

“Improving student outcomes is the ultimate goal of all teachers and school leaders, and of the professional learning they undertake.”  
AITSL 2012



Indicators of learning are evidence that can be used to measure and analyse how well a learner is demonstrating engagement and progression within their learning environment. Monitoring indicators of learning is a valuable way to inform development needs and measure learning progress, motivation and attitude towards learning through the learner’s engagement and behaviours.

Indicators of learning can also provide valuable insight into a teacher’s impact on learning, achievements, and wellbeing when used for evaluating teaching practice. Learning indicators offer important insights into overall teaching effectiveness, including the quality and efficacy of teaching practices, content delivery, and ability to cater to learners’ needs and engage learners effectively.

## Different indicators of learning

To gain a deep understanding of the learner’s progress, indicators focus on both academic achievement and wellbeing. Both are valuable and should be assessed in conjunction when used for teaching evaluation purposes.

**Wellbeing and engagement:** these indicators are important in measuring learners’ motivations, attitudes and connectedness. Wellbeing and positive climate for learning is incredibly valuable in effective teaching, as research has shown positive teacher-learner relationships, motivation and self-efficacy significantly affect academic and non-academic outcomes.

**Learning achievement:** these indicators refer to learning progress. While the primary aim of learner achievement assessments is to guide learning, in evaluative contexts learner achievement is valuable to evaluate teaching impact through monitoring learners’ academic attainment and progress over time.

One of the best ways for teachers to monitor their impact on learning and wellbeing is through using both observable and non-observable learners’ indicators.

## Observable learning indicators

### Learner Engagement

- **Gaze tracking:** used to see where learners are directing their attention.
- **Passive or active engagement in class:** learners discuss their own or other learners’ responses, give examples drawn from prior experience, are problem solving and elaborating on ideas. Passive disengagement may present as withdrawal, pretending to be on task, or behaviours that are not necessarily disruptive and can go unnoticed.
- **Engagement in learning activities:** learners are taking notes, responding to questions and actively engaging in peer discussion.

### Learner Behaviour

- **Level of learner’s interest:** learners appear interested and enthusiastic in how they present and talk.
- **Involvement and motivation:** how much learners are participating in classroom activities.
- **Compliance/disruption:** learners are behaving well, self-regulating, and listening, or are being disruptive.
- **On or off-task behaviour:** how focused learners appear to be on-task. For example, the ratio of time spent on or off-task.

### Classroom Indicators

- **Classroom climate:** includes learner engagement, culture for learning, shared norms and expectations, and behaviour. This can be positive or negative.
- **Vocal dominance:** which learners are talking, how much and what type of talk is occurring in class. This can also include how respectfully learners communicate towards one another, encourage input from their peers, or interrupt one another.
- **Questioning and discussion:** based on the types of questions asked, the proportion of learners asking and responding to questions, or the quality of responses by learners.
- **Assessment cycle:** learners’ response to assessment, feedback and self-assessment/peer review from learners.

## Non-observable learning indicators

In addition to observable indicators, teachers could also look to learner perceptions surveys of teaching and learning, learner self-reflection surveys, interviews or focus groups, and samples of learner’s work.

## Preventing bias in observations

It is important to understand that many of the learning indicators are highly inferred measures. For example, learners who appear to be compliant may not necessarily be engaged in learning. In addition, many of these indications need to be interpreted with due care especially as children age – for example, younger children can sometimes be more likely to be disruptive, and become more compliant as they learn the rules of classroom behaviour; the teacher should determine appropriate types of learner behaviours (i.e. compliance, movement, discussion norms) in-line with the goals and intention of the lesson.

It is critical for teachers to actively build awareness of diverse cultures and their relationships to learning, and interpret learner behaviours with this in-mind. There can be many observable cultural differences in how students engage with learning. Working with families and the school community to understand their perspectives and aspirations for the young people in their community can prevent bias and assumptions based on stereotype or cultural norming.

## Interpreting indicators of learning

It is important to collect evidence across a number of learning indicators, both summative and formative, to provide an accurate view of the impact of teaching practice. When multiple sources are cross-checked and validated, a broader perspective can be formed about the contributions that teaching practices are making to learning and progress.

In **formative contexts** (e.g. to guide everyday teaching practice) examples of indicators can include: observation of classroom interactions, learner participation in discussion, learners' engagement behaviours and samples of work. These indicators are powerful sources of evidence to determine opportunities for growth in teacher practice and selection of appropriate teaching strategies to improve both teacher and learner outcomes.

In **summative contexts** (e.g. performance review) examples of indicators can include formal classroom observations, learners' assessment results and surveys with learners. Some of this evidence can sometimes be difficult to attribute to teaching effectiveness alone (e.g. assessment results) and are often considered in conjunction with other evidence sources.

After gathering evidence of learning, it is valuable for teachers to reflect on their own practice. Some key questions teachers could consider to evaluate their teaching effectiveness include:

- Have I examined a range of learning evidence including diagnostic, formative, summative, and instructional data?
- Are there areas in which learners are not meeting, or exceeding, the curriculum achievement standards? Are there differences in achievement for different groups of learners? If so, why?
- Where is the biggest need or potential for learning growth for the learners I teach?
- What are my team/ educational setting goals and what does the available evidence of learning tell me about the gaps between this vision and our current state?
- What would it look like for learners to make a meaningful improvement in this area? How would we know they improved?
- What targets would be challenging, yet also attainable?

## Using learning indicators to improve practice

Effective teachers are committed to life-long learning and continuous professional development and evaluation of their own practice. Using indicators of learning in conjunction with other forms of evidence (such as interviews, classroom artefacts, or video recordings of lessons) provide teachers opportunities to identify their current professional development and learning needs.

To incorporate learning indicators to enhance their teaching practice **teachers** should consider questions such as:

How can I use learning indicators and evaluations to determine my professional learning and development goals?

What can learning indicators tell me about areas where I should be adapting my practice, knowledge and skills?

To incorporate learning indicators to enhance teaching practice **leaders** should reflect on the learning environment for teachers and the cultural context of practice and consider questions such as:

How do I encourage teachers to regularly gather indicators of learning to guide their practice?

How is my educational setting fostering teachers' self-assessment, development, and adaptation to practice through a commitment to learner engagement and learning evidence?

### Where can I find out more?

For related resources and links to relevant research visit [www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/understand-your-impact/growth-focused-evaluations](http://www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/understand-your-impact/growth-focused-evaluations)