1. Collect data on student learning

Start the strategic planning process by collecting data from each learning area. Data on learning includes what students do, say, make or write. You'll need to collect a range of data that considers both achievement and growth.

Key sources of student learning data include:

- standardised test data (for example, data from the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy [NAPLAN] and senior secondary school assessments)

- Year 1 Phonics Check (for primary schools)

- pre- and post-test data for units of work

- formative assessment data (for example, exit tickets)

- teacher judgements (for example, A to E grades)

- student work samples across a range of achievement standards (for example, essays, projects and presentations).

Supplementary data sources that provide information on factors that can impact learning include:

- student opinion datasets (for example, student opinion surveys)

- retention, attendance and engagement data

- wellbeing data.

2. Ensure data analysis is comprehensive and accurate

Comprehensive analysis requires examining learning data from all students across the curriculum. While this may sound like a lot of work, it will help you identify learning areas that present the greatest potential for improvement.

Accurate analysis means being confident that teachers are making consistent judgements about students' work. You can achieve this through assessment moderation.

Assessment moderation

Assessment moderation involves teachers working together to compare examples of student work at different standards of performance. For example, teachers might compare work assessed as 'Above-standard', 'At-standard' and 'Below-standard' to ensure these judgements are consistent. Once you've reviewed internal school-based judgments, it's worth checking that these judgements align with external and standardised assessment scores. For example, did a student assessed as
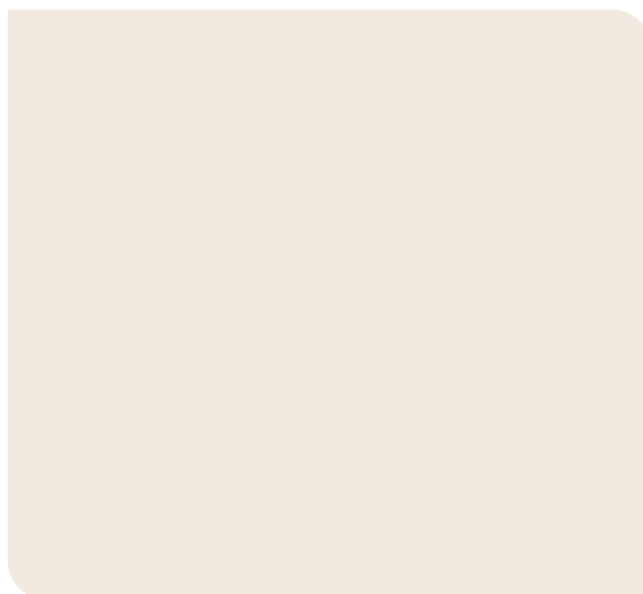
3. Be specific about where improvement needs to be made

School improvement is most effective when you can identify and be specific about what needs to be improved. Once you've identified learning areas with the greatest potential for improvement, you'll need to extend your analysis of these learning areas (for example, mathematics) to determine specific content topics where student learning needs to improve (for example, algebra[2]).

It's also important to investigate whether variations in learning exist for different groups of students, such as those who receive equity funding or who are learning English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D).

Example of using data to identify areas for improvement

You may have identified from Year 5 NAPLAN data that the number of students in the top 2 proficiency levels for numeracy is declining. This doesn't necessarily mean the improvement process needs to focus on teaching and learning in Year 5. To address this decline, you may need to focus on particular groups of students in earlier year levels. Therefore, comprehensive data analysis may lead to investigating students' mathematics learning in Years 3 and 4 (or earlier) to achieve the goal of improving results in Year 5.

4. Set goals and targets in prioritised learning areas

By this step, you should now have enough information to create a small number of goals and associated targets that specify priority learning areas and content topics for improvement.

Planning is most effective when it's sharp and narrow in focus, meaning a plan should contain no more than 2 to 5 goals, depending on the size of the school. An example of a goal is:

> To increase the proportion of Year 6 students performing above the achievement standard for algebra.

Define targets by quantifying a level of improvement for each goal in a specified time period. Ensure targets are measurable and commonly understood by all staff. An example of a measurable target is:

> **A 20% increase in** the proportion of Year 6 students performing above the achievement standard for algebra **by Term 4 2024**.

Targets should account for the time required for school staff to adjust their practice, as well as the time it takes for changes in practice to impact student learning. You may also choose to reference the current performance state as a baseline for the target (for example, starting the target with 'A 20% increase – from 11% in 2023 – in…').

If you're setting an annual plan within a preset multi-year plan, check that the annual goals and targets clearly link to the multi-year approach. Goals and targets – for both annual and multi-year plans – should also align with system objectives and the school's vision.

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2   Based on Version 9 of the Australian Curriculum.

Summary considerations for setting goals and targets for student learning

- Are the goals and associated targets SMART? This means:

    Specific, in that they identify the student groups they will focus on?

    Measurable, in that they include a quantitative measure and specify how much this should improve by?

    Achievable, in that they are sufficiently challenging to close learning gaps?

    Relevant, in that they align with student needs identified through comprehensive and accurate data analysis?

    Timely, in that they identify a specific period of time for the improvement to be reached?

- Are you clear on why specific learning areas have been prioritised over others?

- Have staff been involved in the process of setting goals and targets?

- Have you communicated the learning data behind draft goals and targets to all staff? Have they had an opportunity to provide feedback to inform the final version?

- Have you communicated the learning data behind the final goals and targets to the wider school community? Have they had an opportunity to ask questions to aid their understanding of what the school is prioritising and why?

- If you reach each target, will you achieve the related goal?

- If you are setting an annual plan within a preset multi-year plan, have you checked that the annual goals and targets clearly link to the multi-year plan? If they do not, is there a strong rationale for this, based on comprehensive and accurate data analysis?

We recommend reading the next guide in this series, *Prioritising approaches to achieve each goal*.

To provide feedback on this guide or view further information, including full references and additional resources, visit AERO's website.