Establishing Learning Goals and Success Criteria: What Are They?

Collaborative Discussion Example

Let's look at an example of a standard, Learning goal, and Success Criteria. First, we start with the standard. It is about engaging in collaborative discussions in a range of different configurations, building on other's ideas, and expressing one's one.

Standard
Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Next comes the Learning Goal.

Learning Goal
Understand that there are strategies that I can use to clarify other's contributions and elaborate on their statements in a collaborative, group discussion.

As you can see, the learning goal does not encompass the full scope of the standard, but only addresses one element of the standard, which is to build on other's ideas in collaborative, group discussions.

The Success Criteria then are created based on the Learning Goal and relate to the lesson activity. They provide more specific detail to the strategies referred to in the Learning Goal.

Success Criteria
I can use ask questions to clarify other's contributions.
I can paraphrase to elaborate on other's statements.

If you are not using standards in your Native language instruction, take some time to decide on your end-of-year goals for your students. These goals will probably be different for different student groups based on their language levels. Once you have determined these end of year goals, plan backwards from there to determine lesson goals that build towards the end-of-year expectations.

Language and Pottery Lesson Example

If students are learning language through the process of building clay pots in a particular lesson, there needs to be a learning goal for the language students are expected to utilize during the activity **and** for the skills and understanding that is the intended learning related to pottery.
More specifically, the activity should *require* the use of the target language.

In this example, language learning goals may relate to the vocabulary needed to communicate about the materials and building process, or for example, the pottery uses, or the design symbolism. Goals may also relate to the language structures students need to understand in order to communicate in this context, for example, how to understand and set up a question.

Students also may need to be able to explain issues involved in the building process, such as how to talk about cause and effect, as in, *if* the clay gets too dry *then* it cannot be molded any longer.

Language Learning Goals:
Understand and can use vocabulary related to pottery materials and building process
Understand and can ask questions about pottery
Understand and can talk about cause and effect

It can be helpful to think about student language learning goals from a few different angles.
- What vocabulary do I want my students to learn in this lesson?
- What are pronunciation patterns they need to practice?
- What language structures will help them communicate their ideas?
- What is the purpose of the language? Is it to explain, persuade, introduce?

Language and Dance Lesson Example

Now let's look at an example that includes Learning Goals, Success Criteria, and learning activities. The Learning Goal comes first – it is a general statement of what students are expected to learn. For this lesson, the teacher had decided to focus on action words in the context of learning a dance to provide an opportunity for students to focus on this language feature as well as further develop cultural knowledge.

> **Learning Goal**
> I understand and can use action words to describe the dance moves we practice

The Success Criteria specify concretely how students will demonstrate their learning – it is just one of many ways the goal could be assessed and is written in language students can understand.

> **Success Criteria**
> I can describe the actions I take to perform different dance moves in the Snake Dance

The activity is both how students will develop the learning and how they will demonstrate their success.

Lesson Activity
Students learn a new dance through listening, watching it being performed, practicing and debriefing. Students describe actions they take such as listening to the beat of the chant and walking in step with the leader to form a line and make snake coils.

You can see how tightly connected Learning Goals, Success Criteria, and Activities are, and how the one builds on the other.