

B-1: Set big goals

Frequently Asked Questions about B-1

Do I have to use one of the state- or- nationally-recognized tests? Can't I just write my own?

Developing a high-quality assessment is extremely difficult and time consuming to do. You are strongly encouraged to use an assessment that has been externally-validated. That means it contains items vetted by experts in assessment creation and has national benchmarks for the assessment. Externally validated assessments provide a destination that is not only the measuring stick used to evaluate students beyond the walls of your own classroom, but it is an assessment that students (and your school community) will already see as important.

When at all possible, use the high-quality tools your region provides or suggests. Doing so will make the monumental task you are embarking on just a bit more manageable.

How do I make sure that my assessment will truly increase students' life opportunities?

Many growth assessments (and their analogous growth goals) will already do this because they will represent years of growth of your students academic skills. The same is true for gap-reduction assessments and goals—they represent a “closing of the gap.”

However, if you are using a mastery assessment with a mastery goal, you should consider the following questions to determine whether it is meaningful:

- 1) Does achievement on the assessment mean achievement on a nationally-or regionally-recognized bar?
- 2) Does achievement on the assessment open up doors for the students' future academic endeavors (i.e. will it help the student get into the high school of his/her choice)?

Why should I set a goal before I even know my students?

You're right, 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.

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