

Writing the Rationale

The rationale can be guided by the following questions:

- Why did you set *that* goal?
- What is your current classroom practice in this area?
- What did the data tell you the need was?
- Why is that standard important?
- Is the expected growth reasonable and attainable? Why?

Here is an **example** rationale for a 4th grade reading goal:

"I teach 4th grade, and after assessing my students in reading fluency, notice that a large percentage of my students (68%) do not meet the 4th grade benchmark for reading fluency. Thus, my goal this year centers around improving each student's reading fluency, because that is what the assessment indicates has the highest level of need in my classroom in the reading subject area. I have chosen a fluency content standard as it is vital that students can read fluently in order to fully understand context and content. My growth goal is reasonable yet rigorous and I believe that each of my students, throughout the course of one year, can attain this goal in reading fluency."

Here is an **example** rationale for a middle school math goal:

"In the past, the focus of my classroom has been geared toward content understanding, with myriad skills mixed in to facilitate students accessing the content. However, my focus was never "skills first." With Common Core State Standards aligning closely with skills important to success later in life and in higher education, the focus has shifted to the mathematical practices that lead to deeper understanding of the content. In order for my students to show appropriate growth, and ultimately for my students to obtain mastery of the CCSS in mathematics for 8th grade, it will be vital for me to explicitly teach and facilitate both knowledge *and* skills in my classroom.

The standards that are addressed on the Category II common assessment that will be the vehicle through which my students will demonstrate growth focuses on three areas of content: Formulating and reasoning about expressions and equations, grasping the concept of a function, and analyzing two- and three--dimensional space and figures and the Pythagorean Theorem. The high level nature of these concepts will be a natural reach for my students, who have historically under-performed in math.

As I send my students to high school, I need to be confident that they are able to perform at a ninth grade level and so forth. In order for my students to graduate from high school with a regular diploma, they must each pass the Smarter Balanced assessment in the area of mathematics. This is great impetus for a rigorous goal and the implementation of strategies that support reaching that goal. My students who perform below grade-level on the pre-assessment need to show greater growth than do my students who are showing a higher level of proficiency at the start of the school year. My targets for growth reflect the need for students entering the school year at a lower level of proficiency to show greater strides toward grade-level content and skills knowledge. This will begin to narrow the achievement gap for many of my students, and will direct my focus toward helping these students succeed through intervention and scaffolded support. I believe that the goal is both rigorous and attainable."