

A science teacher's story of goal setting for student growth

Everyone reads the scenario

Read the scenario, keeping the following question in mind: What is this teacher's shift in thinking that will lead to a meaningful impact on her students' learning?

After reading, reflect on the question. Make yourself notes on your handout. You will return to this question later.

As participants finish reading, pass out the Think and Plan Guidance sample.

Simulation activity

1. Select two participants from your table who will take on the role of principal and teacher. They will read the script below to simulate part of the discussion between Ms. Nye and her principal about goal-setting for student growth.
2. After the simulated discussion, other table participants will discuss the following questions.
 - a. Why is it important for teachers to focus on enduring skills and concepts of their content area rather than simply content knowledge when goal setting for student growth?
 - b. Why is it important that teachers use appropriate sources of evidence (those that demonstrate where students are in meeting mastery of the enduring skills/concepts) when determining baseline data for goal-setting?
 - c. What structures and/or processes are in place in our district(s) to support teachers in any content area to develop meaningful student growth goals?
3. Provide the guiding questions document that can help guide conversations between teachers and principals on goal setting for student growth.

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Script:

This script represents a discussion between a teacher, Ms. Nye, and her principal as the teacher shares a draft of her student growth goal.

Principal: I know you implemented the student growth goal setting process last year? How do you see last year's experience with goal setting informing this year's experience?

Ms. Nye: Last year, I used one assessment and it simply assessed students' knowledge of the content. I really tested students at a low level. Simply put, I gave a multiple choice test that told me if students knew the content I was going to teach across the year. This didn't get me the results I wanted. It didn't seem very meaningful. Of course, I expect students to know more content after a year's instruction. But what is really important for them to know in order to be successful throughout the year and in next year's science class? I asked myself how I could make goal-setting more meaningful for me and for my students. That's when I started thinking about the new science standards and how I could assess students in context of the scientific practices or cross-cutting concepts. As students become more skilled in these, they would also be more likely to access and understand the content I want to teach.

Principal: I see you identified the scientific practices of engaging in argument from evidence *and* obtaining, evaluating and communicating information as the enduring skills for focus in this year's goal. Why did you choose these for your focus?

Ms. Nye: I spent the first weeks of school formatively assessing where students were in demonstrating mastery of the key concepts and enduring skills I would teach this year. Using the rubric we designed in our PLC team, I found that students had a wide range of needs, but all students could grow in these two scientific practices. These practices seemed to overlap with other practices such as asking questions or analyzing and interpreting data and if students increase their ability in these two practices it is likely that other scientific skills will be enhanced as well.

Principal: We think of enduring skills as those that endure beyond a single test data, are of value in other disciplines and/or are necessary for the next level of instruction. How do the skills you identified in your goal meet this definition?

Ms. Nye: Being able to engage in argument from evidence is certainly a skill that endures beyond a single test date; it can apply to what we do all year as students learn to use data to support claims and hypotheses. Additionally, this skill can be of value in all other disciplines. Students need to learn to support their arguments with evidence from text, data, observations, and more. It's the same for the practice of obtaining, evaluating and communicating information. Students need to know how to do this well and that skill can be developed throughout the school year. This skill certainly also applies to other content areas. When students learn to locate needed information and evaluate its creditability, they gain a deeper

understanding of the content we are teaching, whatever that content happens to be. Communicating information is a skill that students will develop throughout their school years and beyond.

Principal: I see you used a variety of assessment practices to learn where students are in meeting mastery of the enduring skills important to your content area and to identify more specific areas of need for your students. Then you pulled the data together around a rubric to determine a baseline for your goal. How did the support of your PLC team help you?

Ms. Nye: After working with my PLC team, I had a better understanding of the expectations of the new science standards and of what it might look like for students to reach mastery. Together, we designed the rubric that each of us could use to identify where students were in meeting mastery of the cross-cutting concepts and scientific practices. We also analyzed some existing assessment items to determine if they were appropriate, adjusted assessments, and develop some new assessment items and discussed what kinds of evidence we could collect that would help me determine a baseline for my goal. I observed student discussions, analyzed student work, gave students some performance assessments, asked them to respond to some prompts. I could use this information to determine the starting point, the baseline, for each student on the rubric.

Table Discussion following simulated discussion:

- a. Why is it important for teachers to focus on enduring skills and concepts of their content area rather than simply content knowledge when goal setting for student growth?
- b. Why is it important that teachers use appropriate sources of evidence (those that demonstrate where students are in meeting mastery of the enduring skills/concepts) when determining baseline data for goal-setting?
- c. What structures and/or processes are in place in our district(s) to support teachers in any content area to develop meaningful student growth goals?