

Improving Teacher Practice: Learning Intentions, Success Criteria, and Making Culture Count

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Introduction

Teaching is much bigger career than I thought it would be. It involves so many things - lesson planning, entertaining, creating resources, doing duties, and providing students with a safe and engaging environment: all before 3.15pm. To be a teacher is one thing, but to be an effective, culturally responsive, dynamic, and engaging teacher is a true mission.

There are many components to becoming a star teacher, and unfortunately, there is no “Instant Miss Frizzle” potion to get us there overnight. Because of this, I have to hone my knowledge and grow as a teacher at the same speed as everybody else. That doesn’t mean that I can rest on my laurels and expect to get better without effort, of course, and there are a few particular areas that I’m focusing on right now to improve my practice.

Learning Intentions and Success Criteria

One of those areas is my development of learning intentions and success criteria for my lessons. It is incredibly important for learning intentions and success criteria to be clear to learners - or better yet, co-constructed with learners - so that everybody can take an active role in their learning. John Hattie likens a lesson without learning intentions or success criteria to the concept of driving a car and only being told of the destination upon arrival (David-Lang, 2013). By defining what success looks like, students are able to see the outcome of their work and aim to achieve that outcome.

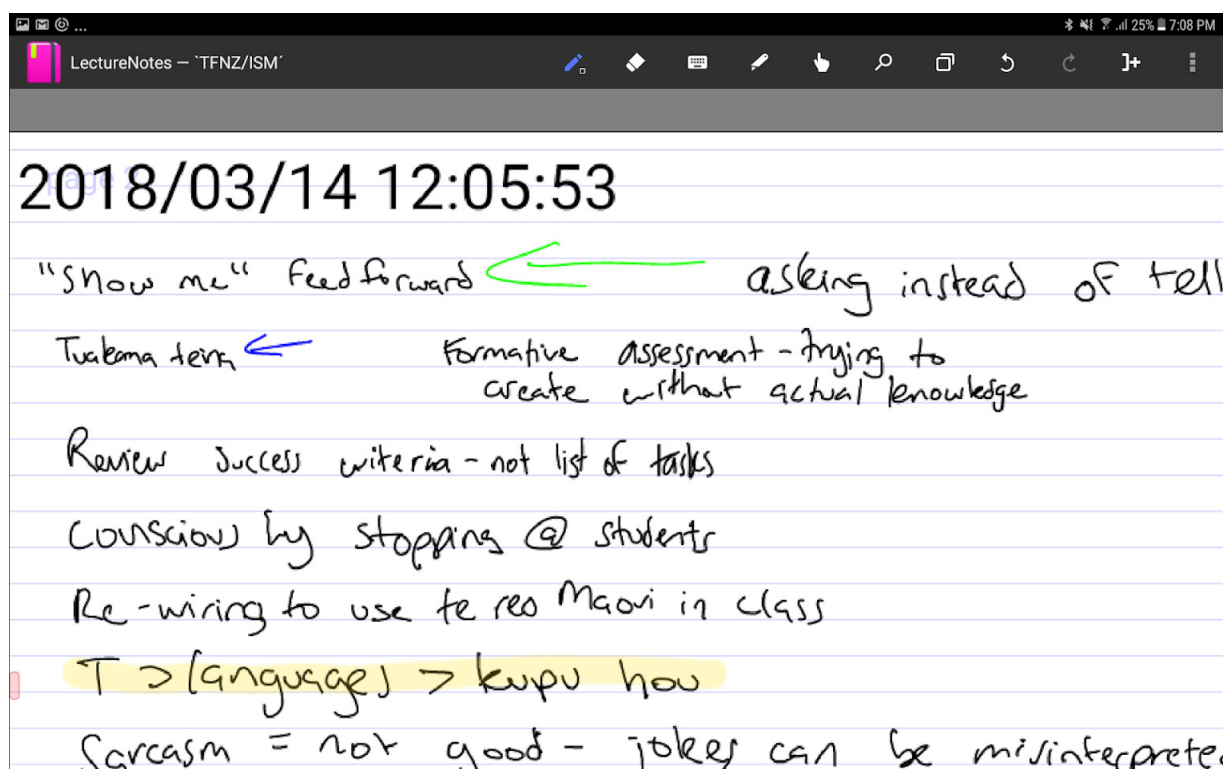
This is particularly useful in digital technologies, as so many of the skills are tangible and can be easily observed through software. For example, if the learning intention was to build a functional website for a stakeholder using hypertext markup language, it would be fairly simple to show the students an already functional website, along with the code, from the numerous examples on the internet. Digital technologies relies on strong learning intentions and success criteria more than other subjects because the topic is so vast and open-ended. It can sometimes be difficult to be sure of what you have achieved in digital technologies unless explicit goals are set beforehand.

When I first started teaching, I thought that learning intentions and success criteria were simply the topic that the class was focusing on, followed by the activities that students need to complete this lesson in order to be successful in studying that topic.

Learning Intention(s):	We are learning to use Adobe Illustrator to create graphics
Success Criteria:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I have completed the "Illustrator Headings" worksheet 2. I have completed the "Illustrator Type Tool/Create Outlines" worksheet 3. I have completed the "Type on a Path with Pencil/Arc/Spiral" worksheet 4. I have completed the "A Rain Drop" worksheet

Above: Excerpt from lesson plan of 10DTG lesson on Friday 23 March ("2018 10DTG Term One/page_27", 2018)

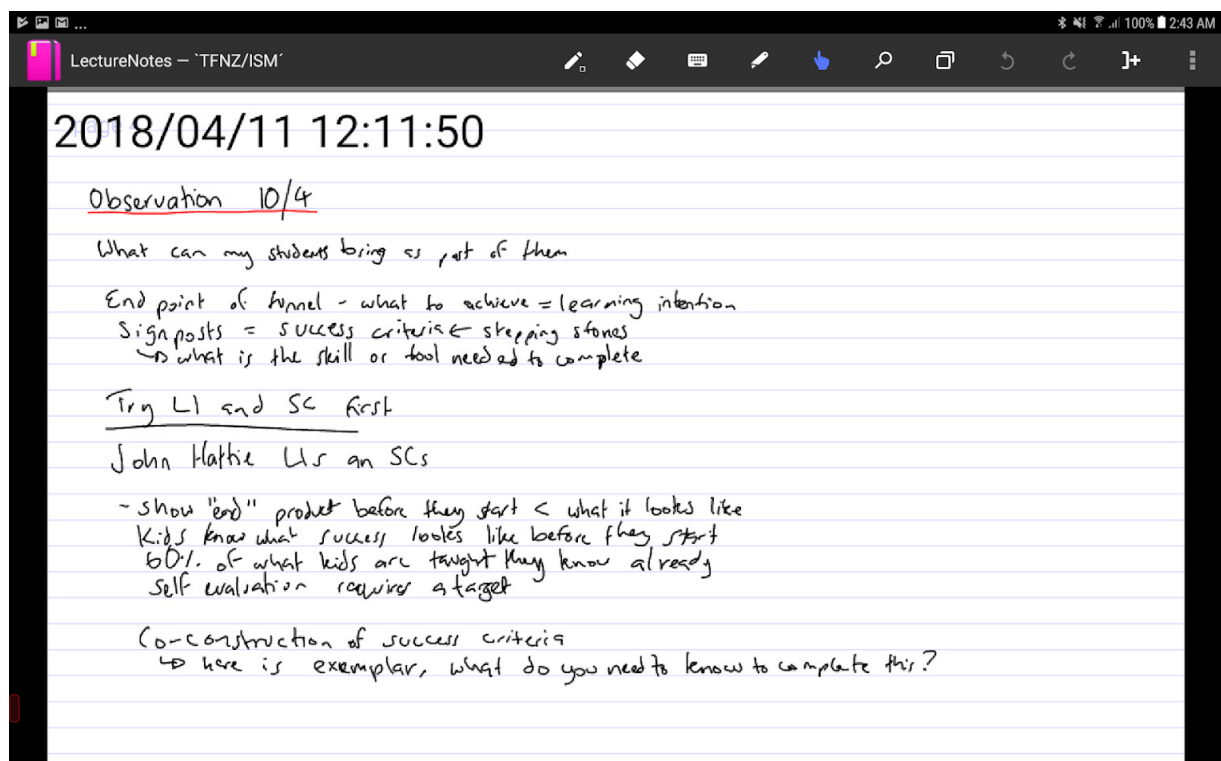
Some of my earliest feedback from my in-school mentor was that my learning intentions and success criteria were not adequate, and shouldn't just consist of a list of worksheets. I tried to remedy this by instead listing skills that students needed to use, such as "I have improved my digital design skills through practice" ("2018 10DTG Term One/page_23", 2018). This wasn't quite right either, and as ironic as it was, I still wasn't really sure what my learning intentions and success criteria were supposed to look like.



Above: Excerpt from my in-school mentor feedback notes on March 14 ("ISM/page_2", 2018)

I agreed with the feedback - I knew that there was something wrong with my learning intentions and success criteria, I just couldn't figure out how to fix it. It wasn't until April, when my in-school mentor pointed me to a video of John Hattie speaking about learning intentions and success criteria that everything finally clicked into place. While watching the video, my mentor described learning as a tunnel: the end was where the students will be when they achieve the goal of the learning - the learning intention - and the signposts along the tunnel relate to the skills or tools that are needed to reach the end of the tunnel - the success criteria (ISM/page_4, 2018).

With that final piece of understanding in place, my lesson plans were starting to make more sense. My success criteria evolved from asking students to complete certain worksheets to "develop two prototype designs using digital design tools" ("2018 10DTG Term One/page_29", 2018). I was getting fewer questions about what we were supposed to be doing in class. My students actually seemed to care more about what they were doing. My learning intentions and success criteria are finally on the right track.



Above: My notes from an observation on 10 April detailing my new understanding of learning intentions and success criteria (ISM/page_4, 2018).

In order to continue my improvement in this area, I would like to begin co-constructing success criteria with my learners. Their input and engagement is essential to improving their sense of ownership over their own learning. I intend to try this at the beginning of my second web development unit for my DTW2 students during term three this year. I have chosen this unit in particular because the students involved will already have experience in developing websites,

and I think that this prior knowledge will benefit them in understanding what else it is that they need to learn in order to be successful in the assessment. This co-construction will be based around the achievement standard for that unit, and as such, I can use their ideas in the development of my own lesson plans throughout the unit.

I would also like to involve my DTP3 students in the co-construction of my success criteria. As part of their programming unit, I would like for them to each create a poster focused on one component of object-oriented programming. If I was to create an example of the output, my students would be able to see the final result, and then develop success criteria concentrated on achieving that same kind of poster outcome. In this way, it would benefit them in their learning activities, as well as provide useful knowledge through ako (reciprocal learning) to the class.

Making Culture Count

The second area that is essential to becoming a superb teacher in New Zealand is cultural responsiveness. A major area of evaluation at Papatoetoe High School is based around the idea of “culture counts”. This relates to the incorporation of tikanga and reo Māori, as well as relating what my students bring into our classroom in terms of their own cultural knowledge and experience. Acknowledging the backgrounds of my learners is incredibly important to increasing their sense of their own value in my classroom, and that, in turn, supports them in building mana-enhancing relationships myself and their peers (Gibbons Tankard, 2015). Affirming cultural practices and experiences can also be very beneficial to learners in gaining a sense of whanaungatanga with their peers as well as supporting students to connect with their own cultural identities (Gibbons Tankard, 2015; Ministry of Education, 2013). All of these things are vital to promoting Māori achieving success as Māori in a westernised space, such as the current educational climate in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, “Māori achieving success as Māori – MASAM”).

My own experiences with “Culture Counts” were always lackluster. My in-school mentor encouraged me to reach out to him and focus on one thing at a time, such as incorporating greetings in te reo Māori, or affirmations in te reo Māori, but these took time to learn and I often forgot during my lessons to use them.

Culture counts PTC 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, Tangata Whenuatanga	-Te reo Māori not evident -Culturally responsive learning contexts not evident -Acknowledgement of cultural identity not evident. -Cultural iconography not evident	-Attempts te reo Māori -Culturally responsive learning contexts emerging -Cultural identity acknowledged -Cultural iconography evident, but not used	-Uses te reo Māori -Some culturally responsive learning contexts -Cultural identity acknowledged & used for learning -Cultural iconography & visual displays show cultural diversity	-Tikanga & te reo Māori meaningfully linked to learning -Culturally responsive learning contexts encourage reciprocal learning & value diverse perspectives -Cultural identity celebrated & encourages learning -Visual displays celebrate cultural diversity & are used for learning	-Tikanga & te reo Māori authentically linked to learning -Culturally responsive learning contexts promote reciprocal learning & value diverse perspectives -Cultural identity authentically valued & integral to learning -Classroom environment authentically reflects cultural diversity & is integrated with the learning	-A mana enhancing connection shared by all
	-Teacher not aware of	-Teacher shares a	-Teacher shares a	-Teacher shares a mana	-Teacher shares a mana	-Teacher shares a mana

Culture counts PTC 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, Tangata Whenuatanga	Te reo Māori not evident	Attempts te reo Māori	Uses te reo Māori	Tikanga & te reo Māori meaningfully linked to learning	Tikanga & te reo Māori authentically linked to learning
	- Culturally responsive learning contexts not evident	- Culturally responsive learning contexts emerging	- Some culturally responsive learning contexts	- Culturally responsive learning contexts encourage reciprocal learning & value diverse perspectives	- Culturally responsive learning contexts promote reciprocal learning & value diverse perspectives
	- Acknowledgement of cultural identity not evident	- Cultural identity acknowledged	- Cultural identity acknowledged & used for learning	- Cultural identity celebrated & encourages learning	- Cultural identity authentically valued & integral to learning
	- Cultural iconography not evident	- Cultural iconography evident, but not used	- Cultural iconography & visual displays show cultural diversity	- Visual displays celebrate cultural diversity & are used for learning	- Classroom environment authentically reflects cultural diversity & is integrated with the learning

Above: Excerpts from observations by in-school mentor on 27 February, and 27 March, respectively ("Observation with ISM on 27 February Rubric Page", 2018; "Observation with ISM on 27 March Rubric Page", 2018)

The feedback was valid - it's incredibly important that I respect and support my learners from all different cultures to relate to their cultural identity, but I had a big struggle with it. I wanted it to be genuine. I didn't want to include te reo Māori tokenistically in my lessons. I didn't want it to be a "checkbox" scenario, where I was only using it in order to "tick the box" of cultural competency. It was of the utmost importance to me that my use of te reo Māori was completely authentic.

I struggled with this for my first few months, and it really showed in all of the feedback from my observations. I saw the problem, and I tried to remedy it, but my fear of appearing "fake" to my learners really held me back. I believe a large amount of it stems back to my own lack of cultural identity. My whanau comes from Taranaki, and my ancestors lived at Parihaka for a time. I am Māori, but I never truly felt it. I look Pākehā, and was brought up Pākehā. I didn't start really connecting with my Māori identity until I started university. Now, it was causing problems in my teaching, and preventing me from encouraging the celebration of cultural diversity in my classroom.



HUI WHAKAREWA

THURSDAY 1 MARCH – FRIDAY 2 MARCH
PAPATOETOE HIGH SCHOOL

NAU MAI HAERE MAI

As a part of our collective commitment to building sustainable practice and raising Māori achievement in our schools, SARMAC would like to welcome you to our Hui Whakarewa. The hui will focus on whanaungatanga and creating connections; whakapapa including the genesis of SARMAC and our kaupapa; provide you with opportunities to learn and engage with culturally responsive and relational pedagogy; and planning for implementation in classroom practice.

VENUE: Te Hikoi (wharehenui), **Pukekohe High School**, Harris Street, Pukekohe.

PARKING: There is staff parking off of John St, however, if there is no parking available please park on the road. Please meet at **gate 1, Harris St** (outside the Wharehenui) for poowhiri.

POOWHIRI: On arrival please assemble outside the gate on Harris St. in preparation for the welcoming poowhiri. For manuhiri the waiata will be: Pūrea Nei (lyrics below. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07w9kmoONy4> for tune). Ladies please wear a long length skirt or dress.

Above: SARMAC hui invitation (South Auckland Raising Māori Achievement Collective, 2018)

It wasn't until I attended a South Auckland Raising Māori Achievement Collective hui that I change my perspective. The hui included a panel where we were given the opportunity to ask existing students questions about raising Māori achievement and acknowledging Māori culture in the classroom. I asked how they felt about their Pākehā teachers attempting to use reo Māori in the classroom, and they told me that they loved it. Other teachers at the hui spoke to me about their experiences with bringing in reo Māori in their own teaching practice, and told me that it is okay to feel tokenistic at the start, because over time it will just become part of your practice. I think that the affirmation from a student, as well as experienced teachers, really changed my perspective on the issue.

The following day, I started my lesson by greeting my students with a "mōrena".

I still have a very long way to go with making culture "count" in my classroom, but now that I'm over the first hurdle, I feel like I'm on my way. Starting from next term, I would like to modify my mid-lesson "attention-grabber" from counting down from five to one in English, to counting down from rima to tahi in te reo Māori. I know that my students will pick up on this as it is such a noticeable change, and I have thought about my responses to students questioning the change already. I have decided to say that I think that it is important that culture is recognised in my

classroom, and that this felt like the right place to start. I think the strategy may be met with some confusion at first, but I think that it will settle down quickly as students become used to it.

A second thing that I would like to incorporate is the use of reo Māori in my affirmations and praise for when students are doing the right thing, as well as commands such as “whakarongo mai” (listen this way). I was initially worried that some students would have difficulty understanding what these words meant, but by repeating the same command in English afterwards, I believe that I can make it work. This will be especially useful when learning activities are taking place.

Final Thoughts

Incorporating both clear and useful learning intentions and success criteria, as well as celebrating cultural diversity in my classroom are significant ways that I can improve my teaching practice, and I look forward to implementing these plans as the year progresses.

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