How-to

Create a student learning scale

Student learning scales provide both teachers and students the opportunity to track student growth on a specific standard over a long period. However, creating your first learning scale may be somewhat daunting. Below is a systematic process for creating your first student learning scale.

Use the *Example Student Learning Scale* found on the website as you read these steps:

**Step 1:**
Pick a content area. Then consider which standards are the most important for your students to learn. These are often standards that take the entire year to teach, and that are essential for students to be proficient in prior to starting the next grade. Ainsworth terms these “Power Standards” (2003). Choose one standard for your scale.

**Step 2:**
Rewrite the standard in student-friendly terms. This will become the student learning goal. Consider if you want to evaluate the entire standard in one scale.

*Example standard: R.L. 4.2 Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.*

*This may be rewritten to say: “Students will use details to pick out the theme in a story, drama, or poem.” (The summary portion might be a separate learning scale due to the complexity of the task.)*

**Step 3:**
Place the student-friendly goal in level 3 of your scale. This is the learning target for all students in your class.

**Step 4:**
Create a more advanced goal for the level 4 part of your scale. Many teachers use the Depth of Knowledge chart (Webb, N. L., et al., 2005) to help with this. Level 4 of the chart is designed to extend student thinking.

*Example: “Students will connect multiple texts with the same theme using details from each story, drama, or poem as evidence.”*
Step 5:
Write a goal that is easier than the level 3 goal and place it in the level 2 part of your scale. The skill/concept portion of the Depth of Knowledge chart may be helpful here. This level shows progression toward the target goal, but students are still developing understanding.

Example: “Students separate the theme from the details in a story, drama, or poem.”

Step 6:
The target goal for level 1 is the same as for level 2, but it includes the words “with help” to show that students are at a beginning level and only exhibiting partial understanding of the target learning goal.

Example: “With help, students are able to separate the theme from the details in a story, drama, or poem.”

After following these steps, you will have a completed student learning scale. Use this scale with your students to help them track their own progress toward proficiency. Slowly introduce new scales when you and your students are ready.

References: