

B-1: Set big goals

Figure out what you'll use to measure success

Example: North Carolina Chemistry

This teacher describes why he chose to use the North Carolina End-of-Course exam, rather than the SAT II, to measure achievement of the big goal.

In planning for assessment, I have to figure out what I will use to measure whether my students mastered the content and achieved the big goals.

First, I had to [determine what assessment to use](#). I knew that it would not make sense to measure their mastery of course content with a growth assessment since the students would not be coming into this course with any previous chemistry knowledge, so I decided on a mastery assessment. I quickly learned that I had two excellent choices: the SAT II Chemistry exam and the North Carolina End-of-Course exam.

I learned that both of them [measure mastery of the major components of my course](#), namely changes in scientific understanding and theories, naming and numbering systems, periodic trends, stoichiometry and equilibrium and thermodynamics. The North Carolina EOC exam is designed by the state and is comprehensive and naturally aligned to my learning goals since they're based on state standards. There was a great deal of overlap between the state learning goals I would be teaching and the content assessed on the SAT II as well. In fact, the SAT II seemed to more closely match the cognitive levels my learning goals call for.

Now it was time to figure out which assessment was more [meaningful](#). I was starting to become very compelled by the SAT II, since by succeeding on the SAT II Chemistry exam, my students would be able to apply to a wider variety of colleges and universities and have a better shot at admission. However, I spoke with a few veteran teachers and mentors, who based on the past experiences of excellent teachers, told me that my students may not be able to achieve the score on the SAT II that would be needed to increase their chances of admission into college. After careful consideration of that advice, I decided to use the NC EOC because achievement on that exam would represent achievement against an absolute bar that is recognized by the state as a whole, and may increase my students' chances of succeeding in honors-level science courses next year.