

The Who, What and Why of Learning Targets

Excerpt from Leaders of Their Own Learning

Table 1.6 The Who, What, and Why of Learning Targets

What do Teachers do?	What do Students do?	What's the Result?
Craft learning targets for lessons aligned to state and Common Core standards. Determine the best point in a lesson to introduce the learning target—at the beginning of the lesson or later (to promote discovery or grappling with new concepts). Discuss and unpack the learning targets with students.	Engage with the learning target—explain it in their own words with a partner or small group; discuss specific vocabulary; ask clarifying questions; and explore how they will demonstrate that they've met the target.	Lessons have purpose and direction and students are more engaged. Students can articulate a clear vision of the learning.
Refer to learning targets throughout the lesson and align activities to support students in meeting them.	Articulate how each activity is helping them move closer to achieving the learning target.	Students are engaged in the lesson because the purpose of their work is clear.
Check for whole-class understanding.	Self-assess where they are in relation to a specific learning target using quick checks, such as fist-to-five. Support other students in assessing and meeting learning targets.	Teachers and students can make informed decisions about next instructional moves (e.g., offering or attending an additional guided-practice session before moving into independent practice).
Check for individual understanding and use data to make decisions about next instructional steps.	Turn in written checks for understanding (e.g., exit tickets, reflection journals, quick quizzes) that demonstrate where they are in relation to one or more learning targets.	Teachers can make informed decisions about next instructional steps related to individual students (e.g., oral or written feedback, differentiated materials, and instruction in the next lesson).
Connect daily and supporting learning targets to long-term learning targets and engage students in understanding the state and Common Core standards they are working toward.	Understand how daily lessons will help them meet long-term learning targets. Support peers in understanding the learning targets and standards.	Students can see how daily lessons are part of a larger plan to meet standards.

Table 1.6 Continued

What do Teachers do?	What do Students do?	What's the Result?
Institute use of learning target trackers.	Track and record their progress toward long-term and supporting learning targets and make an effort	Teachers and students can see more progress toward standards. They recognize gaps in
Integrate character learning targets and academic learning targets.	Understand how the habits and skills embedded in character learning targets support academic progress.	Academic and character growth are linked.
Ensure the rigor of learning targets with a balance of knowledge, reasoning, and skills targets and attention to the complexity of tasks and assessments.	Develop a range of capacities, from skill building to higher-order thinking.	Students are appropriately challenged by the right kinds of learning targets at the right time.
Align standards, learning targets, and assessments. Create the summative assessments that will evaluate whether students have met the targets.	Understand how they will be assessed from the beginning of a learning experience. Prepare to do their best in meeting the targets.	Learning targets aligned with formative and summative assessments enable effective communication about what students are learning.