Fourteen Methods for Co-Constructing Success Criteria

1. Compare two pieces of student work, asking students what strengths and areas for improvement exist. Note their responses on a chart of all those things that should be included to produce high-quality work.
2. Review a series of examples and put them in order from those that need the most improvement to those that are the strongest examples of mastery or proficient work.
3. Use mentor texts or published works to ask students to identify excellent examples of work or components of a piece of writing, film, art, research, and so on.
4. Model or have students model the “how to” and allow other students to explain what they did to meet the goal and how it could be improved.
5. Engage in inquiry about a topic to get students wondering, asking questions, and making connections to their prior knowledge. Then discuss what is needed to tackle learning more about the topic or idea.
6. Provide a video or audio example and ask students to critique the example then evaluate their own work to determine how it could be improved.
7. Ask students to develop a draft. Then evaluate several drafts in the class or a different class to discuss how the drafts accomplish the goal and how they can be improved. Then ask students to evaluate their own draft and make a plan to improve it in some way.
8. Select one component (success criteria) of the learning goal, like using dialogue or explaining how a problem was solved. Engage in a scavenger hunt with students to find high-quality examples (from their own work, others, or published works) that show how that component could be improved. Together, develop an anchor chart that represents the examples the class found and discussed. Add to the anchor chart over time, encouraging students to identify other quality examples as learning continues.
9. With creative tasks, show several versions of excellent work that are all different from one another but align with the success criteria and meet the learning goal. Ask students to determine what is the same about them all and what is different. Ensure the items that are the same are success criteria for all. Allow those that are different to spur student creativity.
10. Model by thinking aloud, using high-quality student or published work to explain what success looks like and how each piece of work meets the criteria. Then, ask students to select the work that speaks to them personally and ask them to make a resource folder for themselves that helps them understand the success criteria (this can be virtual).
11. Use a document camera to project pieces of “old” work and ask students how they would coach the individual to improve their work. Collect their feedback and then ask them to review their own work, using the same feedback.
12. Ask students to provide examples of their own work with a small group or the class. Then ask students to determine which success criteria (pick 1) the piece of work best aligns to and shows excellence in. For example, one piece of writing could be strong in voice while another is strong in organization. Share the examples among the class, noting or labeling how each is strong so students can return to examples that identify what they need or want to work on next in their learning.
13. Ask a student who is ready for the next step to put their work on the document camera. Ask others to first share things they like about the work that aligns to the success criteria. Then ask students to talk in small groups about one possible next step. Allow the student who is sharing work to select one of the next steps presented by the groups.
14. Provide students with the success criteria and ask them to talk in small groups about what is clear and what isn’t clear to them. Then, offer examples, exemplars, and models to see if the criteria are clarified. Allow the students’ needs and desires to guide the discussion and revision of the success criteria so it is student-friendly or paired with examples to make it clear.

Excerpt from *14 Ways to Co-construct Success Criteria with Students, Kara Vandas, TCC Blog May 2021.*