

Clear Targets

*Students can hit any target they can see
and that holds still for them.*

What do we want students to know and be able to do? In standards-based schools, what students are to learn drives all planning, instruction, and assessment. The curriculum documents are the roadmap we use and assessment is the global positioning system that guides us to our destination. Just as the GPS we use in our cars relies on an accurate map to accomplish its task, effective formative and summative assessment depend on the clear roadmap to important learning that a good curriculum provides.

Curriculum documents consist of statements of intended learning, known by more than a few labels. "Common Core State Standards," "content standards," "benchmarks," "grade level indicators," "grade level expectations," "essential learnings," "learning outcomes," "lesson objectives," "learning progressions," and "learning intentions" are a few examples. In this book we use one label to refer to these statements: *learning targets*.

Learning targets vary in complexity, clarity, and level of specificity. Some are written to represent the ultimate learning desired and others are written to reflect the day-to-day learning that students will engage in to reach the ultimate learning. When the content standards represented in our curricula aren't clear, they don't function as effective roadmaps for instruction and assessment won't help us reach our destination. If the curriculum side of the classroom is in disarray, the assessment side will be equally messy; the accuracy of any assessment hinges on clear targets, as we will see in the following chapters.

*Learning targets
are statements
of the intended
learning.*

In this chapter, we explain the different kinds of learning targets; how to make them clear to everyone, including students; the importance of clear learning targets to teaching and learning; and how clear targets are a necessary foundation for classroom assessment quality. It focuses on the shaded portion of Figure 3.1.