

# Student Growth Goals: General Guidance

## Why these changes? Why now?

It has been ten years since Washington's Teacher and Principal Evaluation Program (TPEP) began with a small cadre of pilot districts from around the state. The last decade has provided opportunities to hone evaluation practices to better support educator growth. It has also allowed for drift from the original intent of growing teaching practice; regarding Student Growth Goals this has led, in some schools and districts, to a singular focus on assessment scores. When this process becomes perfunctory, we lose a critical tool for more deeply understanding our students, their learning, and how we must respond as educators.

The revised Student Growth Goal rubrics and guidance serve to advance educational equity through planning with a deep knowledge of students and implementing practices that will yield student and educator growth. The foundational principles below guide the process for setting, monitoring, and reflecting on Student Growth Goals:

1. The process requires reflection and conversation, and favors learning and growth over attainment of a certain level of performance or achievement.
2. It advocates for racial equity and culturally responsive practice at every level for every stakeholder.
3. It provides safety for both students and teachers to be vulnerable learners.
4. It invites personalization to foster student ownership of the learning.
5. It provides an opportunity for teachers and supervisors to return to evaluation as a natural harvest of teaching and learning. It should not be an add-on or check-off, done simply to complete an evaluation.

Because developing student growth goals requires deep knowledge of students and the context of a classroom, we will not be providing "exemplars." We have, however, developed a few vignettes that describe teachers using the Student Growth goal process as part of their regular teaching cycle. We will continue to add to this body of work during the 2021-22 school year.

### I. Implementation options & considerations:

The Student Growth Goals were revised with ideas and feedback from members of the TPEP Steering Committee and teachers, school leaders, and school district administrators across the state. While produced with broad educator input and care, the rubric language may see some minor revisions based on feedback from users in the 2021-22 school year before being finalized for the next several years of use.

For the 2021-22 school year, school districts have the following options:

- a. Use the revised Student Growth Goal Rubrics to prepare and plan for full implementation in the 22-23 school year; use the "old" rubrics for evaluations this year.



- b. Pilot the new Student Growth Goal Rubrics this year perhaps with one or two schools or teacher teams.
- c. Implement the new Student Growth Goal Rubrics this school year.

### Deciding which option makes most sense

Some things to consider as your district decides which path to take include:

- How will the proposed changes facilitate and support shifts in culturally responsive and inclusive practices that your district is already making?
- Are there schools or teacher teams that would serve particularly well as the “early adopters” who might be able to clear the path for the rest of the district’s educators?
- How will this play out in your current collective bargaining agreement? Would you be able to develop a memorandum of understanding to pilot or implement district-wide?
- Is there professional learning that would need to take place to prepare teachers and/or principals/assistant principals before even considering these changes?

### What is changing and what is staying the same?

While the [Student Growth Goal rubric language](#) has changed to align more closely with the Guiding Principles, how the Student Growth Goal scores figure into the overall evaluation score remains the same. [RCW 28A.405.100](#) requires that student growth, defined as the change in student achievement between two points in time, play a significant role in the evaluation of teachers and principals/assistant principals in at least three criteria. This has not changed. The process of setting a learning goal, monitoring student growth and adjusting instruction is critical to the very act of teaching and student growth should be embedded in that regular flow. To do so effectively, we recommend that the two points in time in which to measure student growth be contained within a single unit of study.

Because of the way the new rubrics are structured, using “preponderance of evidence” will not be the most accurate scoring methodology. It is assumed that a teacher’s practice receiving a “Proficient” or “Distinguished” score includes all the elements of that level of performance. For example, in the new rubrics, “Distinguished” performance occurs when a teacher’s practice effects positive change beyond that teacher’s classroom; often, this is the only difference from “Proficient” practice, and therefore, would be required to merit a “Distinguished” score.

Teachers still set learning goals, but there is clearer direction within the rubrics on the considerations to be made in setting them. They still collect and analyze a variety of student learning evidence to see which students made growth and how much, but the emphasis is on how they reflect on and use that information to make decisions about next steps for students’ learning, as well as next steps for their own. In this way, the process supports teacher growth beyond the single unit that served as the focus of their student growth goal process.

Principals/assistant principals will still discuss with teachers the growth that students made, but the focus of their conversation will be on what the teacher’s analysis of their students’ learning

tells them about both students' next steps, and their own. What are their next instructional moves? What, if any, professional learning might be supportive in making these?

District leaders will still have opportunities to suggest or build upon common goals developed by school or teacher teams, but care must be taken to ensure these make sense for the students a teacher is currently teaching. Any suggestions should address the question: *Why this goal for your students at this time?*

### Changes to 3.1, 6.1 and 8.1

*Rather than limiting our students to one dimension of their identity for our pedagogical convenience (and loaded with our stereotypes and biases), the goal is to compassionately see each student as fully human, the same way you would want for a teacher to see your own child or a child you love dearly.*

– Dr. Adeyemi Stenbridge

Central to the revisions to the rubrics for 3.1, 6.1, and 8.1 is the recognition that culturally responsive teaching relies heavily on writing a goal that is based on the teacher's knowledge of their students' cultural, academic, and social/emotional assets, and is cognitively and emotionally engaging.

Movement along the continuum of practice from "Basic" to "Proficient" to "Distinguished" in 3.1, 6.1 and 8.1 relies on a deep knowledge of each student. In all three cases, what determines "Distinguished" performance is the ways in which a teacher is not only meeting and advancing the learning for their own students but also impacting the larger system by positively influencing learning for students beyond their classroom.

A key aspect of having high expectations for our students (State Evaluation Criterion 2) is setting goals that foster cognitive and emotional engagement. Cognitively engaging students rests upon knowledge of students and knowledge of our standards. Complex and higher-order thinking are evident in all grade level standards. Karin Hess's [Cognitive Rigor Matrix](#) provides content-specific examples of complex and higher order thinking. Creating emotional engagement, without which learning does not take place, also demands that a teacher know their students and understand what students will find to be compelling about the learning. The components and indicators from the instructional frameworks describe instruction that is cognitively and emotionally engaging.

Perhaps more deeply than before, educators have come to appreciate the role that families can play in offering unique insights into a student's assets, goals and needs. While addressed in much more depth in State Evaluation Criterion 7 and in specific components and indicators in the instructional frameworks, the revised Student Growth Goal Rubric for 3.1 asks teachers to engage families as partners as they develop their learning goal.

## Changes to 3.2 and 6.2

*If a teacher cannot find something positive to say, then feedback is not what needs to come next.  
Additional teaching needs to come next.*

– Rick Stiggins

These revisions make minor modifications to the new rubrics introduced during the 20-21 school year (which differ significantly from the original rubrics for 3.2 and 6.2). Evidence and examples of student progress, the natural harvest of the students' journeys through the unit, are still collected and analyzed, but expanded to include teachers making meaning of these work samples: *What have I learned about my students? What have I learned about my teaching?* Teacher reflection forms the foundation for this part of the process. The TPEP website has [Case Stories](#) about teachers reflecting on their instruction and how it was and was not reflected in student growth.

In between setting a goal (the ".1s") and analyzing student growth (the ".2s") lives the work of the district's adopted instructional framework (the "State Eight" criteria for evaluation). The revised .2 rubrics necessitate:

- Developing a plan for monitoring student learning progress using both formative and summative assessments.
- Empowering students by engaging them in monitoring and assessing their own progress.
- Gathering and attending to feedback from students on how they are experiencing the classroom environment, the instruction, and their own learning.
- Reflecting on progress made by students and how this information will be used to benefit future instruction.

We realize that some of these elements are familiar in varying degrees across the state and require educators to have access to support for developing and growing their understanding. For more resources, please visit the "Tools and Resources" section of the [TPEP Student Growth page](#).

The critical attribute "Student engagement in assessment" supports students to become agents of their own learning. Students gain deeper ownership of their learning when they have the tools and support to evaluate their own work, and to understand what steps they can take to address any learning gaps.

Teachers can most accurately assess students' assets and meet their needs when they understand how students are experiencing the classroom as a learning environment, and the best way to learn about this is to ask them. In addressing the critical attribute, "feedback from students on their experience of the learning," students must feel safe to use their voices. Part of that safety comes when the teacher shares the purpose of the feedback they're being asked to provide and explains how their feedback will be used. Teachers, too, must feel safe in asking these questions for this element to be effective. Their general reflections on student feedback

should be part of the conversation with their evaluators; it would be up to the teacher to decide to share specific responses and results.

As was the case in the revised .1 rubrics, the changes to both 3.2 and 6.2 include effecting a change beyond the teacher's classroom as the difference between "Proficient" and "Distinguished." Please also note that in the revised .2s, both formative and summative assessments are expected at a "Basic" level of performance. This is a shift from the original Student Growth rubrics.

## II. Implementation options & considerations:

### Considerations for district administrators

- ❖ Implementing the revised Student Growth Goals is an opportunity to revisit and recenter the evaluation process as a tool for promoting student and educator growth and development, and to make significant and sustainable change in promoting equitable access for all students. To the extent possible, having principals/assistant principals and teachers learn about this work together promotes partnership in the ownership of student learning and consistency in messaging.
- ❖ The revised Student Growth Goal rubrics favor live conversation between teachers and principals/assistant principals over asynchronous communication. Recognizing that engaging in meaningful evaluation takes time, consider how existing time (*e.g., required evaluation conferences, teacher team time*) can be used for conversations about student growth.
- ❖ Implementing the revised Student Growth Goals calls for reflection on how a district's adopted curriculum/materials can create opportunities instead of barriers for educators to engage with the critical attributes of the revised Student Growth Goals. Implementation also affords the opportunity to ensure equitable access to the state-supported and required "Since Time Immemorial" curriculum, as well as Washington State K-12 Learning Standards and national standards for each grade level and content area.

### Considerations for principals/assistant principals

- ❖ Existing structures and systems for evaluating teachers can include conversations for the purposes of evaluating the Student Growth Goals, thus making efficient use of time. Similarly, evidence used for feedback on the state criteria/instructional framework may now prove useful with Student Growth Goals.
- ❖ Teachers, especially beginning educators, must have the safety to be vulnerable learners in order to try new strategies and grow. Because the Student Growth Goal process can be implemented in any unit, it allows teachers to "try again" with their next unit/learning goal to address any areas that have not yet met proficiency. For newer teachers, consider enlisting the new teacher's mentor in providing support.

- ❖ For the goals to be meaningful to students and teachers, teachers must have ownership in developing a goal that sufficiently addresses the question, “Why this goal for your students at this time?” This may necessitate personalizing larger district or building goals in ways that reflect the authentic learning in the teacher’s standards and allows for building on the assets of their students during the unit of study in which the progress is evaluated using the Student Growth Goals.
- ❖ Different from the original Student Growth rubrics, the elements comprising these are consistent across Basic, Proficient, and Distinguished performance. This means that scoring using a “preponderance of evidence,” the methodology used for all other rubrics in the evaluation system, will not work. Where this is the case, the teacher’s practice must meet all elements of a level of performance in order to receive that level’s score. For example, in 6.1, the teacher’s performance must meet the last element of the “Distinguished” rubric to receive a “Distinguished” rating.

### Considerations for teachers

- ❖ The revised Student Growth Goals emphasize learning, growth and reflection in both students and teachers. There is an increased expectation to know individual students and their cultural, academic, and social/emotional assets, and to personalize instruction using student “voice and choice” to promote growth in each and every student.
- ❖ Student Growth Goals should generally live inside of a unit of instruction rather than over a whole year of instruction. Placing the goal inside a unit of instruction allows for deeper attention to the students’ learning progress, as well as the teacher moves necessary to support it. It also allows for multiple opportunities to set and meet growth goals during the year, capitalizing on teacher learning from the previous unit.

Even so, the goal *may* include a habit of mind or SEL or thinking/process target that is a year-long focus, or be part of a spiraling curriculum, and therefore provide later opportunities for students to show even greater understanding. Consider what would provide the most useful “dipstick” interval to support a robust cycle of inquiry on the specific learning target(s).

- ❖ Evidence of student progress should be authentic to the learning goal and embedded in the instruction and learning activities designed for that unit. Standardized assessments are unlikely to best serve this purpose because they don’t necessarily capture each student’s learning.
- ❖ Teacher reflection on the learning process is as important as student progress in the learning, to the extent the teacher uses that reflection to adjust their instruction.

- ❖ Using the critical attributes described on the rubrics for 3.1, 6.1 and 8.1 can help a teacher plan instruction that empowers students to be independent learners. The instructional frameworks provide guidance for planning and implementing instruction that supports students in becoming independent learners, particularly at the “Distinguished” level of practice.
- ❖ Culturally responsive teaching compels us to value the skills, abilities and strengths each of our students bring to the classroom and to build upon those by providing them with multiple ways to demonstrate learning.

### **In conclusion**

These changes to Student Growth Goals represent significant shifts from what was captured in the original process. For some educators, this may require something new in their practice – a new perspective on student engagement in assessment, a new way of communicating with families, a new structure for teacher and supervisor interaction, a new appreciation for student voice. These shifts are not just meant for this process; they signal what we know to be essential for effective, culturally responsive pedagogy, no matter the goal, no matter the student.

Because every year, every teacher and principal in our state develops and works to meet at least one student growth goal in service of their evaluation, this activity holds huge potential to leverage educator growth. It deserves our full and committed attention.

### **Key Resources:**

Chappius, J., & Stiggins, R. (2020). *Classroom assessment for student learning: Doing it right – using it well* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Pearson Education.

Hammond, Z.L. (2015). *Culturally responsive teaching and the brain*. Corwin Press.

Stembridge, A. (2020). *Culturally Responsive Education in the Classroom: An equity framework for pedagogy*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

William, D. (2017). *Embedded formative assessment*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Solution Tree Press.

*Additional resources including the Instructional Frameworks and Case Stories are available on the [TPEP section](#) of the OSPI website.*