

BEGINNING TEACHER NEWSLETTER

## Midcourse Corrections

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**"If learning is headed in the wrong direction, educators must be willing to pivot and adjust the plan - even in the middle of a unit."**

Ship captains and pilots are accustomed to the term *midcourse correction* which implies a navigational change that is made to ensure a vessel reaches its destination. As the pilots of students' educational experiences, teachers must have ways to identify when learning is headed in the wrong direction and then make necessary corrections to get learning back on track.

All teachers experience circumstances when student learning veers off course. By following four steps, teachers can develop the expertise needed to make corrections that steer learning back on course.

## Step 1: Identify your destination with clear learning intentions and success criteria.

If you don't know where you're going, you're not likely to get there. When lessons seem to flop, it may be because you or your students lacked clarity on what the expectations were in the first place. Be clear about what you expect students to **learn** (rather than do) - these are the learning intentions. Also gain clarity on how you and they will know that they have learned it - this is the success criteria. Communicate learning intentions and success criteria to students.

## Step 2: Plan your route by creating a learning progression.

Having determined a destination, you must now determine how you will get there. What learning experiences are necessary to guide students to the destination and how should those experiences be sequenced? How much time should be spent within each learning experience? Creating a blueprint that appropriately sequences necessary learning experiences means you know which route you and your students will be taking.

## Step 3: Periodically check course with formative assessments.

Plan for and use formative assessment strategies such as questioning, thumbs-up, exit tickets, white board responses, or graphic organizers to periodically assess whether or not students are on track to arrive at the intended destination.

## Step 4: Anticipate pitfalls and correct course as needed.

Take time to anticipate student misconceptions and trouble spots - planning (in advance) appropriate interventions and course corrections to address them. When you identify learning is off course, use strategies such as changing the instructional mode, providing additional models/examples, chunking learning into smaller pieces, providing scaffolds, or making time for student reflection to get learning back on track. Don't be afraid to adjust timelines to accommodate for course corrections.