Monitoring Growth of Advanced Learners Project

# Aim

As you work through the OLAC foundational concept, *Measuring the Growth of Advanced Learners* you will learn why it is so important to be able to assess the academic growth of advanced learners. Most importantly, it is the key to providing them with effective instruction based on high expectations and individualized goals. The foundational concept considers the following in the context of Ohio policy:

* Identifying advanced learners;
* Monitoring growth in advanced learners’ academic achievement;
* Creating SMART goals;
* Establishing clear learning targets; and
* Developing student ownership of learning.

This project is designed to be completed over a series of lessons with students and may take a month or more to complete. Therefore, you may want to start working on the project at the start of your learning.

# Alignment with the Operating Standards for Identifying and Serving Students Who are Gifted and Project Learning Targets:

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| Standard | Target One | Target Two | Target Three |
| The ability to select, use, and interpret technically sound formal and informal assessments for the purpose of academic decision making. | The teacher will combine assessment data from multiple sources to provide insights about advanced learners’ baseline knowledge and skills. | The teacher will select or create appropriate assessments to collect evidence of advanced learners’ knowledge and skills related to their written learning goals or targets. | The teacher will understand that involving students in the assessment process helps build student ownership of learning. |
| *The ability to use data from a variety of sources to measure and monitor the growth of students who are gifted.* | The teacher will understand the difference between measuring achievement and measuring growth. | The teacher will collect formal and informal evidence of student learning at multiple points in time to assess and monitor student growth. | The teacher will draw inferences from formal and informal assessment data to show student growth related to a selected learning target |

## Estimated Time Completion

10 hours

# Products

1. **Reflections on Monitoring Growth**
2. **SMART Goals**
3. **Plan for Assessment**
4. **Monitoring Student Learning**

# Procedures

**Step 1:** **Learn about local procedures.** Find out which two tests your school or district uses to assess advanced learners. The gifted coordinator or assessment supervisor should be able to provide you with the names of tests and a schedule for when they are administered. Usually these are achievement test, but they may be ability tests.

**Step 2: Choose student participants.** To complete this project, you will need to select students to participate with you. You will want to work with at least two students to provide comparison, while three or four students would allow for even more comparison. Ideally, you should select advanced learners whom you teach or work with at least once a week. It is not necessary that all of the students you select be advanced learners, however, a minimum of one advanced learner must be identified gifted for this project.

Talk to the students you want to include in your work. Let them know you are learning how to measure growth. Ask them what they think this means and how they think you could measure the growth in their learning. Let them know that together you will be setting individual learning targets for the next few weeks and will monitor their progress toward their individual learning targets.

After you talk with the students, write a reflection on how they reacted. What were their thoughts about measuring growth? Were they interested in monitoring their growth? You will keep a journal of your reflections and how your students respond throughout the project. Your final **Reflections on Monitoring Growth** product will include your reflections after your initial discussion with students, two or three reflections on how students respond to formative assessments during their learning, and a final reflection on how students understood and reacted to the process of monitoring their learning (see Step 7).

**Step 3: Identify student goals.** You will need to identify learning goals for your students. What are their strengths and weaknesses? What standard or curricular goals are they working toward in class? If you have access to their assessment records, look for strengths and weaknesses in achievement and ability tests. If they have Written Education Plans (WEPs) you can select a goal from those documents. You will want to identify learning goals that align with what students are currently learning.

Meet with each student individually and discuss his/her learning goals. Work with the student to identify a short-term learning target to work toward over the next couple of weeks.

**Step 4: Set SMART goals.** As you read in the OLAC Foundational Concept, *Monitoring Growth of Advanced Learners*, you will want to set short-term learning targets that are measurable. Using the SMART acronym, check that your students’ learning targets are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely. Since you are working with short-term learning targets (a month or less) you will need to be especially specific and align the learning targets to long-term annual or benchmark goals in WEPs or other planning documents – you should not have to create new long-term goals.

Long-term annual or benchmark goals are very broad and are difficult to teach and assess in daily or unit lesson plans. For each long-term goal, a teacher needs to identify the smaller learning targets that will lead to mastery of the goal. For example, if the long-term benchmark goal is to write a paragraph, the learning targets may be to 1) write a full sentence, 2) write a full sentence with details, 3) write two sentences… and so on, working up to a three-sentence paragraph that conveys a full idea.

Your **SMART Goals** product should include for each student a ***long-term goal*** (taken from their WEP) and ***short-term learning target*** (which you will monitor and assess).

**Step 5: Plan for assessment.** In order to monitor growth, you will need to collect assessment data at multiple points in the learning. This could be formal or informal data and can be collected at whatever intervals are appropriate for student learning and needs. For instance, you may want to collect exit tickets from students daily, especially if a student needs frequent feedback. For some content and students, you may want to collect a weekly written reflection that will reveal what students know, what misconceptions they may have, and if they are ready for the next step in the learning.

Your **Plan for Assessment** product should include a ***pre-assessment*** (a way to determine where students are entering the learning), a plan for gathering ***formative evidence*** of current achievement levels at multiple points in the learning, and ***summative assessment*** that will provide an opportunity for students to demonstrate mastery of the learning target.

For example, if the focus of a lesson is on using evidence to support a claim the teacher may choose to start with a ***pre-assessment*** that asks students to identify the evidence another writer has used in a selected short article. Can the student complete the task independently? With support? Or were they unable to complete the task? Is the student ready for the planned unit of study or does the student require further differentiation or scaffolding? Over the course of the next couple of lessons the teacher might choose to have students look at more examples and begin writing their own arguments with evidence. A quick way to gather ***formative evidence*** of student learning is through exit tickets. In this case, it may be appropriate ask students to write down the two pieces of evidence an author used in an article the class read. The ***summative assessment*** should be planned ahead of time – both teacher and students should know how students will show they’ve mastered a skill. In this example a written assessment with a rubric would be most appropriate.

**Step 6:** **Monitor student learning.** This step is perhaps the trickiest because we are so accustomed to recording test scores and calculating an average to award a grade. When monitoring growth, we need to think about scoring student work differently – over time and at multiple points in the learning. How will you keep a record of student growth from novice to mastery?

In the example above, the teacher may be using a rubric for the summative assessment and could probably use a similar rubric to monitor student learning. The pre-assessment should show students entering the learning at a 1 or the “novice” level of a four-point rubric. At the first formative assessment students may be progressing toward the next level, a 2 or “developing”, and so on, until students reach level 4 or “mastery”. Students who are gifted may work through this continuum at a faster pace than other students or they may go beyond mastery and demonstrate a more complex level of skill.

Monitoring student growth in reading might include the use of fluency or words per minute assessment tools. Monitoring growth in mathematics problem solving could include a series of increasingly difficult problems from novice to mastery level. For some students and skills, a teacher might keep a running record of student confidence with a new skill, from a level of “needing direct support” to “successful with minimal support” and finally to “consistently successful independently”.

Your **Monitoring Student Learning** product should include a description of how you plan to record evidence of student learning (i.e., a rubric, fluency scores, skill mastery levels) and the actual records of each student’s progress toward their learning targets.

**Step 7: Discuss and reflect on student ownership.** Take some time to talk to your students about their participation in setting learning targets and monitoring their learning. Did they master the knowledge and skills in their learning targets? Ask students to share with you how they felt about the monitoring process – was it helpful in keeping them focused? Did they feel more involved?

In this project the focus was on monitoring student progress to measure growth rather than achievement. Another reason to monitor student progress is to involve students in their learning and to build student ownership of their learning. Ask your students if they felt more involved in the teaching and learning process. Brainstorm with them how you could involve students in monitoring their growth. Talk about different ways students could be involved in setting learning targets, collecting evidence of their learning, and participating in self-assessment.

Add your notes and personal reflections to your first product, **Reflections on Monitoring Growth.** Be sure to reflect on your experience and your students’ experiences.

***Share the following with the person who is supervising the Gifted Education Professional Development (PD) in your district: your Reflections on Monitoring Growth product, your SMART Goals product, your Plan for Assessment product, and your Monitoring Student Growth product.***

# Rubric: Social and Emotional Needs Project

Participants in the Gifted Education PD might review the “distinguished” column of the rubric below as a guide to what a complete and well-executed project would look like. The person who is supervising the Gifted Education PD can use the rubric to evaluate participants’ projects. Total rubric scores of **8 or higher** are sufficient for receiving credit for the project.

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| Products | Distinguished (Four points for each product at this level) | Accomplished (Three points for each product at this level) | Competent (Two points for each product at this level) | Emerging (One point for each product at this level) |
| **Reflections on Monitoring Growth** | The reflection is complete, thoughtful, coherent, and compelling. | The reflection is complete and thoughtful. | The reflection is complete. | The reflection is incomplete or insufficiently thoughtful. |
| **SMART Goals** | The goals are closely tied to present level of performance and clearly in keeping with SMART goal conventions. | The goals are tied to present level of performance and in keeping with most of the SMART goal conventions. | The goals are loosely tied to present level of performance and shows awareness of most SMART goal conventions. | The goals have some limited relation to present level of performance and shows awareness of one or two SMART goal conventions. |
| **Plan for Assessment** | The plan is clear, complete, coherent, and includes multiple valid methods for monitoring growth. | The plan is clear and includes valid methods for monitoring growth. | The plan is clear but unspecific and includes vague methods for monitoring growth. | The plan shows understanding of the concept, but is lacking specifics and uses a single or vague method for monitoring growth. |
| **Monitoring Student Learning** | The assessment methods used are appropriate and follow the assessment plan. Records of student growth are clear, specific, and demonstrate the teacher’s ability to draw conclusions from the data. | The assessment methods used are appropriate and generally follow the assessment plan. Records of student growth are complete and demonstrate the teacher’s ability to draw conclusions from the data. | The assessment methods used somewhat follow the assessment plan. Records of student growth vague but demonstrate some teacher ability to draw conclusions. | The assessment methods used are unclear and may not be in the assessment plan. Records of student growth are vague and demonstrate an attempt to draw conclusions. |