in a set order to perform the skill e.g. the technique needed to perform a forward roll.

When writing success criteria for closed skills where there is one right answer and there are probably a limited number of strategies you can use to come up with that answer then a checklist of strategies may be more appropriate. For example, success criteria in mathematics may be a list written for the pupils or by the pupils of the process they need to go through to succeed at the learning:

Learning intention: We are learning to how to calculate the area of different triangles.

Success criteria: Remember to

- identify and measure the base height
- multiply the base by the height and divide by two
- record the units in squares.

The more open the skill, the more likely it is that the success criteria will be a menu of techniques you can choose from to perform the skills successfully e.g. a rugby tackle differs according to angle you tackle from and the speed and size of the player you are tackling. Pupils can create their own mindmaps to generate a menu of success criteria for open skills.

Think in Terms of Strategies for Success and Evidence of Success

If the main purpose of success criteria is to help pupils to improve their performance then the criteria needs to describe the strategies to be used for success.

The following examples show how a mix of 'strategies for success' and 'evidence of success' (end products and performances) are used:

Learning intention: We are learning to use a chisel safely and effectively.

Success criteria:

- chisel small sections in a controlled manner (strategy)
- stop short of the final line (strategy)
- finish surface fairly flat (evidence)
- do the two sections fit well? (evidence).

Use Criteria to Support Functional Writing

To support functional writing generate menus of success criteria that focus on a mixture of process and production.

All of the suggestions in the success criteria below need not be taken up to achieve the learning intention, and they do not need to be used in any particular order.

Learning intention: We are learning to understand how writers use language to persuade readers to agree with them.

Context: A current newspaper article.

Success criteria:

- I can identify key terminology and jargon
- I can see the importance of the tagline / headline
- I can explain what the writer's point of view is
- I can identify at least three ways the writer has put this view across
- I can produce my own writing using these techniques.

Whole-part-whole in Physical Education

The idea of 'whole-part-whole' is used by PE teachers. The teacher analyses the performance of the skill overall and identifies any specific weakness, so that the pupil can isolate and practise these. The teacher can give the pupil more effective verbal feedback on that particular part of their performance. Once the weaknesses have been address and improved, the whole skill can be performed again.

The following hockey example demonstrates that teachers who have clear success criteria can help pupils to isolate and practise parts of a skill.

Learning intention: We are learning how to 'drag on the move'

Success criteria: We will aim to

- keep stick and ball in contact
- move towards left-hand marker
- shift body weight and step left
- rotate wrist anti-clockwise
- turn the toe of the stick
- step right and
- drag ball to right round markers.

Give Just Enough Help to Close the Gap

In art and design, music and drama teachers discuss with pupils what makes a good end product or performance and make strategies for success explicit and accessible.

The following is a set of strategies developed for drawing a good portrait:

- Eyes half way down the face
- Distance between the eyes roughly the same as the width of one eye
- Distance between pupils roughly width of the mouth
- Roughly distance between eyes and bottom of the nose is height of ears
- Look down vary circle up c/d above each others
- Eye lids rest on pupils (not staring)
- Structure lines drawn in softly.

Observable Behaviours

When tasks are more open-ended e.g. in writing an essay or for attitudes or dispositions that involve personal and inter-personal skills, it is often useful to focus on observable behaviours by asking, 'What will good look like or sound like?' or 'What will be a fair effort and what will not be acceptable?'

This can be applied to a product: 'What will a good book report, essay, poster, graph, presentation etc. look like?'

It can also be applied to a skill or attitude. For example:

- 'What will it look, sound and feel like if a group is involved in a good discussion?' Possible success criteria might include: one person talking at a time, no interruptions or put downs, positive body language, eye contact with the person speaking, pupils asking questions, agreeing and disagreeing.
- 'What will it look, sound and feel like if your audience appreciates your presentation?' The success criteria might include: pupils sitting still, not fidgeting, eye contact with the speaker, no talking, nodding and smiling, hands up to ask questions, applause at the end.

Practical Ideas for Sharing Learning Intentions and Success Criteria with Pupils

Where learning intentions and success criteria work best, they are subsumed into the quality feedback and support that teachers give to individuals and groups, and that the pupils give to each other.

For this to happen, pupils need to be explicitly taught the processes that are involved in using learning intentions and success criteria. It is only then that a genuine and ongoing dialogue about learning can be established in the classroom, rather than a set of statements to be copied into a jotter.

Make Learning Intentions Accessible while Pupils are Working

To help pupils stay focused on what they're learning remind them of the learning set at the start of the lesson. The process can be helped by making sure that the learning intention is on display while pupils are working:

- Written in a jotter at the start of a piece of work
- Printed on a bookmark or card that can be moved between different documents or areas where work on that intention is being carried out
- Displayed on a poster, flip chart, bubble, whiteboard where the group is working.

Involve Pupils in Negotiating Success Criteria

Involving pupils in the process of identifying the success criteria they will use in assessing their response to a specific learning intention will help them to engage with their own learning and take responsibility for it.

A good way to do this is to brainstorm based on questions such as:

- How will we know if we have achieved this?
- To achieve our learning intention what do we need to remember to focus on?
- What will I need to look for to see if you have achieved this?

There will be occasions where it's worth taking more time to negotiate suitable success criteria with pupils. This can be done by guiding pupils through the process setting, editing, combing and deleting criteria to allow them to describe quality in a way that they can assimilate before embarking on a task designed to take them on to a new piece of learning.

Generating success criteria together also develops the kind of dialogue that strengthens skills and deepens understanding.

Pupils usually need some idea about what constitutes success in a task and the strategies they might use to achieve the task in advance. However, there are occasions when the best

time to talk about success criteria can be after pupils have undertaken a task. This would prevent pupils:

- following the required steps without internalising the process or thinking up an alternative strategy for themselves
- copying the end product rather than using and developing their own creativity and their own understanding of what quality is.

Introducing success criteria after pupils have completed a task (useful for mathematical calculations or any step by step procedure) can help pupils to:

- learn by making mistakes, by trial and error and lateral thinking
- work out the level they're at
- set a target for improvement
- devise the strategies they need to improve.

Using an Exemplar

The best way to help pupils develop a 'nose for quality' products and performances is through discussion.

Show the learners an example of a good piece of work that meets the learning intention and ask them to make a list of the things that make it a good example. Take contributions from pupils and help them if they are missing some criteria which you feel are important to include. When you have a list of criteria, help the class decide which are the most important so that the list is not too long. Either leave the list on display or get the pupils to record it.

A demonstration in music, art or PE can illustrate the standard expected.

Displays of work with success criteria can have certain features highlighted to show why the work is good.

Frequently Occurring Success Criteria

If the learning intention and related success criteria recur during the year then you can print them on A3 paper and stick them on the board. Or if they are frequently recurring then you can permanently display them on the wall in a language that pupils will understand and ensure that a pupil reads them aloud and explains them for each lesson that they are relevant.

Reflective Questions for Staff

- Are the learning intentions set out in appropriate language for the age of the children?
- Are the learning intentions Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic Timed (SMART)?
- How well are the learning intentions explained to children?
- Are the children able to discuss and refine the learning intentions at the beginning of the lesson?
- Are the learning intentions and success criteria visible for pupils to refer to throughout the lesson?
- Do I ensure that all children understand the learning intentions and success criteria?
- Can pupils tell an observer what the learning intentions and success criteria are?
- Do I refer to the learning intentions and success criteria during the lesson?
- Have the pupils had the opportunity to create the success criteria?
- Do I take time at the end of the lesson to discuss how well we have achieved the learning intentions and success criteria?
- Are the pupils able to assess themselves and peers against the success criteria?
- Are the pupils able to determine how they will know if they have been successful in achieving the learning?

- Do the children feel that sharing learning intentions and success criteria are having a positive effect on their learning?
- Have the children been given the opportunity to feedback their views on sharing learning intentions and success criteria to their teacher?
- Do I give specific feedback focusing on success criteria and improvement?
- Do I provide opportunities for the pupils to make improvements to their work?

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