

INTRODUCTION



Hitting a target you cannot see is extremely difficult—challenging at best. What would you do if someone asked you to prepare a healthy dinner? Although you know exactly what the intention is, without a clearer description of what this individual means by a healthy dinner, you would likely succeed in meeting that intention if, and only if, you and this person share a common understanding of a healthy dinner. Without that understanding, your success is left to chance. During the planning and preparation, you are left guessing about the ingredients, supplies, and how to use them to create the final product. Without additional information, you would have to wait until the actual presentation of the dinner to even find out if you met expectations.

Now, imagine a similar scenario involving 30 students and a teacher who asks them to construct a viable mathematical argument, gather compelling scientific evidence, use text features to make meaning, or compare two historical accounts of the same event. Without any additional information, these 30 students—much like you and your preparation of a healthy dinner—are left to interpret what is meant by a viable argument, compelling evidence, text features, or an appropriate comparison. The students are clear about the goal or intention (e.g., construct a viable mathematical argument), but their success at meeting the learning intention is left to chance. Ambiguity in expectations of what success looks like in any process, task, or product diminishes learning. This effect applies to both students and teachers (see Table I.1).

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TABLE I.1 Ambiguity in Expectations of Success Affects Both Students and Teachers

STUDENTS ARE LIMITED IN THEIR POTENTIAL TO . . .	TEACHERS ARE LIMITED IN THEIR POTENTIAL TO . . .
Retrieve the necessary background knowledge and prior knowledge	Activate the necessary background knowledge and prior knowledge
Identify the necessary tools and skills	Select high-impact approaches or strategies
Monitor their progress toward successful completion	Design and implement checks for understanding that monitor learners' progress
Seek support and feedback	Scaffold and provide feedback to learners
Recognize when they are successful	Decide when learners are ready to move forward

Ensuring that teachers and learners have clarity about expectations through high-quality success criteria increases the likelihood that learning will happen and *all* learners will meet the learning intentions. Thus, we focus on this critical need. Clarity for learning must move beyond just learning intentions and provide supporting, high-quality success criteria that define what success looks like for *each and every* learner in our schools and classrooms.

Success criteria provide the parameters that establish what success looks like for the learning intentions that day. In our dinner example, success criteria would have provided clear parameters about what a healthy dinner was or was not. Success

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criteria would also have provided parameters for what makes an argument viable in mathematics, what makes evidence compelling in science, what it means to effectively use text textures, or what is an appropriate comparison of bias in historical documents. This very essential component of

teaching and learning is vital in both face-to-face and remote learning environments. Whether teaching and learning are happening in the brick-and-mortar classroom or through a learning management system (LMS), success criteria are necessary for providing a clear view of what success looks like for any process, task, or product.

To be clear, this is not a new idea nor do we pretend that we are all not at least familiar with success criteria in the classroom. The term *success criteria* has appeared in classrooms and conversations around learning as far back as the late 1950s. In 1968, Paul Harmon defined success criteria as a necessary component of any performance objective associated with student outcomes. He stated that a performance objective must be accompanied by “a paragraph describing the *success criteria* by which student’s behavior is to be judged as acceptable or unacceptable” (p. 85). What is most fascinating—and relevant to our discussion here—is that Harmon follows his definition with, you guessed it, a set of parameters that defined quality success criteria. In other words, he provided success criteria for what makes good success criteria. He expected that

the paragraph will detail, if relevant:

- a. the time allowed to complete the performance;
- b. the number, percentage or proportion of total test items that must be answered correctly to pass;
- c. the actual responses that will be considered acceptable;
- d. the person who will judge or evaluate the performance; and
- e. the distinct point in time at which the performance is considered acceptably completed. (Harmon, 1968, p. 85)

Although we have come a long way from this conceptualization of success criteria, you likely have noticed that some challenges arise with the creation and implementation of criteria for success in your own classroom.

We agree. In our work with schools and classrooms around the world, our experiences with classroom walk-throughs, PLC+ professional learning community meetings, and coaching sessions with instructional leaders, teachers, and students

suggest that something is not working in our quest to ensure that both we and our learners know what success looks like.

Cathy Youell, a veteran and master elementary teacher, shared feedback with John about this exact concern. Through conversations during grade-level and PLC+ meetings, Cathy noted that her learners continually struggle with answering the question *How will I know that I have learned it?* In most cases, they simply did not answer the question or gave a default response: “When my teacher says so.”

Kateri hears this same reflection from teachers. They have practiced setting learning intentions, but describing what it looks and sounds like when students have met those learning intentions is an intimidating challenge. Teachers wonder how to make success criteria specific enough to be measurable while broad enough to allow for student voice and choice. Teachers want to address the “so what” element of learning, but they are not always sure themselves why the content matters beyond their current grade level or outside of school. Doug and Nancy also noticed a decrease in the percentage of learners who could answer this exact question during their classroom visits (Table I.2).

TABLE I.2 Responses to Questions About Learning

	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES							
	WEEK OF 10/18	WEEK OF 11/1	WEEK OF 11/8	WEEK OF 11/15	WEEK OF 11/22	WEEK OF 12/6	WEEK OF 12/13	WEEK OF 1/10
What am I learning?	80	80	75	60	75	80	80	85
Why am I learning this?	75	60	65	65	65	70	70	70
How will I know that I have learned it?	50	55	70	60	55	65	65	70



Available for download at resources.corwin.com/successcriteria/playlist

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Before we move forward in this playbook, let's do a preassessment to see where you and your learners are in describing *how* they will know if they have learned the information. Using an entrance ticket, one-on-one conferencing, or a computer-based survey (e.g., Mentimeter, Google form), ask your learners the following question: *How will you know that you have learned the information or met the day's success criteria?* Use the space below to summarize their responses and your reflections about their responses.



What percentage of your learners could answer this question? What trends did you notice in the responses? Hold on to these data, and we will revisit this question again in an upcoming module.

Learners appear to struggle when asked to describe *how* they will know if they have learned the information. Through our work in schools and classrooms across the globe, we have found that this struggle differentially affects learners with certain background or demographic characteristics. For example, English language learners may struggle to describe how they know if they have learned the information because of how we create and implement success criteria. How we create and implement success criteria may inadvertently narrow the access and opportunity for learners with a disability to demonstrate their learning progress. If success criteria should provide both the teacher and the learners with a clear understanding of what success looks like, the evidence suggests we are falling short with all learners. Success criteria have an average effect size of 0.88 (Visible Learning Meta^x, 2020). Falling short on providing learners with a clear understanding of what success looks like eliminates the potential to double the rate of learning in our classrooms, which therefore limits the access and opportunity for *all* of our learners to meet the day's learning intentions.

The difficulty our learners have recognizing and articulating criteria for success may be a reflection of our struggle with developing and using success criteria in our classroom. Addressing this struggle is the goal of this playbook. How can we better approach the creation and implementation of success criteria to ensure we and our learners know what success looks like? The answers to this question lie in the modules of this playbook.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS PLAYBOOK

The purpose of this playbook is to take a closer look at the creation and implementation of success criteria so that we can better connect our learners to a shared understanding of what success looks like for any given learning intention. The potential to maximize student learning with success criteria can only be actualized through effective implementation. The modules of this playbook will focus on expanding our understanding of what success criteria are and how we can better utilize them. In addition, we will explore how to better engage our learners in success criteria that lead them to self-monitor, self-reflect, and self-evaluate their own learning.

Up to this point, our perspective and use of success criteria has been far too narrow and thus leads to the very challenges highlighted by Ms. Youell and teachers' reflections as well as the walk-through data presented by Doug and Nancy. We will address those challenges so that both you and your learners can clearly describe what successful learning looks like.

THE LEARNING PLAN WITH THE MODULES

This is a playbook and, by definition, contains a collection of tactics and methods used by a team to accomplish a common goal and get things done (Merriam-Webster, 2020b). In the case of this playbook, the common goal is the creation and implementation of high-quality, high-impact success criteria. Therefore, each of the subsequent modules is designed to support your thinking and use of success criteria in your classroom. But the modules are not necessarily intended to be completed in sequential order or all at once. When coaches and their teams go to their playbooks to get things done, they select the plays that best fit the current context or situation. For example, a spread delay offense designed to slow things down in basketball is not a great play to call if your team is down by 5 points with less than 30 seconds to go in the game. Likewise, the modules in this playbook should be utilized by your team when the current context or situation calls for the module. So, what's the plan?

This playbook is divided into three parts (Table I.3). The first part will look at what success criteria are, where they come from, and the purpose for devoting an entire book, or playbook, to this one concept. This involves tackling five of the biggest challenges encountered when creating and implementing success criteria in our teaching. These barriers, as we have discovered in our own work, result in learners struggling to describe *how* they will know if they have learned the information. This has never been more important than today as we capitalize on the many developments in instructional technology to support remote learning. If learners are not physically in a classroom, we must ensure they know what success looks like from a distance. Starting with what success criteria are and where they come from, we will spend time thinking about the role of success criteria in processes, products, and dispositions.

The second part of this playbook takes an up-close look at the variety of options we have in creating and implementing success criteria. From creating *I can* statements to co-constructing success criteria, we will devote individual modules to each of the options we have for helping our learners know what success looks like. From there, we enter the third part of this playbook. This final part focuses on the relationship between high-impact, high-quality success criteria and meta-cognition, deliberate practice, feedback, and equity. We will look at where success criteria come from and how to align our approach to creating and implementing them based on the types of learning expected in the day's lesson. Finally, we will devote considerable attention to the role success criteria play in promoting self-monitoring, self-reflection, and self-evaluation through effective feedback and deliberate practice.

TABLE 1.3 The Success Criteria Playbook Overview

	FOCUS
Part 1	
Module 1	What Are Success Criteria?
Module 2	What Are the Challenges to Creating and Implementing Success Criteria? How Do We Overcome Those Challenges?
Module 3	How Do Success Criteria Pave the Way for Equity?
Part 2	
Modules 4–9	What Is the Continuum of Success Criteria? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I Can/We Can</i> Statements (Module 4) • Single-Point Rubrics (Module 5) • Analytic/Holistic Rubrics (Module 6) • Teacher Modeling (Module 7) • Exemplars (Module 8) • Co-Constructing Criteria for Success (Module 9)
Module 10	Different Types of Success Criteria for Different Aspects of Learning
Part 3	
Module 11	How Do We Use Success Criteria to Foster Meta-Cognition?
Module 12	How Do Success Criteria Support Deliberate Practice and Transfer of Learning?
Module 13	What Is the Relationship Between Success Criteria Feedback?
Module 14	How Do We Use Success Criteria to Fulfill the Promise of Equity?

For Modules 4–9, you and your PLC+ team members will utilize these when the context of the learning in your classrooms calls for them. Success criteria are important in our quest to develop learners who take ownership of their learning and engage in self-monitoring, self-reflection, and self-evaluation. But the creation and implementation

of success criteria can be challenging. Ensuring that our criteria for success are not circular, incorporate more than just procedural learning, include the processes of learning, can be measured, and move beyond *I can* statements requires us to focus on

High-quality success criteria improve our decisions about teaching and improve the outcomes of our learners.

why we use success criteria to begin with. High-quality success criteria improve our decisions about teaching and improve the outcomes of our learners. So, our hope then is that you will approach this challenge with these benefits in mind. If learners in your classroom are not able to articulate what success looks like or how they know that they have learned it, we hope that you will use Modules 4–9 to rethink your approach through reflective questioning. Here are some examples:

- 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?

Expanding our perspective on what success criteria are and how we utilize them in our classrooms will have a noticeable effect on how our learners engage in the learning.

Let's establish your own learning intentions and success criteria for your work in the playbook. What do you want to learn from this playbook (learning intention) and how will you know you have learned it (success criteria)? These can be individual as well as collective learning intentions and success criteria. Use the space provided to record your goals and criteria for success.



Just as you did with your data from the previous task, keep this information close by so that we can revisit these learning intentions and success criteria throughout the playbook.

LEARNING WITHIN THE MODULES

We make two assumptions about your learning journey in this playbook. First, we assume you have used *The Teacher Clarity Playbook, Grades K–12: A Hands-On Guide to Creating Learning Intentions and Success Criteria for Organized, Effective Instruction* (Fisher, Frey, Amador, & Assof, 2019) and are familiar with the processes in that book. Thus, we will not repeat the information about analyzing standards

and developing learning progressions. However, those are absolutely necessary and essential skills and understandings for this playbook. This is the next step! Second, we assume that you have noticed that your learners, and maybe even you, struggle with knowing what success looks like in your classroom. This may be evident in the data you collected in the above task. If these two assumptions fit your current professional learning journey, this playbook is for you.

Each of the modules begins with a self-assessment and then introduces a specific goal, an explanation of the ideas within the module to establish the focus for the learning (a learning intention). The module then continues with modeling how the process is applied through examples across learning domains. Examples will cover primary, elementary, middle school, and high school content, skills, practices, dispositions, and understandings. From kindergarten to calculus and from learning to read to writing compelling reports, we seek to provide a wide range of examples to show that high-quality success criteria can serve as a shared language for how we communicate expectations in our classrooms.

Each module offers you an opportunity for practice and application with a variety of content and grade levels. The practice section encourages you to write your answers and discuss them with your team, if possible. Although using this book as part of your personal learning is possible, the creation and implementation of high-quality success criteria is best done collectively with colleagues. One benefit of this collaboration is the opportunity to engage in critical dialogue around what success looks like for you and your learners. These critical conversations will provide feedback on the quality of our criteria.

Each module also includes opportunities for creating and implementing high-quality success criteria that can be used immediately in your classroom. Again, this is best done during collaborative planning or during your PLC+ meeting (Fisher, Frey, Almarode, Flories, & Nagel, 2020). At the end of the modules, you are asked to self-assess. This will allow you to check your own understanding and to identify areas to focus on in the future.

COLLABORATING TO CREATE AND IMPLEMENT HIGH-QUALITY SUCCESS CRITERIA

The most effective way to create and implement high-quality success criteria is to work collaboratively with your grade-level team, content team, or PLC+. We believe that the work of this playbook is an essential component of the work you do in your PLC+. The use of these five guiding questions of PLC+ will keep the focus relentlessly on the learning of our students:

- Where are we going?
- Where are we now?
- How do we move learning forward?
- What did we learn today?
- Who benefited and who did not benefit? (Fisher et al., 2020, p. 8)

In PLC+, teachers identify learning intentions and discuss ideas for instruction. They meet to review student work and figure out if their efforts have been fruitful. They also talk about students who need additional instruction or intervention to be successful. This is all informed and supported by high-quality success criteria. High-quality success criteria ensure that we have high expectations, focus on a common understanding of what success looks like, activate the conversation around learning, and ensure equity of access and opportunity to learning for all students (Table I.4).

TABLE I.4 How Success Criteria Support the Work of PLC+

PLC QUESTION	TEACHER CLARITY MODULE	DESCRIPTION
Where are we going?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modules 4–9: What Is the Continuum of Success Criteria? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>I Can/We Can</i> Statements (Module 4) Single-Point Rubrics (Module 5) Analytic/Holistic Rubrics (Module 6) Teacher Modeling (Module 7) Exemplars (Module 8) Co-Constructing Criteria for Success (Module 9) 	These modules focus on what success criteria are and are not. This includes looking at the different approaches for creating and implementing success criteria.
Where are we now?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Module 10: Different Types of Success Criteria for Different Aspects of Learning Module 11: How Do We Use Success Criteria to Foster Meta-Cognition? 	Knowing where learners are requires that both teachers and learners know their current level of understanding. Success criteria provide that clarity to both teachers and learners.
How do we move learning forward?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Module 11: How Do We Use Success Criteria to Foster Meta-Cognition? Module 12: How Do Success Criteria Support Deliberate Practice and Transfer of Learning? Module 13: What Is The Relationship Between Success Criteria and Feedback? 	To address this question, we have to leverage the high-quality success criteria to engage learners in taking ownership of their learning, engage in deliberate practice, and give and receive feedback.

CONTINUED 



PLC QUESTION	TEACHER CLARITY MODULE	DESCRIPTION
What did we learn today?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Module 12: How Do Success Criteria Support Deliberate Practice and Transfer of Learning?• Module 13: What Is the Relationship Between Success Criteria and Feedback?	These modules look at how success criteria give insight into providing opportunities for learners to practice. These practice opportunities allow for the giving and receiving of feedback about learners' progress and our teaching.
Who benefited and who did not benefit?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Module 12: How Do Success Criteria Support Deliberate Practice and Transfer of Learning?• Module 14: How Do We Use Success Criteria to Fulfill the Promise of Equity?	These modules ensure that all learners have access and opportunity to high-quality teaching and learning. Success criteria set the high expectations for this to occur. Specifically in Module 14, we look at how to ensure equity in our classrooms.



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Now, let's get started!