

# Gathering Evidence of Student Learning: Alignment

Examples focused on alignment between Learning Goals and Activities

## Example 1

Learning Goal	Possible Activities	Alignment
Communicate on familiar, everyday topics using a variety of words and phrases	Discuss an historical event	Not well aligned
	Make a list of everyday activities	Better aligned
	In small groups, describe your favorite everyday activities	Best aligned

In this example, the lesson goal is that students can communicate on familiar, everyday topics using a variety of words and phrases. Asking students to communicate about historical events would not be well aligned with the goal, because the content is different.

Asking students to make a list of everyday activities might be similar to the content of the goal but stops short of asking students to actually communicate using a variety of words and phrases. Making the list might be on the pathway to the goal, but doesn't reflect the accomplishment of the goal.

Asking students to have a discussion about a everyday activities is aligned to both the content, that is: familiar topics, and to the performance expectation, which is to communicate using a variety of words and phrases.

## Example 2

Learning Goal	Possible Activities	Alignment
Explain a character's point of view based on an analysis of the story	Construct a concept map outlining a character's belief system	Not well aligned
	Explain a character's point of view in a given text, orally or in writing	Well aligned
	Construct a concept map outlining a character's belief system  Based on the concept map, explain the character's point of view in a given story	Best aligned

In this example, if a teacher wants to know if students can explain a character's point of view, based on the analysis of a story, then an instructional activity asking students to explain the character's point of view in a given story, orally or in writing, would provide good evidence of learning.

But having students construct a concept map outlining a character's belief system would not. This example differs in both content and performance demand.

But an appropriately-designed concept mapping activity could help students acquire the understandings they need to explain a character's point of view – and provide evidence of how students are making sense of the story. But the concept map alone would still fall short by not asking students to EXPLAIN the character's point of view. Combining the two activities provides the best alignment with the learning goal.

Just as the alignment of assessment with learning goals is a central principle in more formal testing and assessment, it is also essential for formative assessment. Even if teachers are clear about where their students are going, they are not likely to be effective in getting students there unless lesson learning activities and the evidence they produce are well aligned with lesson Goals and Success Criteria. When evidence gathering is not well aligned with the lesson goal, teachers' interpretations of where students are and where they need to go next are likely to go awry.