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MODULE 2:

# CHALLENGES

OF CREATING & IMPLEMENTING SUCCESS CRITERIA



# MODULE 2

## WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES TO CREATING AND IMPLEMENTING SUCCESS CRITERIA? HOW DO WE OVERCOME THOSE CHALLENGES?

Before you engage with the information in this module, rate yourself on each of the following success criteria using the four-item scale:

- I can describe challenges associated with creating and implementing success criteria.



- I can explain ways to overcome common challenges associated with creating and implementing success criteria.



- I can list different ways of implementing success criteria.



- I can work with my peers to analyze success criteria.



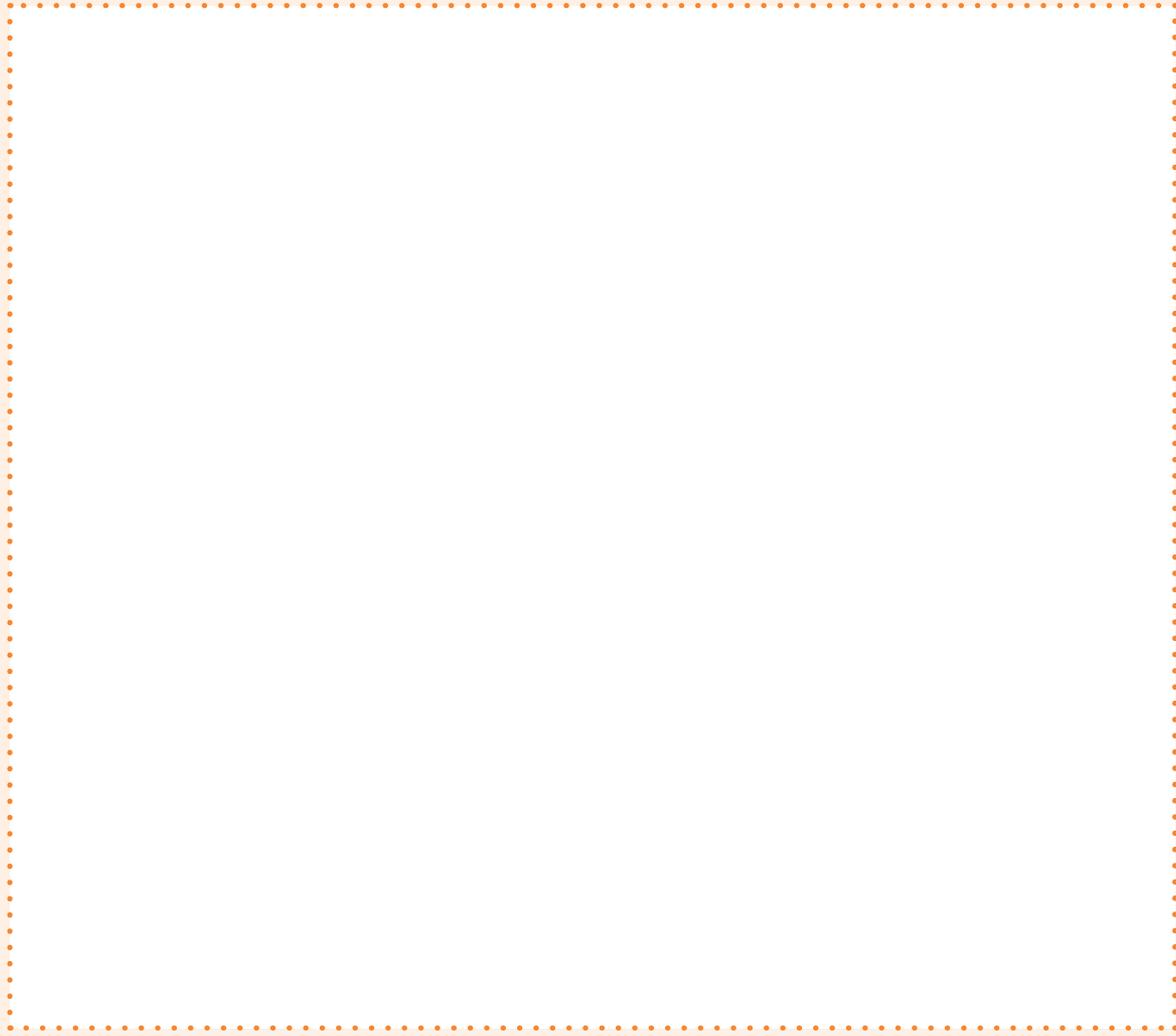
A large rectangular area enclosed by a dotted orange border, intended for a student to write their self-rating for each of the four success criteria listed above.

Describing what we expect learners to say and do if they have met the learning intentions is one thing; sharing that expectation with our learners is something different. We cannot stop at just *us* knowing what success looks like; we have to share this with our students. The transition from learning

intentions to the creation and implementation of success criteria has come with unanticipated challenges for many of us. But know that this is a process of continued improvement. Something is better than nothing, so please do not become paralyzed and give up if this is hard work at first. Knowing now what the challenges are will help us overcome them during our work in this playbook and leverage the full potential of success criteria to yield greater student learning.

**We cannot stop at just *us* knowing what success looks like; we have to share this with our students.**

Using the data collected in the Introduction (turn back to page 4), what challenges have you encountered in creating and implementing success criteria? Jot down your challenges and the challenges of your colleagues or PLC+. What specific evidence or experiences indicated that these are challenges? In other words, what did you or your learners say and do?



# CHALLENGES TO CREATING AND IMPLEMENTING SUCCESS CRITERIA

Let's look at some of the common challenges in creating and implementing success criteria in our schools and classrooms. Many of these may be on your own list of experiences. From data collected through classroom walk-throughs, PLC+ meetings, and coaching sessions with instructional leaders, teachers, and students, we have identified the following challenges:

1. Circular learning intentions and success criteria
2. Too procedural
3. Product-focused
4. Not measurable
5. Agenda or set of directions

As we look closer at how these challenges manifest themselves in the classroom, keep in mind that each module from this point forward is designed to address these challenges. For now, we are just calling them out and providing

non-examples of success criteria that exemplify these challenges so that we can better utilize this playbook to address the specific challenges in your school and class.

## CHALLENGE 1: CIRCULAR LEARNING INTENTIONS AND SUCCESS CRITERIA

One of the challenges we face in creating and implementing success criteria is the use of circular phrasing between the learning intentions and success criteria. In some classrooms, the learning intention and success criteria are presented as answers to three questions: *What am I learning? Why am I learning this? How will I know that I have learned it?* In the case of circular phrasing, the learning intention and success criteria are the same thing, thus providing no clear understanding about the learning or the evidence that will demonstrate learning. Let's look at our first set of non-examples of success criteria that exemplify this circular phrasing.

### HIGH SCHOOL ALGEBRA: SYSTEMS OF EQUATIONS

What am I learning?	I am learning about solving systems of equations.
Why am I learning this?	So that I can solve systems of equations.
How will I know that I have learned it?	When I can solve systems of equations.

### ELEMENTARY SCIENCE: MATTER

What am I learning?	I am learning about the different types of matter.
Why am I learning this?	So that I can know the different types of matter.
How will I know that I have learned it?	When I can identify the different types of matter.

### KINDERGARTEN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

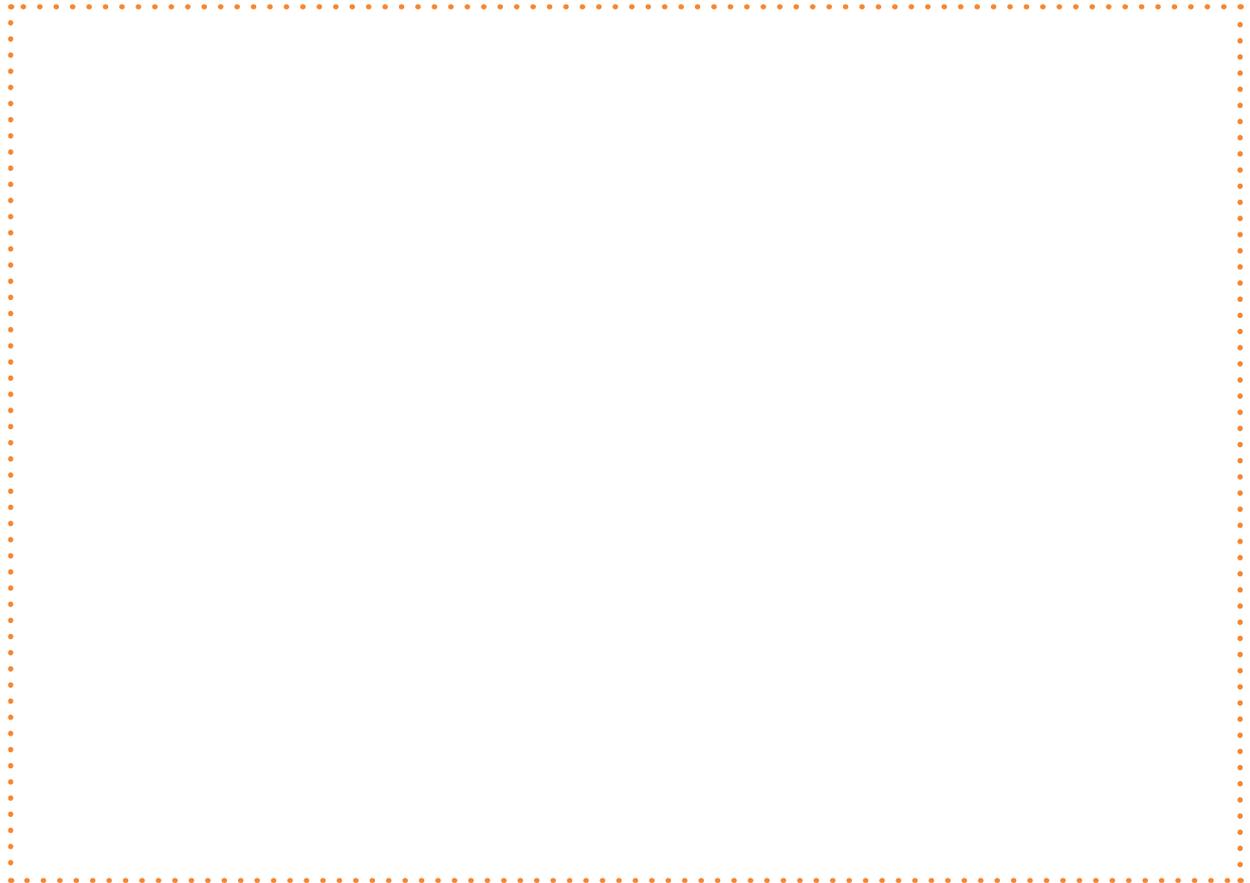
What am I learning?	I am learning to ask and answer questions about details in a text.
Why am I learning this?	So that I can ask and answer about details in a text.
How will I know that I have learned it?	When I can ask and answer about details in a text.

### MIDDLE SCHOOL HISTORY: ANCIENT EGYPT

What am I learning?	I am learning to locate and describe the major river systems and how they supported permanent settlement and early civilizations.
Why am I learning this?	So that I can tell how rivers supported early civilizations.
How will I know that I have learned it?	When I can locate rivers and describe how they supported permanent settlement and civilizations.

Although the success criteria in the examples are visible to both the teacher and the student, this phrasing, and thus logic, is circular. Therefore, these success criteria are not adding to students' understanding of what learning

looks like. Take a moment to brainstorm what causes circular phrasing and possible ways to address the challenge. In other words, what could these teachers do to avoid this challenge?



## CHALLENGE 2: TOO PROCEDURAL

Another challenge with success criteria is the disproportionate focus on *procedural outcomes*. Solving for the missing variable, writing a descriptive paragraph, calculating the slope, answering the “W” questions, listing a fact family, solving net force equations, naming the three branches of government, balancing chemical equations, and listing the steps of mitosis are all outcomes linked to procedural knowledge. Success criteria can and should incorporate *conceptual learning*, *application of concepts and thinking*, *dispositions*, and *collective or collaborative learning outcomes* (i.e., *I can* versus *We can*). Although incorporating

each of these into a single learning experience is equally unrealistic, focusing solely on procedures is a far too limited view of success and quickly turns into simply “getting to the right answer” without understanding that answer.

### Success criteria can and should incorporate the following:

- conceptual learning
- application of concepts and thinking
- dispositions
- collective or collaborative learning outcomes

### MIDDLE SCHOOL MATHEMATICS: MEASUREMENT AND GEOMETRY

What am I learning?	I am learning that the circumference of a circle is proportional to its diameter.
Why am I learning this?	So that I can understand geometric relationships in circles.
How will I know that I have learned it?	When I can state the value of pi. When I can identify the parts of the equation for circumference. When I can solve for the diameter. When I can find the circumference given $d$ . When I can find circumference given $r$ .

### ELEMENTARY SCIENCE: EARTH AND SPACE SYSTEMS

What am I learning?	I am learning about our solar system.
Why am I learning this?	So that I can understand my place in the universe.
How will I know that I have learned it?	When I can name the eight planets. When I can list them in order from closest to farthest from the sun.

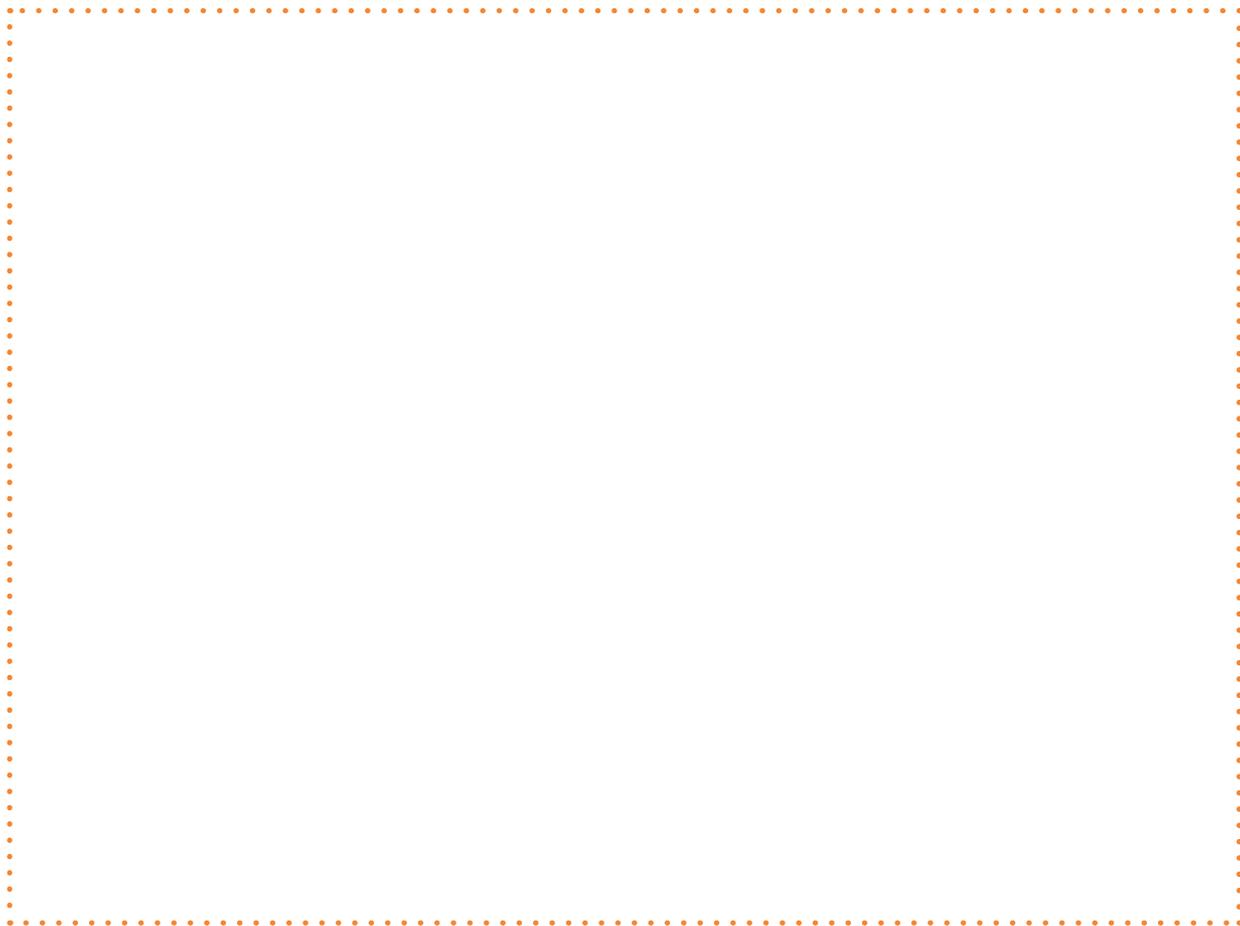
### ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

What am I learning?	I am learning to distinguish features of a sentence (e.g., first word, capitalization, ending punctuation).
Why am I learning this?	So that I can write better sentences.
How will I know that I have learned it?	When I can find the first word in a sentence. When I can find the capitalized letter to start the sentence. When I can find the ending punctuation.

### SOCIAL STUDIES: EXPLORATIONS OF THE AMERICAS

What am I learning?	I am learning to locate land claimed by Spain, France, England, Portugal, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Russia.
Why am I learning this?	So that I understand the development of the Americas after European contact and conquest.
How will I know that I have learned it?	When I can name the location claimed by each country (Spain, France, England, Portugal, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Russia).

Return to Module 1. Starting on page 17, we devoted time to laying the foundation for generating success criteria beyond content learning intentions. With that in mind, what are the causes of and potential solutions to exclusively procedural success criteria? How would you edit these success criteria to incorporate additional learning intentions?



## CHALLENGE 3: PRODUCT-FOCUSED

Learning is a process and there are important milestones throughout the process that give us insight into how our learners are progressing in their learning. Far too often, success criteria focus on the final product and inadvertently minimize the process necessary to arrive at that product.

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In mathematics, we often jump straight to correctly solving a computation problem. In history and English language arts, the inclination is to focus

on essays, tests, and projects. In science, an example of product-focused success criteria is “I can create a model of cellular reproduction and use it to explain the process.” What milestones or indicators exist along this learning journey that allow learners to monitor their progress and teachers to check for understanding? If a linear progression is not appropriate (e.g., proofs in geometry, human impact on the environment, multigenre writing, learning about different forms of government), what collective evidence will provide a more comprehensive picture of success? This is an important point. Students can use well-constructed success criteria to monitor their own progress toward the expected learning or collective indicators. Furthermore, are there social-emotional and language learning intentions that should inform the success criteria? Success criteria should not be limited to the end goal.

### ELEMENTARY MATHEMATICS: COMPUTATION

What am I learning?	I am learning about subtracting numbers.
Why am I learning this?	So that I can subtract 10 and 100.
How will I know that I have learned it?	When I can correctly solve 15 subtraction problems.

### MIDDLE SCHOOL SCIENCE: CONSERVATION OF MATTER

What am I learning?	I am learning about chemical reactions.
Why am I learning this?	So that I can understand how atoms stay the same but rearrange to form new molecules or compounds.
How will I know that I have learned it?	When I can balance simple chemical equations using subscripts and coefficients.

### ELEMENTARY ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: WRITING

What am I learning?	I am learning to introduce a topic and state my opinion.
Why am I learning this?	So that I can tell people my opinion.
How will I know that I have learned it?	When I can include all items on the writing checklist.

### HIGH SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES: ECONOMICS

What am I learning?	I am learning about competition among buyers and sellers.
Why am I learning this?	So that I understand a market price.
How will I know that I have learned it?	When I can predict prices based on information about buyers and sellers.

When you looked at these non-examples, you likely perceived a lack of clarity in what was going on in each scenario. For example, the computation in elementary mathematics statements leaves us asking what kind of subtraction problems are meant. The *why* statement literally suggests that learners will solve one problem,  $100 - 10$ , when this teacher

likely means subtracting multiples of 10 from a given number or subtracting 10 or 100 from a wide range of values. This isn't clear as written due to a singular focus on the end product. That is exactly our point. What causes us to focus on the product and ignore the process? How do we avoid this challenge? Add your and your colleagues' thoughts to the box that follows.

## CHALLENGE 4: NOT MEASURABLE

Another challenge that contributes to the disconnect in our learners' understanding of expectations is the measurability of success criteria. For example, success criteria that add a qualifier, or refer to a highly abstract concept or idea, are often not measurable by us or our students. This creates a situation where both the

teacher and the learners are not only unclear about what success looks like, but they will find it very difficult to translate the success criteria into actionable steps toward the learning intention. As we will see in an upcoming module, success criteria that are not measurable can impede the opportunities to engage in deliberate practice, meta-cognition, and the giving and receiving of feedback. Consider the following nonmeasurable success criteria.

### HIGH SCHOOL GEOMETRY: REASONING, LINES, AND TRANSFORMATION

What am I learning?	I am learning about the relationships between angles formed by two lines intersected by a transversal.
Why am I learning this?	So that I can prove the two lines are parallel.
How will I know that I have learned it?	When I can reason quantitatively. When I can engage in critical thinking. When I can know if two lines are parallel.

### ELEMENTARY SCIENCE: WEATHER

What am I learning?	I am learning that the analysis of weather data is used to predict weather events.
Why am I learning this?	So that I can better understand how weather events impact ecosystems.
How will I know that I have learned it?	When I can thoroughly analyze weather data. When I can make the best weather predictions for a given area.

### ELEMENTARY ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: SPEAKING AND LISTENING

What am I learning?	I am learning to describe people, places, things, and events.
Why am I learning this?	So that people want to listen to me.
How will I know that I have learned it?	When I can express my ideas. When I can use relevant details.

### ELEMENTARY SOCIAL STUDIES: EVERYDAY LIFE ACROSS TIME

What am I learning?	I am learning about transportation methods from the past.
Why am I learning this?	So that I understand how people went places.
How will I know that I have learned it?	When I can explain how transportation works.

How would we make these success criteria more measurable? What do you see as the causes of this particular challenge?

## CHALLENGE 5: AGENDA OR SET OF DIRECTIONS

Oftentimes our attempts to provide as much clarity as possible move our success criteria away from learning and toward an agenda or set

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of instructions. For example, in mathematics, we may provide instructions for how to solve a problem instead of focusing on the content, practices, and dispositions associated with the learning of a particular topic. In science, we can easily turn the learning intention for a laboratory investigation or experiment into an agenda or list of instructions about what to do before, during, and after the experiment. In reading and writing, we focus on rules or procedures. In history and social studies, we focus on the chronological order of tasks to be completed.

### ELEMENTARY MATHEMATICS: NUMBER LINES

What am I learning?	I am learning about number lines.
Why am I learning this?	So that I can use them to solve problems.
How will I know that I have learned it?	When I can draw a straight line. When I can mark off the number line. When I can label the number line.

### HIGH SCHOOL PHYSICS: ONE-DIMENSIONAL MOTION

What am I learning?	I am learning about motion in one dimension.
Why am I learning this?	So that I can solve kinematics equations.
How will I know that I have learned it?	When I can read the problem. When I can draw a diagram of the problem. When I can list the known variables. When I can identify what I am solving for. When I can select the right equation. When I can solve for the unknown variable.

### HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: LITERATURE

What am I learning?	I am learning to determine the meaning of words and phrases using word parts.
Why am I learning this?	So that I can figure out words as I am reading.
How will I know that I have learned it?	When I can identify prefixes. When I can identify suffixes. When I can identify roots or bases.

### ELEMENTARY SOCIAL STUDIES: PHYSICAL AND HUMAN GEOGRAPHY

What am I learning?	I am learning about geographical features.
Why am I learning this?	So that I can describe our local region.
How will I know that I have learned it?	When I can name the characteristics of deserts. When I can name the characteristics of mountains. When I can name the characteristics of coastal areas.

How would we make these success criteria more about learning and less like an agenda or set of directions? What do you see as the causes of this particular challenge?

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# SUCCESS CRITERIA SELF-ASSESSMENT

Let's apply the list of challenges created by you and your colleagues on page 33 and the five challenges just described to help us self-monitor, self-reflect, and self-evaluate how we create and implement success criteria. Locate and record previous, current, or future learning intentions and success criteria in the space provided. Then, with your colleagues, discuss and analyze each example. Do you recognize any of the five challenges in your success criteria? Does this provide insight into the data collected in the Introduction (page 4) when you

posed the following question to your students: *How will you know that you have learned the information or met the day's success criteria?* Here are some additional reflective questions to guide your discussion and analysis, which are also included in the Introduction.

- Do my success criteria truly represent the learning intentions for my learners?
- Did I pick the best option for implementing success criteria based on the type of learning expected of my students?
- Am I using success criteria to support my students taking ownership of their learning?

PREVIOUS, CURRENT, OR FUTURE LEARNING INTENTIONS AND SUCCESS CRITERIA	MY THOUGHTS ABOUT AND RESPONSES TO THE REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS ABOUT SUCCESS CRITERIA	MY COLLEAGUES' THOUGHTS AND RESPONSES	NEXT STEPS IN MY OWN LEARNING ABOUT SUCCESS CRITERIA

## OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Success criteria are more than *I can* statements. Each of the challenges described is brought about by the insistence that these teachers only use *I can* statements to answer the question: *How will I know that I have learned it?* Although *I can* statements are one option, and in many instances a great option, they are not the only approach and do not communicate success criteria effectively in all instances. This narrow view of success criteria leads to circular phrasing, too much emphasis on procedural learning, a hyperfocus on a product, criteria that are not measurable, and/or agenda items and a set of directions. Then, learners struggle with knowing what success looks like for a given intention. In a remote learning environment, these challenges are exacerbated by the fact that we are more than an arm's length away from learners. Thus,

clarity around what success looks like for both us and our learners is paramount. If our view of how to articulate success is solely focused on *I can* statements, we miss opportunities to provide expectations in collective learning, concept attainment, guided inquiry, project-based learning, and problem-solving teaching.

Returning to the concept of a playbook, we will devote entire modules to other ways of communicating what success looks like in our schools and classrooms.

**If our view of how to articulate success is solely focused on *I can* statements, we miss opportunities to provide expectations in collective learning, concept attainment, guided inquiry, project-based learning, and problem-solving teaching.**

Ways of communicating criteria for success:

- *I can* statements
- *We can* statements
- Single-point rubrics
- Analytic/holistic rubrics
- Teacher modeling
- Exemplars
- Co-constructing criteria for success

We want to emphasize that there is no one best option. Some options work better than others, depending on the lesson. The determining factors about which of the above options to use once again take us back to the three reflective questions. If you and your colleagues need to refresh your memory, turn back to page 7 or page 41. To ensure we encode these three questions, retrieve them from your memory and write them in the space provided.



Again, *I can* statements are one way to share expectations of success with learners; however, in each of the previous examples, the sole use of an *I can* statement may impede learners as they engage in the acquisition of complex concepts and then apply those concepts and thinking to other contexts (transfer). This, in turn, becomes an equity issue—the topic of our next module.

Now that you have finished this module, rate yourself on each of the following success criteria using the four-item scale. Use the space provided at the end to self-reflect on your own learning. What will you do next with this information? You may not yet be at the expert level, as it takes time to integrate knowledge into practice.

- I can describe challenges associated with creating and implementing success criteria.



- I can explain ways to overcome common challenges associated with creating and implementing success criteria.



- I can list different ways of implementing success criteria.



- I can work with my peers to analyze success criteria.



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