

Gather Evidence Aligned to Learning Goals and Success Criteria

Transcript for the online video from CSAI – Section 2

Welcome back to the module on Gathering Evidence of Student Learning. Recall that the four main ideas of this module are:

- Think of “Evidence” Broadly
- Gather Evidence Aligned to Learning Goals and Success Criteria
- Capture a Range of Student Responses
- Plan and Strategically Position Evidence-Gathering Opportunities

This video is focused on the second idea, Gather Evidence Aligned to Learning Goals and Success Criteria.

When thinking about how to gather evidence of student learning, the first and most important question is, “will this strategy provide the information I need to help students be more successful in their learning?” Evidence gathering strategies are most useful when they make student learning visible, so students and teachers can see how students are doing and whether they’re making progress toward the lesson’s Learning Goals and Success Criteria. The evidence is gathered, as we have seen, as students are engaged in activities during the lesson. But to both support students’ pathways to success and provide good evidence of where students are, lesson activities, Learning Goals and Success Criteria must be closely aligned.

Aligning Learning Goals and Success Criteria with activities means thinking carefully about both the content of goals and Success Criteria AND about how that content will be applied or used. For example, consider the Learning Goal: Compare and contrast similar themes in stories from different cultures. The content of the goal involves story themes. How that content is to be applied – or the performance expectation of the goal – is that students be able to compare and contrast. Instructional activities and the evidence they yield must reflect both the content and the expected level of application.

For example, imagine that 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 an everyday activity is aligned to both the content, that is: familiar topics, and the performance expectation, which is to communicate using a variety of words and phrases.

In another example, the Learning Goal involves students being able to use their knowledge of calendar terms to invite a friend to an event. A worksheet asking students to identify the days of the week and the names of the months might be related in content, but unless the instructional activity involved students in actually creating a written invitation or verbally presenting an invitation, it would fall short on performance demand.

As a final 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.

Alignment is essential for the culminating activity for the lesson, where teachers will be able to fully assess students' achievement of the Learning Goal against the final Success Criterion. 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.

Next, we'll pause and reflect. Is the evidence you currently gather during a lesson aligned to your Learning Goals and Success Criteria? If yes, how did you make sure this was the case? If no, how can you make sure they align? Pause the video for a moment to reflect on this question.

Thank you! You completed the second section of the Gathering Evidence of Student Learning module.

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