**ACTION TOOL A:**

**Understanding Learning Targets**

**What Is a Learning Target?**

The most effective teaching and the most meaningful student learning happen when teachers design the right learning target for today’s lesson and use it along with their students to aim for and assess understanding.

A learning target describes, in language that students understand, the lesson-sized chunk of information, skills, and reasoning processes that students will come to know deeply and thoroughly.

**How Does a Learning Target Differ from an Instructional Objective?**

An *instructional objective* describes an intended outcome and the nature of evidence that will determine mastery of that outcome from a teacher’s point of view. It contains content outcomes, conditions, and criteria.

A *learning target* describes the intended lesson-sized learning outcome and the nature of evidence that will determine mastery of that outcome from a student’s point of view. It contains the immediate learning aims for today’s lesson.
### Checklist for Evaluating Learning Targets

A learning target contains **ALL** of the following characteristics. It must

- Describe exactly what the student is going to learn by the end of today’s lesson.
- Be stated in developmentally appropriate language that the student can understand.
- Be framed from the point of view of a student who has not yet mastered the intended learning outcome for today’s lesson.
- Be connected to and shared through the specific performance of understanding designed by the teacher for today’s lesson (what students will be asked to do, say, make, or write that will deepen student understanding, allow students to assess where they are in relation to the learning target, and provide evidence of mastery).
- Include student look-fors—descriptive criteria that students can use to judge how close they are to the target, stated in terms that describe mastery of the learning target (not in terms that describe how the students’ performance will be scored or graded).
### MATHEMATICS EXAMPLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To focus and direct learning, you need:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content outcome</strong></td>
<td><strong>Conditions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge and/or skills a student should be able to demonstrate</td>
<td>Circumstances under which students will be able to perform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student will be able to solve problems using 3-digit addition with carrying in the ones' place.</td>
<td>Without using calculators or fact charts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Students' learning target for today's lesson on: Introducing carrying.

**What am I going to learn?**
I am going to be able to use a method called “carrying” so that I know what to do with the 10 under 8+2 or the 12 under 9+3 in problems like these:

- 438
- 219
- 152
- 563

**How will I show what I know?**
I will use a paper and pencil and show my work as I solve the problems.

**How will I know how well I am doing—what are my look-fors?**
I can explain and show how to put the carrying marks in the right places as I solve the problems (most of the time). My work will look like this example:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
438 \\
+219 \\
\hline
657
\end{array}
\]

#### Students' learning target for another day's lesson on: Practicing for accuracy and proficiency.

**What am I going to learn?**
I am going to be able to use carrying to solve problems like these accurately and smoothly:

- 438
- 219
- 152
- 563

**How will I show what I know?**
I will use a paper and pencil and show my work as I solve the problems.

**How will I know how well I am doing—what are my look-fors?**
I can put the carrying marks in the right places and use them to get the correct answers (most of the time).

#### Students' learning target for yet another day's lesson on: Identifying relevant problems.

**What am I going to learn?**
I am going to be able to write my own story problems that need 3-digit addition with carrying as part of their solution.

**How will I show what I know?**
I will create stories from my own classroom or home or shopping.

**How will I know how well I am doing—what are my look-fors?**
I can write three story problems that need 3-digit addition with carrying as part of their solution (depending on the lesson, may add “and I can solve them correctly”).

#### COUNTEREXAMPLE:

**NOT a learning target for today's lesson**

I can do 3-digit addition with carrying in the ones' place to solve problems.  

[NOTE: This is not one lesson-sized chunk, and it is mostly in teacher language, just with an “I can” stuck on at the beginning.]

**Without using calculators or fact charts.**

I will get at least a B on my quiz.  

[NOTE: This criterion is about scoring, not showing learning. It is not shared as a student look-for.]
### READING EXAMPLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher's instructional objective for a set of lessons focused on teaching: The concept of main idea.</th>
<th>Content outcome</th>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge and/or skills a student should be able to demonstrate</td>
<td>The student will be able to identify main idea.</td>
<td>In grade-level-appropriate reading passages one paragraph in length.</td>
<td>The student can say, select, or write the main idea of a passage with 80 percent accuracy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students' learning target for today's lesson: Identifying the main idea of a paragraph.</th>
<th>What am I going to learn?</th>
<th>How will I show what I know?</th>
<th>How will I know how well I am doing—what are my look-fors?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I will learn that a main idea is the most important thing the writer of a paragraph is trying to tell me.</td>
<td>I will read paragraphs and choose the main idea for each paragraph from a list.</td>
<td>I can choose the right main idea and explain why it was more important than the other choices.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students' learning target for another day's lesson on: Summarizing main ideas that are stated literally.</th>
<th>What is the writer trying to tell me?</th>
<th>How will I show what I know?</th>
<th>How will I know how well I am doing—what are my look-fors?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I will learn to answer the question “What does the writer say is the main idea?” in one sentence.</td>
<td>I will read paragraphs and look for main ideas that the author has stated. I will usually find these in the topic sentence.</td>
<td>I can restate the paragraph’s main idea in my own words, in one sentence.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students' learning target for yet another day’s lesson on: Making inferences to identify the main idea.</th>
<th>What is the writer trying to tell me?</th>
<th>How will I show what I know?</th>
<th>How will I know how well I am doing—what are my look-fors?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>I will learn to answer the question “What is the writer trying to tell me?” in one sentence.</td>
<td>I will read a paragraph, think about how all the details in the paragraph are related, and describe what the paragraph as a whole is trying to say.</td>
<td>I can summarize the paragraph’s main idea in my own words, in one sentence.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTEREXAMPLE: NOT a learning target for today’s lesson</th>
<th>I can identify the main idea in a paragraph.</th>
<th>I will get all of the teacher’s main idea questions right.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>NOTE:</strong> This is not one lesson-sized chunk, and it is mostly in teacher language, just with an “I can” stuck on at the beginning.</td>
<td><strong>NOTE:</strong> This is too general; it is not connected to a specific performance of understanding.</td>
<td><strong>NOTE:</strong> This criterion is about scoring, not showing learning. It is also too general and cannot serve as a student look-for that promotes meaningful self-assessment.</td>
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