

## B-1: Set big goals

### Set an ambitious and feasible initial goal to start the school year on the right path

#### Why do this?

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Without knowing your students, you won't be able to set a final bar that you're sure is the right bar. However, before the school year starts, you can use historical data to help you set the best possible bar as an initial goal. This will allow you to plan for assessment (P-1), create your instructional plan (P-2) and invest your students in your goal (I-2) from Day One—allowing you to save valuable instructional time in the beginning of the school year. After the school year starts and you give your students a diagnostic assessment, you will adjust and differentiate your goal for your students based on what you learn about their actual starting points.

#### What are good initial targets?

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At this point, you can use historical data to help you set the best possible bar as an initial achievement target. You'll need to modify this once you've got diagnostic data. Based on our work with teachers for the past 17 years, here are the general guidelines that we would suggest as a baseline or starting point for setting your targets:

If you...	set a...	with the initial target...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>will measure achievement of your goal with a growth assessment</li> </ul>	Growth goal	1.5 years growth in almost all cases; 2 years growth for secondary ELA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This represents a significant amount of growth that will help catch students up to their peers.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>will measure achievement of your goal with a mastery assessment, and</li> <li>you have comparative data about past performance of students in your context and students in high-performing schools on that assessment</li> </ul>	Gap-reduction goal	Learn about the achievement gap in your context to set an appropriate target for your assessment (see “Additional guidance for setting gap-reduction goals” section below)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>will measure achievement of your goal with a mastery</li> </ul>	Mastery goal	Average score of 80% mastery of all learning goals

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<p>assessment, and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>you do not have</i> comparative data about past performance of students in your context and students in high-performing schools on that assessment</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The 80% target means that students are ready to move to more complex content because they can demonstrate that they have mastered your course's learning goals four out of five times.</li> </ul>
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### How do I learn about my students before school starts?

Regardless of what type of target you set for your students, you can get a jump start on tailoring your goal to your students by learning as much about your students and their context before the school starts.

Consult these resources	Ask these questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Veteran teachers at your school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What achievement targets do excellent first-year and experienced teachers set for their students?</li> <li>▪ What academic gains have excellent first-year and experienced teachers been able to achieve in the past?</li> <li>▪ Based on past experience, what skills and knowledge can I expect my students to come in with, on average, and at the high and low ends of the spectrum?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Teachers at better-resourced schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What do teachers at better-resourced schools expect students to achieve at the end of the course?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Your students' records from past years</li> <li>▪ Your students' teachers from last year</li> <li>▪ Information about individual students: reading levels, writing skills, individualized learning plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What skills and knowledge did my students master by the end of last year?</li> <li>▪ In which content areas did they make great gains?</li> <li>▪ What content areas did they struggle with?</li> </ul>

### Additional guidance for setting gap-reduction targets

1. **Establish a baseline.** You've established your vision for what students should be able to know and do and identified a state exam that reflects this vision . How do students in your school community — or in low-income communities in your state — perform on this assessment? Use last year's average scale score

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for this subgroup as your baseline. Your state department of education website should have this information, or your school will. Both sources should have historical data going back several years, so you should note if and uncover why last year may have been an anomaly. You should also determine if your particular placement would somehow differ from the school's general average, perhaps because you have been assigned students labeled as special needs or gifted and talented. You may even have access to your students' scores last year as a reference point. Wary of a potentially skewed sample from their school and unable to find that data, you may decide to use the district average or the average of low-income students in their state as your baseline instead. Your region will have a spreadsheet with this information.

2. **Identify your pacesetter.** How are more affluent students in your state, those with greater opportunities, performing? Your region will have a spreadsheet with the average scale scores of students who do not receive free and reduced lunch. It is both sobering and not surprising at all that the average scale scores of students who do receive free and reduced lunch score at about the same distance below the state average as students who do not receive free and reduced lunch score above the state average. (In some states, data about students who do not receive free and reduced lunch is not available. In these cases, we have identified a high-performing district to serve as the pacesetter.)
3. **Create your target.** Consult colleagues, such as your program director, to determine a target that is truly at the intersection of ambitious and feasible. How far have excellent teachers at your school been able to push their students in the past? Depending on your context, this could be 15%, 20%, 40%, or 75%. This number reflects your students' performance if they have narrowed the gap between low-income students and their peers from more affluent backgrounds, which would make students significantly more competitive in your state and is feasible given what we have seen other teachers accomplish in the past.