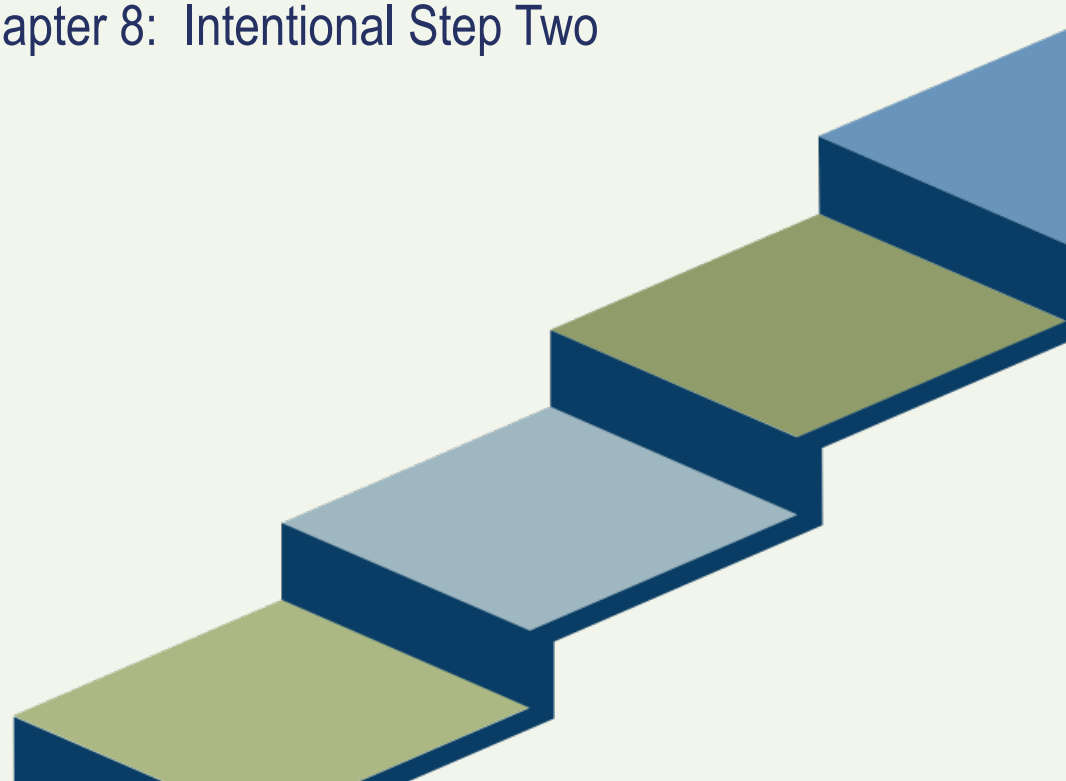
# Intentional Instructional Moves

Strategic Steps to Accelerate Student Learning

## Companion Guide

Chapter 8: Intentional Step Two



# Chapter 8

## Intentional Step Two: Create Explicit Success Criteria

Research has shown that when students understand what's expected of them, they are far more likely to persevere through challenging tasks (Clarke, 2021). Once teachers have established what students will be learning, the next step is to identify how they will be evaluated. What will success look like for this particular lesson? Success criteria tell students exactly what they need to do in order to master the content and skills. These criteria should be shared up front and alongside examples so students know how to succeed.

It might seem counterintuitive to give students the "right answer." But we wouldn't ask students to play a game of chess without first teaching them the rules. Likewise, it can be frustrating for students to be given a task without knowing the steps to complete it. The classroom becomes more inviting when students understand what's expected of them and how they can meet (or exceed) those expectations. Success criteria also allow them to have greater agency in their learning and work toward more independence (Hattie, 2015).

Establishing success criteria before the lesson makes learning explicit to teachers and students. Teachers can more easily confirm when students have acquired new knowledge by referring back to the criteria. Streamlining assessment helps teachers identify where students need support and allows them to scaffold future lessons. When teachers have a clear idea of how they will be evaluating students, they can deliver a more focused lesson, provide relevant examples, and offer better feedback (Catholic, 2013).

When writing success criteria, teachers should identify the key skills students need to demonstrate the learning intentions and standards. What do they need to do, include, or focus on? Success criteria should be planned in advance and specific to the task. They should also be

shared and discussed with students prior to the lesson. Students can be involved in the co-creation of criteria, but the teacher should still have pre-planned expectations. These criteria will then influence the types of assessments and the kinds of feedback the teacher gives. Ex. Learning Intention: students will write a descriptive story. Success Criteria: students will be evaluated on the quality of the writing, the structure of their story, and their use of descriptive language.

**Teaching Tip:** Process criteria are usually more powerful than product criteria.

Strategy 1: Worked Examples

The teacher walks students through the steps to complete a task or problem using a "worked," or finished example. This strategy is distinct from other types of modeling because the teacher provides students with the task or problem, guides them through the steps to complete it, and shares the solution (or possible solutions). While presenting examples, teachers should invite students to analyze and reflect on the steps and the solution. For instance, if students are working on a research paper the teacher can share professional and/or student examples of successful research papers. The teacher can then walk students through the steps of writing a research paper and invite them to think more deeply about the process by leading a reflective discussion:

- What makes this example successful? How does it compare to other examples we've reviewed?
- Why did the author do X? Why didn't they do Y?
- How could this work be improved?
- What strategies will you take from this example? How will you apply them to your own process?

Worked examples can be highly effective learning tools for direct instruction, but there are a few caveats to keep in mind:

1. Students need to **actively engage** with the examples and understand the steps for arriving at the solution. They should be able to explain the steps leading up the solution and reflect on why those steps lead to success. The teacher can promote deeper understanding of the process by having students actively study the steps and the solution(s).
2. Students should be able to **apply the principles** of the example instead of simply memorizing the answer. Teachers can avoid this pitfall by offering a range of worked examples and asking students to complete a similar, but different task. This teaches them to apply common principles to unique versions of the problem.
3. Students must be able to **problem-solve independently**. Worked examples are helpful, but once students understand the task, teachers need to support them toward independent practice. They can do this by gradually fading support and offering more complex problems.

The goal of worked examples is to provide realistic models for students to study as they strive toward mastery of a problem or task. But for deep learning to occur, students must actively engage with the examples. Also, if students are already proficient in the task, worked examples aren't as helpful.

Strategies for delivering worked examples can include:

- Completed Graphic organizers
- Samples of successful research papers
- Videos that illustrate the solution to a math problem

- Demonstrations of science labs

Worked examples allow students to examine the steps of a task, giving them the knowledge and skills necessary to perform the task on their own. This form of Cognitive Task Analysis (1.29) helps break down key principles and strategies so students can solve the problem effectively. It also promotes deeper thinking skills like reasoning and critical analysis. According to one study, students who are exposed to worked examples can solve problems six times faster than those who work through problems on their own (Sweller & Cooper, 2009). This strategy is especially beneficial when students are learning new knowledge and skills because it promotes the transfer of existing knowledge to new situations. According to Hattie, connecting to students' prior knowledge has an effect size of .93, and transfer strategies .86.