Competency-Based Education
Folio Series

Ib
TRACKING STUDENT PROGRESS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Element Ib
TRACKING STUDENT PROGRESS
IN A COMPETENCY-BASED CLASSROOM

An important part of the cycle of learning, assessment, and further learning is awareness of the progress students are making toward specific learning goals. Different forms of data about growth should be continually gathered and shared as part of this upward spiral of the learning process. Tracking progress is particularly important in a competency-based classroom since one of the hallmarks of such a classroom is that students are continually aware of their progress on specific topics. This is rarely the case in a traditional classroom.

Regular feedback about how students are doing helps teachers hone their teaching strategies for individual students and for a class as a whole; it also helps students refine their own personal approach to learning. Information about progress is valuable to students when provided by teachers, but it is equally valuable if not more valuable when students track their own progress.

What Does It Look Like When You Are Tracking Student Progress?

With proficiency scales in place (see Folio Ia, Providing Proficiency Scales), teachers have the prerequisites established to help students track their progress. To do so, teachers should be engaging in activities like the following:

- Tracking the progress of individual students on specific proficiency scales
- Tracking the progress of the entire class by showing the percentage of students who have demonstrated proficiency (3.0) on specific proficiency scales
- Having students set goals on specific proficiency scales relative to their own progress
- Having student track their progress using data notebooks

When teachers are effectively tracking student progress, they also should be able to describe how tracking progress is achieved in real time or virtually and the primary strategies they use to track student progress.

In addition to teachers engaging in specific behaviors, tracking progress also is signaled by students engaging in behaviors like the following:

- Periodically updating their progress on specific proficiency scales
- Setting goals relative to their growth on specific proficiency scales

Tracking progress can also involve strategies that encompass students responding accurately to the following prompts:

- Explain how well you have progressed on a specific proficiency scale
- Describe what you need to do to improve on a specific proficiency scale

What You Should Understand and Be Able to Do

To effectively track student progress, teachers should understand and be able to do the following:

- Understand that tracking progress is difficult to do without proficiency scales
- Have individual students track their progress
- Chart the progress of the entire class
- Have students set goals for growth on specific proficiency scales
- Have students use data notebooks

STRATEGIES

The strategies covered in this section reflect some of the key concepts and skills teachers should understand and be able to do to effectively track student progress and ensure that students have the data they need to reach their learning goals.

Understand That Tracking Progress Is Difficult To Do Without Proficiency Scales

In the traditional classroom it is almost impossible for students to track their progress, primarily because proficiency scales—even some of the weaker versions of proficiency scales described in Folio Ia, Providing Proficiency Scales—are not typically employed. About the closest traditional teachers can come to having students track their progress is to have them keep track of scores they have received on various assessments. For example, assume that a math teacher plans to give a weekly quiz on fractions over a nine-week period of time. Each weekly quiz would be based on 100 points. Students would individually keep track of their scores on these assessments over the nine weeks of the grading period.

The major problem with this approach is that these tests are commonly not comparable, so neither students nor teachers will have valid indicators of growth. For example, the first assessment might include very simple content such as adding simple fractions with the same denominator. The second quiz might cover essentially the same content as the first, so scores for each student for the first and second quizzes would be comparable. However, the third quiz might focus on relatively complex aspects of fractions such as multiplying fractions with different denominators. Scores for students on this third quiz would not be comparable to the scores for students on the first and second quizzes because the content was much more difficult.

Another option for traditional teachers is to have students keep track of points they have accrued. Using this approach, teachers assign points to various assignments and assessments; overall grades are based on how many points students have accrued by the end of the grading period. For example, the teacher might begin a grading period by telling students that they must earn a certain number of points to obtain an A, slightly fewer points to obtain a B, and so on. The scheme might be defined as follows:

- 200 points or higher = A
- 150 points to 199 = B
- 100 points to 149 = C
- 50 point to 99 = D
- 49 points or below = F

Assessments and assignments would be worth specific numbers of points. Students could certainly see their points increasing each week as well as their progress toward specific grades, but points would provide no information about students' actual growth in understanding about specific academic topics.

Have Individual Students Track Their Progress

Proficiency scales are covered in depth in Folio Ia, Providing Proficiency Scales. One of the big advantages of using proficiency scales is that scores on assessments are always comparable. To illustrate, assume that a teacher is using the proficiency scale shown in Exhibit 1 for the topic of fractions to design assessments and plan instruction. The assessments the teacher designs and administers will be based on this scale. The assessments will include some simple content, described at the score 2.0 level, more complex content at the 3.0 (which is commonly, but not necessarily, the target for proficiency), and content at the 4.0 level, which goes above the content covered at the 3.0 level.

Exhibit 1. Content-Specific Proficiency Scale – Fractions

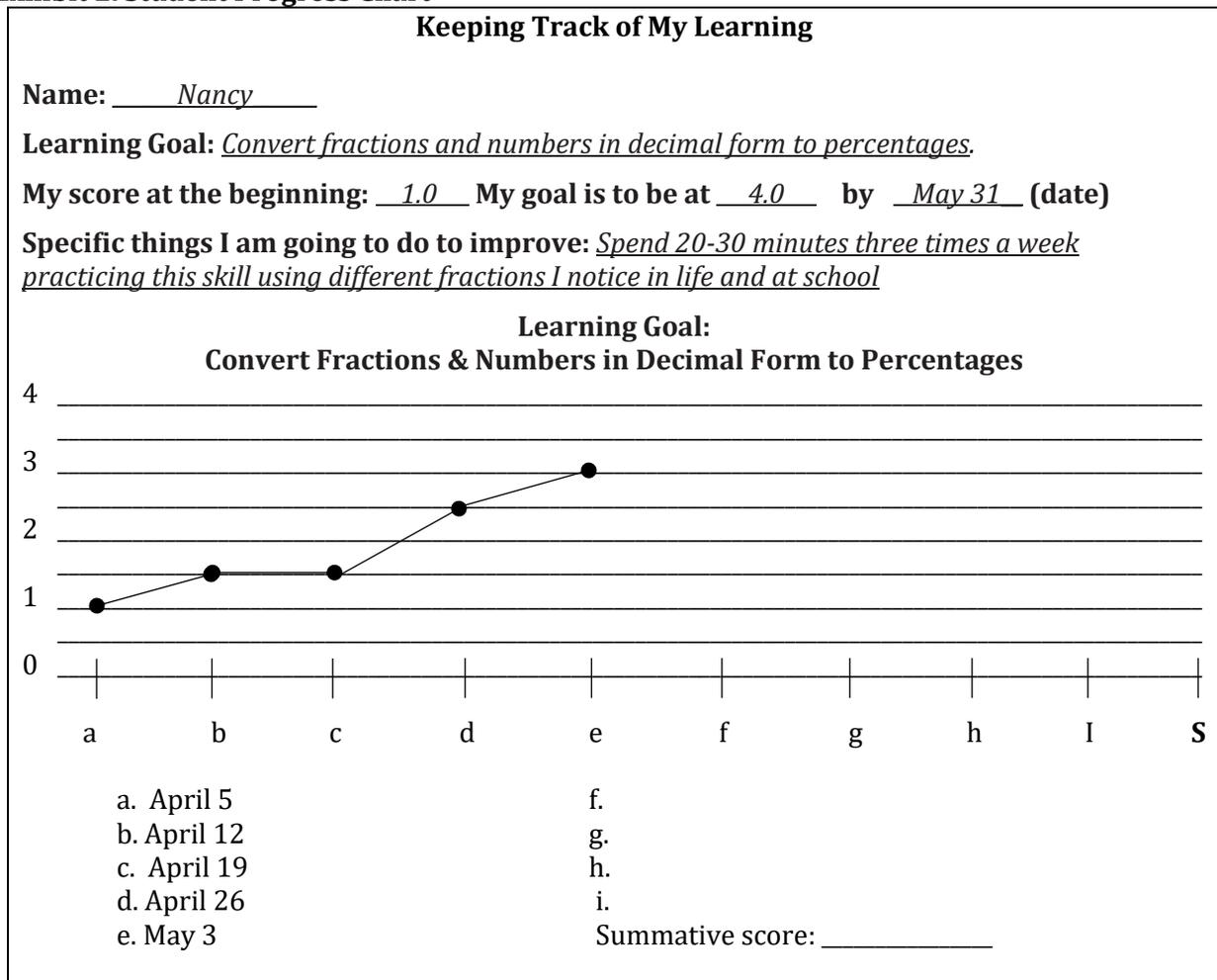|	Strand: Seventh-grade mathematics, measurement topic—converting fractions, decimals, and percentages
4.0	In addition to score 3.0 performance, the student demonstrates in-depth inferences and applications that go beyond what was taught. For example, the student: • compares and orders fractions, decimal values, and percentages in real-life situations • compares and converts fractions, decimal values, and percentages in real-life scenarios
3.5	In addition to score 3.0 performance, the student demonstrates partial success with score 4.0 content.
3.0	The student: • converts numbers in decimal form to simple fractions. • converts fractions to numbers in decimal form using division skills. • converts fractions and numbers in decimal form to percentages.
2.5	The student makes no major errors or omissions regarding score 2.0 content and demonstrates partial success with score 3.0 content.

2.0	The student recognizes or recalls specific vocabulary (e.g., *decimal, fraction, numerator, denominator, simplify*) and performs basic processes, such as:
	    • Interprets decimal place value as fractions
	    • simplifies fractions
	The student recognizes or recalls specific vocabulary (e.g., d*ivision, decimal value, truncate, rounding*) and performs basic processes, such as:
	    • Uses division skills on multi-digit numbers to convert a fraction to a decimal
	    • Interprets fractions as decimal place values
	The student recognizes or recalls specific vocabulary (e.g., *percentage, decimal form*) and performs basic processes, such as:
	    • Demonstrates understanding that percentage represents parts per 100
	    • Solves a percentage as a fraction out of 100

1.5	The student demonstrates partial success with score 2.0 content but makes major errors or omissions regarding score 3.0 content.
1.0	With help, the student demonstrates partial success with score 2.0 content and score 3.0 content.
0.5	With help, the student demonstrates partial success with score 2.0 content but not with score 3.0 content.
0.0	Even with help, the student has no success.

Source: Adapted from Marzano, 2006; Marzano & Haystead, 2008; Marzano, Norford, & Ruyle, 2019.

A detailed content-specific proficiency scale such as that shown in Exhibit 1 shows a progression of learning—or levels of performance—relative to specific content knowledge. Teachers can and should

assess and provide feedback to individual students about their progress, including suggestions for improvement, deeper understanding, greater skill with a specific process, and so on. However, the great advantage of students learning to track their *own* progress is that doing so enhances students' ownership of the learning process, which contributes to students becoming vital, active, and lifelong learners who are more and more engaged and even excited about learning, in the classroom and beyond.

To help students track their own progress, teaches should provide students with resources and time to track their progress on specific measurement topics. One such resource is a Student Progress Chart like that shown in Exhibit 2.

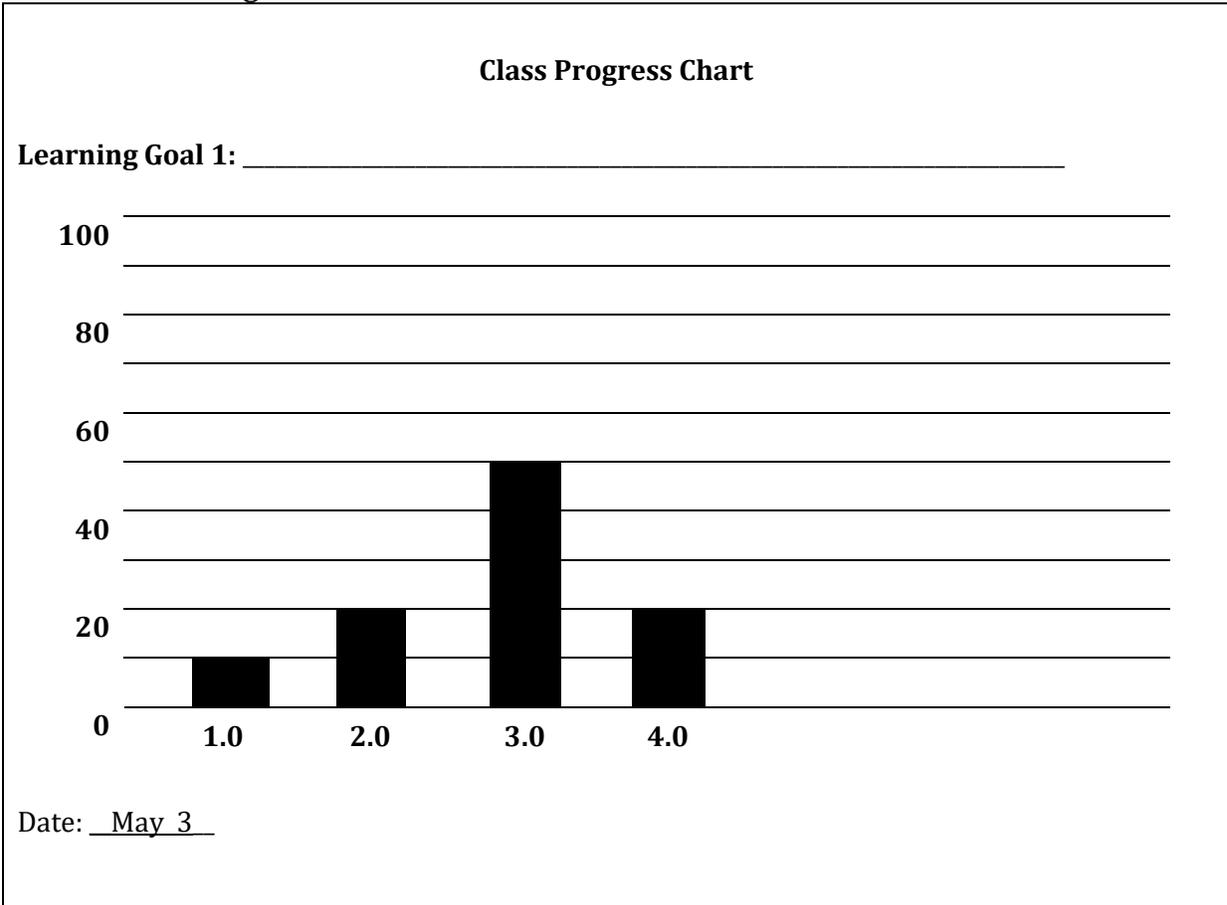**Exhibit 2. Student Progress Chart**

Keeping Track of My Learning

Name: _____*Nancy*_____

Learning Goal: *Convert fractions and numbers in decimal form to percentages.*

My score at the beginning: __*1.0*__ **My goal is to be at** __*4.0*__ **by** __*May 31*__ **(date)**

Specific things I am going to do to improve: *Spend 20-30 minutes three times a week practicing this skill using different fractions I notice in life and at school*

Learning Goal:
Convert Fractions & Numbers in Decimal Form to Percentages

a. April 5	f.
b. April 12	g.
c. April 19	h.
d. April 26	i.
e. May 3	Summative score: _____

Source: Adapted from Marzano, 2006.

To use the chart shown in Exhibit 2, the student—in this case, Nancy—first notes the learning goal, her score at the beginning of the learning period, and the score she wants to reach by the end of the learning period. She also identifies steps, such as additional time she will spend learning content or other practices she will engage in, to help ensure that she meets her goal. As the teacher gives quizzes and other assessments, Nancy then charts her progress over time, also noting the date of each assessment (as shown in the section at the bottom of the chart shown in Exhibit 2).

Chart the Progress of the Entire Class

Charting the progress of the entire class results in another perspective about how students are faring in the classroom. Using this strategy, the teacher uses a whole-class tracking chart, such as that shown in Exhibit 3, to graphically depict the percentage of students who scored at proficient or above for a particular assessment.

Exhibit 3. Class Progress Chart

Class Progress Chart

Learning Goal 1: _____

(chart showing percentage on the y-axis from 0 to 100, and proficiency levels 1.0, 2.0, 3.0, 4.0 on the x-axis; bars at approximately 12 for 1.0, 22 for 2.0, 53 for 3.0, and 22 for 4.0)

Date: __May 3__

Source: Adapted from Marzano, 2006.

To use a class progress chart such as that shown in Exhibit 3, teachers would calculate the percentage of students who scored at each proficiency level, in this case, score 1, 2, 3, and 4. This type of aggregated data gives teachers a snapshot of the class as a whole relative to a specific learning goal and helps teachers strategize about instruction to highlight in future lessons.

A chart such as that shown in Exhibit 3 and the resulting aggregated data can also be used by teams of teachers—in the same grade level or across grade levels—to identify future areas of instruction. If score data show that the percentage of students in a particular grade level who are at or above a particular performance standard is low, then teachers might come together to brainstorm and develop new strategies to help students progress.

Have Students Set Goals for Growth on Specific Proficiency Scales

A variation on having students track their progress toward meeting a specific learning goal is to have them set goals for growth *at certain points in time*. As discussed, Exhibit 2 shows an example of how a student would note his or her score at the beginning of a unit of instruction, for example, and then set a goal for where he or she will be by a certain date—for instance, the end of the unit. In that example, over the course of the unit, the student tracks his or her progress toward that end goal based on assessment scores.

Setting specific *interim* goals—and identifying the additional work, practice, and so on that the student will engage in—is one way to make this process even richer. Exhibit 4 shows an example of a chart students might use to apply this strategy as they are engaged in a unit of instruction about fractions, using the proficiency scale shown in Exhibit 1.

As Exhibit 4 exemplifies, the student would start by noting his or her score at the beginning of the unit. In this case, the student—Albert—scored at the 2.0 level. Next the student would set specific goals for how much he or she will grow at certain points in time. In this case, Albert's goal is to be at score 2.5 by the end of Week 3, score 3.0 by the end of Week 5, score 3.5 by the end of Week 6, and score 4.0 by the end of Week 8.

Now that the student has set these goals, the way to success is to next identify the specific things the student will commit to doing to help ensure that he or she will actually meet each goal as targeted. In the example shown in Exhibit 4, Albert has committed to 30 minutes of practice three times a week on the core skills identified for each score level of the Fractions Proficiency Scale. If Albert encounters a setback and doesn't meet one or more of his goals, he will ask the teacher for some additional help.

As students use this strategy over time, it's best if they regularly evaluate themselves in terms of what they are discovering about themselves as learners, what they might do differently next time they set learning goals, and how these realizations will help improve their learning in other classes.

Exhibit 4. Student Chart for Interim Goal Setting & Identifying Strategies for Growth

**My Goal Setting Over Time
And Strategies I Will Use to Help Me Meet My Goals**

Name: _Albert_
Learning Goal: 4.0. _I will be able to compare and order fractions, decimal values, and percentages in real-life situations._
My score at the beginning of the unit: _2.0_
My growth goals over the rest of the unit:
End of Week 3: _2.5_. _This means I will demonstrate that I can do most of the processes mentioned for score 3.0 with some good success, even if I don't do everything perfectly._

End of Week 5: _3.0._ _By the end of week 5, I will demonstrate that I can do all of the processes mentioned at score 3.0 very well._

End of Week 6: _3.5._ _By the end of week 6, I will still be able to demonstrate that I can do all of the processes mentioned in score 3.0 very well, and I will be able to do some of the processes and applications mentioned for score 4.0._

End of Week 8: _4.0._ _By the end of this unit about fractions, decimals, and percentages, I will demonstrate that I can apply what I've learned to situations I might encounter in real life._

Specific things I will do to meet each growth goal:
I will practice the skills three times a week, 30 minutes at a time. If I do not meet my goal at any time, I will talk with my teacher right away to see if she might have suggestions or be willing to talk with me after class and provide some tutoring or help of some kind.

Content: Fractions, specifically converting fractions, decimals, and percentages
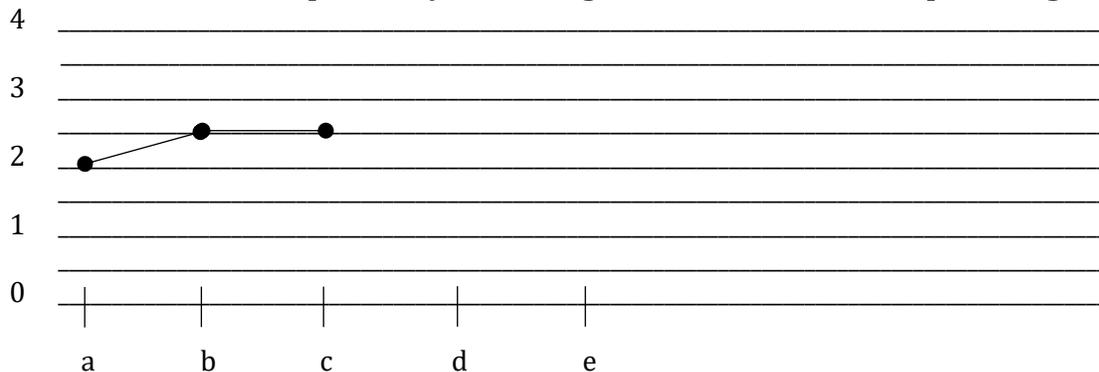
My Actual Scores

a. Beginning score _2.0_   b. Week 3 _2.5_   c. Week 5 _2.5_

d. Week 6 _____   e. Week 8 _____

Source: Adapted from Marzano, 2006.

Have Students Use Data Notebooks

One of the most powerful things a teacher can do to facilitate tracking of student progress is to use data notebooks. A data notebook is a spiral, three-ring, or other type of notebook that includes the wide variety of data that reflect student progress. Such data might be captured in tracking forms, matrices, and actual grading reports. The centerpiece of a data notebook is the Personal Tracking Matrix.

In their book *A Handbook for Personalized Competency-Based Education,* Robert J. Marzano, Jennifer S. Norford, Michelle Finn, and Douglas Finn III (2017) explain that one way in which students can monitor their individual learning progress is to use a personal tracking matrix. Teachers can develop personal tracking matrices for students; however, a better and more empowering approach is to help students develop their own. The personal tracking matrix is similar to a proficiency scale in that the content is presented in a learning progression with the complex content at the top and the simpler content at the bottom. The difference between the two is that a personal tracking matrix is stated in student-friendly language as *I can* statements. To illustrate the similarities and differences between a proficiency scale and a personal tracking matrix, see Exhibits 5 and 6. Exhibit 5 is an example of a proficiency scale for a health and wellness learning target. To create a personal tracking matrix for this proficiency scale, the teacher would work with students to rewrite each learning target in student-friendly *I can* language, as shown in Exhibit 6.

Exhibit 5. Proficiency Scale for Health and Wellness

Score	Knowledge
4.0	In addition to score 3.0 performance, the student demonstrates in-depth inferences and applications that go beyond what was taught. For example, the student collects data on her or his diet over a period of time and makes and defends a claim about the overall healthiness of his or her diet by providing evidence about the effects of the foods.
3.5	In addition to score 3.0 performance, the student demonstrates partial success with score 4.0 content.
3.0	The student demonstrates understanding of the effect of the foods we eat on our bodies.
2.5	The student makes no major errors or omissions regarding score 2.0 content and demonstrates partial success with score 3.0 content.
2.0	The student recognizes or recalls specific vocabulary (e.g., *dietary guidelines, fad, additive, nutrition, calorie, protein, carbohydrate, sodium*) and performs basic processes, such as: - Identifies examples of healthy foods according to Dietary Guidelines for Americans - Identifies examples of unhealthy foods according to Dietary Guidelines for Americans - Identifies examples of fad diets and explains why they are fads - Reads and explains a food label - Explains what makes up a balanced diet
1.5	The student demonstrates partial success with score 2.0 content but makes major errors or omissions regarding score 3.0 content.
1.0	With help, the student demonstrates partial success with score 2.0 content and score 3.0 content.
0.5	With help, the student demonstrates partial success with score 2.0 content but not with score 3.0 content.
0.0	Even with help, the student has no success.

Source: Adapted from Marzano, 2006; Marzano & Haystead, 2008; Marzano, Norford, & Ruyle, 2019.

Exhibit 6. Personal Tracking Matrix

Level	Indicator	My Rating			My Evidence
		I'm still confused about this topic.	I've learned some but not all of this topic.	I've got this now.	
4	I can show examples of different types of diets and explain how they might affect a person's body.				
3	I can explain what eating different types of foods might do to my body.				
2	I can describe foods that are in a balanced diet.				
2	I can read and explain a food label.				
2	I can give examples of fad diets and explain why they are fads.				
2	I can give examples of unhealthy foods using the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.				
2	I can give examples of healthy foods using the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.				
2	I can provide an explanation of the term *dietary guidelines*.				
2	I can provide an explanation of the term *fad*.				
2	I can provide an explanation of the term *additive*.				
2	I can provide an explanation of the term *nutrition*.				
2	I can provide an explanation of the term *calorie*.				
2	I can provide an explanation of the term *protein*.				
2	I can provide an explanation of the term *carbohydrate*.				
2	I can provide an explanation of the term *sodium*.				

The personal tracking matrix shown in Exhibit 6 translates the learning targets from the proficiency scale into more specific *I can* statements and breaks down some elements into more detail, with more complex score 4.0 content at the top and less complex, score 2.0 content at the bottom. In the example shown in Exhibit 6, each vocabulary term has its own line. The personal tracking matrix also includes

a column to write in evidence of students' learning and columns for students to use to rate themselves against each learning target using the following three-level scale:

1. I'm still confused about this topic.
2. I've learned some but not all of this topic.
3. I've got this now.

It is important to keep a few things in mind when helping student create personal tracking matrices. First, it is important for teachers to use student-friendly language while being sure to retain important academic vocabulary terms students need to learn. Second, it's helpful for teachers to keep in mind that creating personal tracking matrices with students is an effective way to help them engage in and understand the content they need to learn. After some practice, students may be able to create these matrices on their own. Older students may do well using a proficiency scale without creating a tracking matrix that uses *I can* statements. More information about and examples of personal tracking matrices are available in *A Handbook for Personalized Competency-Based Education* (Marzano et al., 2017).

DETERMINE YOUR STATUS & GROWTH REGARDING THIS ELEMENT

To increase their skill regarding tracking student progress, teachers should begin by identifying their current level of expertise relative to tracking progress. The first step to this end is for teachers to rate themselves using the scale shown in Exhibit 7.

Exhibit 7. Teacher Self-Evaluation Scale for Tracking Student Progress in a CBE Classroom

	4 Innovating	3 Applying	2 Developing	1 Beginning	0 Not Using
Tracking Student Progress	I engage in all behaviors at the *Applying* level. In addition, I identify those students who are not aware of what they must do to improve and design alternate activities and strategies to meet their specific needs, leading to almost all students being aware of what they must do to improve their current status.	I engage in activities to track student progress without making significant errors or omissions, and the majority of students are aware of what they must do to improve their current status.	I engage in activities to track student progress without making significant errors or omissions. Evidence for this level of performance includes: 1. I track progress for each individual student and the overall proficiency of the entire class. 2. I ask students to set goals and form action plans relative to the proficiency scales. 3. I have students use data notebooks.	I engage in activities to track student progress, but I make significant errors or omissions, such as not keeping track of the progress of individual students and not making students aware of their individual progress.	I do not engage in activities to track student progress.

Source: Adapted from Marzano, 2011, 2012; Marzano & Toth, 2013.

The self-evaluation scale shown in Exhibit 7 has a straightforward logic to it. At the *not using* level, the teacher is not doing anything to track student progress. At the *beginning* level, the teacher is trying to track student progress, but he or she is doing so with some significant errors or omissions. At the *developing* level, the teacher is tracking student progress with no significant errors or omissions. At this level, however, the teacher's actions are not translating into the majority of students benefiting from tracking progress. That occurs at the *applying* level, where the teacher tracks student progress without making significant errors or omissions and a majority of students

are experiencing the desired effects. At the *innovating* level, the teacher is going above and beyond the *applying* level by (1) identifying those students who are not experiencing the desired effects of tracking progress and (2) making adaptations to meet their specific needs.

Teacher should start by examining the evidence for the *developing* level, which involves doing certain things and being able to describe certain behaviors they use. If teachers do not engage in these behaviors and cannot describe the strategies they use, then they should probably rate themselves at the *not using* level or the *beginning* level. If they are making no attempts at strategies for this element, they should rate themselves at the *not using* level. If they are making attempts at strategies for this element, they should probably rate themselves at the *beginning* level. If teachers meet the criteria for the *developing* level, then they should examine the evidence for the *applying* level. Such evidence focuses on things students are doing and things students can describe. If students are meeting these criteria, then teachers should determine whether they are making adaptations for specific students who are not benefitting from tracking progress. If so, then teachers can score themselves at the *innovating* level.

To further help teachers rate themselves, we offer the guidelines shown in Exhibit 8.

Exhibit 8. Element Ib. Teacher Guidelines for Self-Evaluation: Tracking Student Progress in a CBE Classroom

Design Area I: I design and communicate proficiency scales that help students understand the progression of knowledge they are expected to master for specific measurement topics.	
Element Ib Planning Question: What will I do to track student progress?	
Teacher Evidence for Level 2 (Developing)	**Student Evidence for Level 3 (Applying) or 4 (Innovating)**
I am: - Tracking the progress of individual students on the proficiency scales - Tracking the progress of the entire class by showing what percentage of students scored at a proficient (3.0) level or above for a particular assessment - Asking students to set goals relative to the proficiency scales and track their own progress - Helping students track their progress using data notebooks **When asked, I can:** - Explain how tracking student progress is addressed in real time or virtually - Describe the primary strategies I use to help students track their progress	**Students are:** - Periodically updating their status on a proficiency scale by tracking their progress - Setting goals relative to increasing their status within specific proficiency scales **When asked, students can:** - Describe how they have progressed on a particular proficiency scale - Describe in their own words what they need to do to get to the next level of performance on a proficiency scale

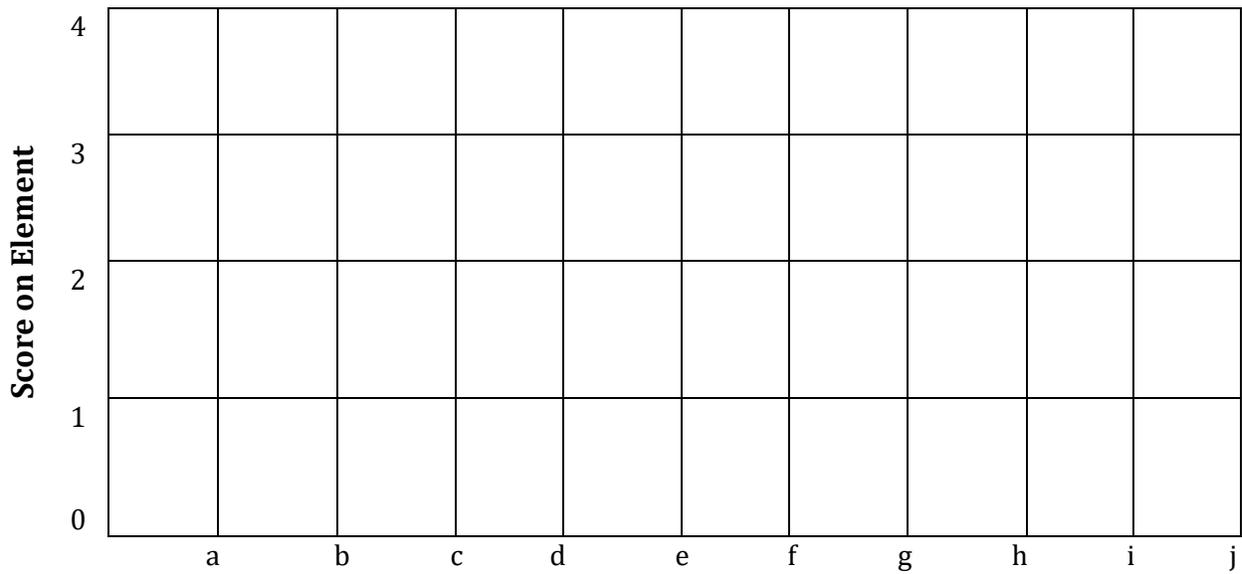*Source:* Adapted from Marzano 2011, 2012; Marzano & Toth, 2013.

Tracking Progress Over Time

Occasionally score yourself on the strategy you have selected to work on and track your progress.

Strategy: _____

Initial Score: _____

Goal Score: _____ by _____ (date)

Score on Element (y-axis: 0, 1, 2, 3, 4)

x-axis: a b c d e f g h i j

Date

a._____   f. _____

b._____   g._____

c._____   h._____

d._____   i. _____

e._____   j._____

Strategy Reflection Log

As you practice your selected strategy, record notes about how you are progressing using the following form.

Date	Notes

Teacher Survey for Tracking Student Progress

Teachers can use this survey to evaluate themselves at different points in time as part of continuous improvement. Each evaluation is an opportunity to assess progress and then set new personal goals for improvement. The individual teacher using this survey should select the number on the scale of 1-5 that most accurately reflects his or her use of the particular strategy, where 1 = "no, not at all" and 5 = "yes, definitely."

1. I understand that tracking progress is difficult to do without proficiency scales.

    1   2   3   4   5

2. I have individual students track their progress on specific proficiency scales.

    1   2   3   4   5

3. I chart the progress of the entire class.

    1   2   3   4   5

4. I have students set goals for growth on specific proficiency scales.

    1   2   3   4   5

5. I have students use data notebooks.

    1   2   3   4   5

What primary strategies do you use to track students' progress?

_____

_____

_____

Student Survey for Tracking Progress – Elementary School

1. My teacher scores my learning and gives me suggestions about how to improve.

   I very much disagree.   I disagree.   I don't agree or disagree.   I agree.   I very much agree.

2. I keep track of my own progress on the scales my teacher has explained.

   I very much disagree.   I disagree.   I don't agree or disagree.   I agree.   I very much agree.

3. My teacher explains how my class is doing as we are trying to reach the learning goal.

   I very much disagree.   I disagree.   I don't agree or disagree.   I agree.   I very much agree.

4. I set goals for the grade or score level I will reach by certain dates.

   I very much disagree.   I disagree.   I don't agree or disagree.   I agree.   I very much agree.

5. I track my progress by each date I chose before the lesson began.

   I very much disagree.   I disagree.   I don't agree or disagree.   I agree.   I very much agree.

6. My teacher explains how to write the knowledge statements in my own words for each score of a scale.

   I very much disagree.   I disagree.   I don't agree or disagree.   I agree.   I very much agree.

Student Survey for Tracking Progress – High School

1. Our teacher scores our learning and gives each of us suggestions for improvement, deeper understanding, or greater skill with a specific process.

   I strongly disagree.   I disagree.   I don't agree or disagree.   I agree.   I strongly agree.

2. We track our own progress on specific proficiency scales we are using.

   I strongly disagree.   I disagree.   I don't agree or disagree.   I agree.   I strongly agree.

3. Our teacher explains how well our class is progressing toward the learning goal.

   I strongly disagree.   I disagree.   I don't agree or disagree.   I agree.   I strongly agree.

4. We set our own goals for growth on specific proficiency scales.

   I strongly disagree.   I disagree.   I don't agree or disagree.   I agree.   I strongly agree.

5. We each track our progress against the goals for growth we set.

   I strongly disagree.   I disagree.   I don't agree or disagree.   I agree.   I strongly agree.

6. We write knowledge statements in our own words for each score of a proficiency scale.

   I strongly disagree.   I disagree.   I don't agree or disagree.   I agree.   I strongly agree.

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