Volume 1

Chapter 4: Standards-based Schools

Introduction

One of the most significant recent changes in the education community for parents, students, and professionals has been the inclusion of standards as a central component of the schools’ curricula. Standards are statements of the outcomes, detailing what each student is to learn.

Prior to the inception of standards some incredibly ineffective practices occurred in schools.

- Do you remember taking spelling tests where your score could range from 0-25? If you spelled all 25 words correctly, which were often selected randomly for this week’s list, you were thought to be a good speller. But were you? If you spelled 80% of the words correctly, were you ever told which spelling skills (not words) you needed to work on? We think you were more likely told to just spend more time memorizing the words you missed. Spelling wasn’t a set of skills—it seems to have been a score based on your ability to memorize.

- Do you recall when you were told “it will be on the test” and then, whatever “it” was, everyone got busy and tried to memorize “it”? The reason we all memorized “it” was because our performance was going to affect our class grade. Typically, we didn’t need to know how to analyze “it” nor use “it” in a socially constructive manner. We only needed to memorize “it”. The teacher only wanted to know if we mastered “it” so she would know what grade we had earned. If 7-8 of her pupils didn’t learn “it”, the instruction tomorrow continued as if everyone had learned that piece of content. And the 7 or 8 just got further and further behind.

- Assessment wasn’t used as a golf or piano teacher would use it—to try to discern what we needed to learn next and what we needed to review. Assessment was used to give us a mark that would identify us as good or bad learners. Such information tended to leave most students with an unpleasant view of assessment. It lacked utility to them as learners; assessments seldom served to help improve one’s performance.

- In PE classes, as well as art and music classes, your course evaluation was often based on “participation”. A high score on “participation” often meant you were

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1 The implementation of standards will never overcome all ineffective practices. Insensitivity, thoughtlessness, ineptitude, laziness, and exhausted teachers will always exist. But the frequency of occurrence of the examples which appear in the bulleted items above will be diminished, we hope, when the standards-approach becomes fully implemented.
viewed by the teacher as being happy and cooperative. If you were sullen or recalcitrant, no matter how much you learned about physical education, your course grade suffered. Your grade was based on your disposition, not your acquisition of physical skills. Be a good boy/girl and we will reward you.

Under standards-based school procedures we think you will find education is more logical and more likely to aid progress by students. Practice has become a teaching activity to help students make progress rather than just something PE and music teachers inflicted upon you without any clear purpose—though they were correct in using practice activities. Your main focus will be on the degree to which your students learn rather than on your skillfulness in employing a teaching strategy recommended by a neighboring teacher. Teaching strategies are important—but not as important as student learning. Teachers, under standards-based education, may actually compliment students on their progress, not just when they exhibit high achievement or a sunny smile. Don’t compliments for making progress towards the outcomes seem more logical to you as a student and as a prospective teacher?

In this chapter we have several tasks we wish to accomplish to help you understand the importance of standards to schools, to students, and you as a prospective teacher. We hope you will accomplish the two goals listed below as well as each of their underlying objectives. As you skim through our chapter objectives, think of them as enabling outcomes helping you to attain the chapter goals.

**Chapter Goals and Objectives**

We have two goals for our readers as they progress through this chapter. The first goal introduces the five cognitive outcomes we hope you will attain while the second describes the two attitudes we seek to facilitate within our readers.

The reader will:

1. Learn the importance of standards within today’s schools and their impact upon teachers and students.

   A. Prepare a description of how external standards impact a classroom teacher’s lesson design. The description will include a brief explanation of each of the following teacher activities:
      - an analysis of the standards to select themes embedded in those statements which seem significant to your students’ lives;
      - translate those themes into objectives with pupil behaviors stated;
      - select instructional procedures to help students meet your objectives; and
      - state your general assessment plans.
B. Recall three types of source agencies influential in the construction and provision of standards.

C. Prepare a brief description of how the standards-based school reform movement came to exist.

D. Prepare a description of what expectations are likely to be held for pupils by a school or district employing standards-based education.

E. Select from a list behaviors those which teachers successfully functioning in a standards-based school will likely exhibit.

2. Develop confidence that one can operate effectively as a teacher in a standards-based school.

A. Profess a positive feeling about his/her ability to use external standards to guide his/her teaching.

B. Indicate confidence s/he can learn to successfully function in a standards-based educational setting.

**Pre-assessment**

In these volumes we argue you and we should both treat our students well. One aspect of that intent is to provide instruction that, as best we can muster, is appropriate to our students’ needs. Our instruction should be neither too difficult because it assumes knowledge, skills, or experiences our readers don’t have nor will it be too easy because they have already mastered, or nearly mastered, our lesson outcomes. Either case is a waste of the student’s time as well as a waste of our instructional efforts. To avoid both planning errors we need to determine before instruction begins the status of our student’s present knowledge and attitudes.

We have provided in the Teachers’ Edition, which accompanies these volumes, a chapter pre-assessment, a post-assessment, scoring guides for you to use in evaluating your own work, and suggestions for interpreting your performance on those tests. Your instructor has the discretion to assign or ignore those assessments. But because we believe strongly in the power of assessment information, we hope you will want to see those tests to help you determine how well you already understand the impact of standards-based education for you and for your future students.

**Overview**

If you had to define what a high school diploma means about a graduate we think you would find the task difficult. One can’t be certain what content the diploma holder knows; what skills of being a citizen have been acquired; what work habits are now part
of the holder’s method of approaching job tasks; or, even, if the person learned to show up for school. Holding a high school diploma doesn’t seem to clarify what the holder knows, can do, or how s/he will function in society.

Business people, in particular, want some clarity around what they can expect from their prospective employees who hold a high school diploma. Can the holder actually read, write, and compute; get along with colleagues; and understand and exemplify concepts such as punctuality and personal responsibility. Society at large wants to know all that about diploma holders plus they hope the person will have learned financial responsibility, hold an ability to attend to their personal hygiene, and to respect the possessions and property of their neighbors. But many schools have been lax in providing an unambiguous definition as to what a diploma holder has acquired and assurance that those attributes will truly be found in high school graduates.

Along with that bit of disenchantment with public education (see the timeline in the next section for a more thorough discussion) many authors have been calling for a reform in schooling. Diane Ravitch made one compelling case through a comparison of a diploma to a driver’s license.

Students should meet some reasonable standard of accomplishment in the major realms of knowledge. In recent years, the diploma has come to represent very little….. We do not give driver’s licenses to those who cannot drive, even if they mean well and even when they have mitigating reasons for the incapacity…. If we took learning as seriously as driving, the high school diploma would be of far more value to those who hold it (Ravitch, 1985, p. 15).

As pressure mounted for changes to be made in the schools, the solution many scholars came to support was called standards-based reform. The reform came to mean a systemic, or education-wide, reform in how schooling occurred. Del Schalock summarized the types of changes made:

The meanings of outcomes-based [standards-based] instruction and the various ways it has been expressed, include:

- The alignment and integration of curriculum, instruction, and assessment;
- Clarifying what students are to know and be able to do;
- Tailoring instruction to foster the outcomes desired;
- Designing assessment to match the outcomes desired;
- Using assessment information to guide instructional planning and student learning;
- Adapting both instruction and assessment to accommodate differences in learners and context, as well as differences in outcomes to be accomplished; and
- The wedding of instruction and assessment in the classroom (Schalock, 1994, p. 125).

We don’t expect you to comprehend all that is implied in the above list—yet. But, by the end of this chapter we hope one of our friends, Del Schalock\(^2\), summarization will be quite clear to you. Mark his list as something you need to review before you leave this chapter. Now, however, we turn to the task of condensing the content in this chapter to

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\(^2\) Del Schalock spent just over two years working with us as we planned these three volumes. He was to write this volume. But, unfortunately, in 2006 Del passed away. We lost a good friend and you missed a chance to read the work of a wonderful scholar.
two crucial ideas.

Standards-based schools are based upon a few central ideas and most of them will seem to you, we hope, quite logical. But of all the concepts we will try to convince you to employ when you teach, Del Schalock, who was a leader in the standards-based school movement, wrote something, with his colleagues, we think summarizes well all that we will say to you.

Both individual teachers, and members of a school’s faculty collectively, need to find ways to engage all students productively in learning, and help each student progress in his or her learning from where they are to where they are expected to be (Schalock et al., 2006, p. 2).

If you acquire nothing else from the chapter, please retain the two most significant concepts from Schalock et al’s quote.

- You are to help each student learn.
- You need to focus on each student’s progress—not just achievement.

Those two ideas mean that in standards-based schools a teacher’s task is to focus on all students, not just those who are attentive or those who smell good or those whose parents look over your shoulder, so to speak. You will be paid to teach them all. Secondly, you don’t need to just focus on where they wind up during your instruction but to continually monitor how far they have come. Not everyone will be able to achieve all your objectives but you need to help them move beyond where they were when you started. That doesn’t mean limit your goals for some children. If your objectives are important then you want all the students to master those that are possible. But you can’t be expected to work miracles. You may, after all, have a one-armed boy in your archery class. You can, however, be expected to help even the less adept come closer than they were when you began working with them. We don’t think either of those two significant ideas are unrealistic nor are they ones your supervisors will disrespect.

But you may feel vulnerable in standards-based schools. In teacher preparation programs from the past, students like you were expected to master certain skills like “write clearly stated objectives” or “prepare a visually appealing bulletin board”. If prospective teachers could do tasks like those, they were thought to be competent. Now, if you are to be judged competent, you must bring about a change—progress in your pupils. That is a much more sophisticated expectation but, we are sure you will agree, a much more important outcome than writing explicit objectives or designing eye-catching bulletin boards. Teaching for knowledge gain versus writing clearly is the more worthy goal—one we think is more important than determining your teaching competency by whether you can write a clearly stated sentence. The difference is prospective teachers in the past only had to account for themselves—“I can now write a clear objective”. Now, though, you are to ensure all your students make progress toward a standard—and you need to have had a clear influence on their change in behavior. You have to rely on your skills and knowledge and charisma so you can help your students to make you look competent. That is a scary way to lead your life—but it is a much more important goal than designing an attractive bulletin board.
But to put this all into context, this is the same set of expectancies physicians, financial advisors, and lawyers live with every day. They all need to help their customers lead a better life. And that is your role as well. If you plan a course of instructional action and your students do not respond productively then you need to recognize this and change your lesson design.

That is what a physician or a group of physicians in a clinic does for a patient who does not respond to a first medication or operation. A teacher or a school should not give up on a child any more than a physician or clinic would give up on a patient. Any less constitutes a breaking of public trust and a likely response of viewing the profession as weak or failing (Schalock, 2002, p. 53-54).

If you hoped teaching would be easy, we don’t think you will believe that much longer. In the latter parts of this chapter we lay out how standards-based schools will impact your life, the lives of your students, and the lives of your fellow teachers and supervisors. Again, much is to be asked of you but we think you will agree these expectancies are reasonable given the two concepts Schalock and his associates stated for us earlier in this chapter:

• You are to help each student learn.
• You need to focus on each student’s progress—not just achievement.

A perceptive reader would ask “Will all this effort in standards-based reform really change what goes on in classrooms once teachers close the door?” If you asked that question, good for you. Skepticism is a useful trait. If all that we will discuss in these three volumes leaves teachers doing what they did 30, 50, or 100 years ago, then the reform failed as did we in our writing. But thankfully changes have been noted. [Research exists] “that standards-based professional development programs …..seem to be….successful in changing teachers’ practices” (Supovitz, 2001, p. 84).

The above quote summarizes analyses of classroom behaviors as teachers responded to standards-based reform and was noted in research completed by Supovitz and Turner (2001) and Cohen and Hill (1998).

Standards-based reform, as we told you, is undergirded by two significant ideas noted above by Schalock. But you may ask, will my authors employ those ideas just as they expect of me?

Fig. 4.1: Practice

Without looking back, what are the two concepts which undergird standards-based schools  Put your answers on the lines below.

_____________________________  _______________________________

Now check your answer against the two bulleted items immediately above.
Objective 1.A. for the chapter will be met, in part, if you understood this section. We do hope you will come to believe we have taken our own advice and look on you as someone to whom we owe a responsibility to help you progress toward becoming a competent teacher—even a very good one. That is the task we have taken on and we hope you will become convinced that in the end, we did help you do exactly that.

Definitions

Before we go further, we need to clarify terms so you know exactly what we mean when we continue to use words like standards, goals, objectives, benchmarks, and outcomes. The following definitions are, by-and-large, ones we have constructed. They represent the ways within the profession these words are typically used. Because they are all inter-related, we will define the set working from the most abstract to the most concrete. Hopefully, that organizational structure will help you understand our definitions.

Outcomes—any target a school system states for its students and any target a teacher states for her students, are outcomes. Outcomes are the purposes or end-points students are to achieve. The four words defined below are all outcomes. Outcomes make up the complete set of aims for schooling whether one states them explicitly or vaguely. The four concepts we define below are all “outcomes”. You will be expected to use them appropriately when you are a faculty member.

In general, the following four concepts are differentiated by the (1) time frame for acquiring the outcome, (2) level of specificity expected within the outcome, (3) assessment form anticipated to be used to determine progress and/or achievement, and (4) author of the outcome statement (Girod, M. Schalock, and D. Schalock, 2002). Hopefully, you will detect in the definitions below each of the above four elements.

Goals—these are system-wide (district, state, or nation) outcomes and are often long-term educational targets explaining cognitive, physical performances, and affective targets such as attitudes, values, and dispositions. They tend to describe in general terms what it is the agency or organization hopes the system will attain with its student population; e.g. students will learn to think creatively. Because goal statements are often vague there is typically no one measure that will determine whether pupils have attained the outcome. For some goal statements there is no one discipline responsible for the goal—just the complete educational system. No one class you ever took likely claimed to teach you to be creative in every academic walk of life. Often summative assessments such as standardized tests and community questionnaires serve as guides for educational agencies to use in speculating to what degree a goal has been achieved.

We all use the word goal regularly. Members of your family likely ask you
“What are your goals?” What they are is asking, in general what do you hope to accomplish with yourself. They want to know, in broad terms, do you plan to marry, have children, go to college, get a job, play in a rock band, or just become rich. They usually want to know what is dear to your heart. That use of the word *goal* says it is something that is a general outcome to be worked toward and accomplished at some future date.

Educational curriculum specialists use the word *goal* to describe outcomes that “….are common educational goals imposed by society to be met by each individual in the educational system” (Corno and Snow, 1986, p. 606). Goals such as numeracy and literacy and knowledge needed for citizenship are broad, general outcomes. The term *goal* has become less common in usage and has been supplanted by the word *standard*.

Standards—these outcome statements tend to be more specifically stated than goals though “….standards are more conceptual than specific” (Horn, 2004, p. 7). They are often still vague as to exactly which behaviors students will be expected to achieve. Here are two examples:

- Understand that resources are limited; e.g., scarcity exists.
- Acquire and organize materials from primary and secondary sources.

Both of the above are clearer than goals as to what students are to be able to do, but they remain vague about how you might bring the intent of either standard in your classroom. What, for example, might you teach your 9th graders tomorrow morning about the first standard above? It is hard to be specific, isn’t it? But standards are very important to you as well as all educators. They cut to the heart of what the larger community (national and/or local) wants pupils to learn. Those expectations guide states, districts, schools, and teachers in selecting that which will be taught to children.

[Standards are] ….statements that identify the essential knowledge and skills that should be taught and learned in school. Standards also identify behaviors and attitudes related to success inside and outside of school. These include (but are not limited to) providing evidence to back up assertions and developing productive, satisfying relationships with others (Carr and Harris, 2001, p. 184).

Standards come in two types—content and process standards. *Content standards* are those describing the outcomes to be taught such as knowledge or skill outcomes; those kinds of targets such as the bulleted two immediately above are content standards. *Process standards* describe how education should occur and include goals the larger community holds for the ways the children will be taught. Examples of process standards include:

- Provide the nurturing and care-giving students need so they become effective learners
- Affirm the dignity and worth of each student (Schalock, 1994, p. 242).
• The teacher combines new units, existing units, published materials, and learning experiences and routines to implement standards in the classroom (Vermont Department of Education).

Generally, when you read about content standards you will find those most helpful in deciding what you will teach. Process standards are most commonly written to guide an educational agency in how children will be taught.

Standards are often loosely aligned with a discipline, such as art—students will learn to evaluate works of art. (Even in that statement we aren’t sure if the “works of art” refer to paintings, sculptures, music, or performance.) It is common to find that standards are written by one of many agencies, several of whom we mention in the next section of this chapter, and are often also assessed by standardized tests. Standards often have limited utility to classroom teachers except they serve as sources of direction for the construction of instructional objectives. From that standpoint standards are powerful in that they serve to guide daily instruction and assessment (Carr and Harris, 2001; Clune, 2001).

Benchmarks—of the terms defined here, this one has come into usage only recently. Whenever an assessment activity for an outcome, or standard, is assigned to a specific grade level and/or a specific discipline, then the outcome is often called a benchmark and its evaluative documentation is called a benchmark measure. (It is a mark to identify how high one’s boat has risen on the bank of the intellectual river.) Benchmarks themselves are typically constructed by the agency providing the instruction—a state department of education, a school district, or a group of teachers within a school.

The standards [benchmarks] set for learning by states and districts define the successive bars to be reached by students as they progress in their learning, and standards-linked assessments indicate where students stand at a particular point in time with respect to a particular bar, but it is each student who needs to reach each bar and the main job of teachers is to help each student in each classroom make steady progress toward each bar that lies immediately ahead (Schalock et al. 2006 p. 9).

When we earlier described standards we told you they are usually non-definitive. Clarifying statements are typically included and they are often called benchmarks, particularly when they are organized by grade level. For the two standards we showed you above under the definition for standards, the state agency preparing those statements also provided benchmarks for, in this case, 4th-5th graders.

• Understand the roles and responsibilities of the three branches of government and explain how their powers are distributed and shared.
  
  Example benchmark:
  Name and distinguish the primary function of each branch of
government at the federal level.

- Acquire and organize materials from primary and secondary sources.
  
  Example benchmark:
  Gather, use, document, and weave together information from multiple sources; e.g., print, electronic, human, primary, secondary.

- Understand how individuals, groups, and international organizations influence government.
  
  Example benchmark:
  Understand how U.S. political parties have influenced government policies and decisions (Author, Oregon Department of Education, 2001, http://www.ode.state.or.us/teachlearn/real/documents/ss.pdf.) (The above benchmark was selected as a high school criterion for Oregon.)

We hope you noticed that none of the above standards are completely covered by the single objective shown for each outcome. In the first standard, students need to learn the roles as well as the responsibilities of each. That gets at the distribution component. Another objective needs to exist to ask students to learn about the sharing of power. Finally, we think a third objective needs to exist comparing and contrasting each branch. We showed one benchmark—but not all one would need to teach to attain the standard shown in the first bullet.

A similar lack of coverage exists for the second standard above. The second benchmark shown deals with actions students are to take when seeking information. But someone will need to explain, prior to instruction for the 2nd benchmark, what both primary and secondary sources are and how they are alike and how they differ. Suggestions on how to pull all that information together would provide a focus for a second objective coming from this benchmark. More complete coverage of the standard could then be achieved for both benchmarks.

The third standard would also need some differentiation between groups that don’t have significant influence on the policies of the federal government and well as a benchmark where students select contemporary policies that have exhibited influence.

Agencies such as national organizations or textbook publishers don’t usually prepare benchmarks. Benchmark assessments are most often developed by state departments or are found in texts selected by state departments or school districts. Because benchmarks are often written with greater specificity, in terms of the behaviors students are to acquire, teachers usually find benchmarks easier to turn into instructional objectives.

You will find the word benchmark is also used as a synonym for “exemplar”
or “criterion” or “good example”—see the sentence added to the two benchmarks we provided above. When students are asked to produce a product or performance often the instructional strategy used will be to show them work and previous students developed to clarify the goal or standard sought. Benchmarks also called “good-enough criteria” (Horn, 2004, p. 45).

Within this usage of the word, benchmark states what students are expected to accomplish by a specific grade. But sometimes benchmark is the term used when a teacher shows the clarifying example; e.g., “This what we want you to learn to do.” The word benchmark clarifies what students are to accomplish and in most cases it states by which grade the target is to be assessed and met.

Benchmarks do lead toward increased accountability as they typically specify at which grade level or in which discipline they are to be attained. If one of the benchmarks for literacy is assigned to the 7th-8th grade it is clear, within a specific school, only 1-2 teachers are likely to be viewed as responsible for helping children attain those outcomes. An aspect of standards-based education, and its subordinate benchmarks, is its potential to enhance accountability.

But even benchmarks aren’t quite specific enough to guide what you will do this afternoon with your students. Those highly specific, and very useful, statements are discussed next.

Objectives—the outcomes teachers find most helpful in directing their instructional activities are objectives. “The difference between goals and objectives, for us and many other writers, is that the latter are measurable or assessable by the teacher…. [while] goals are quite general…. ” (Girod, Schalock, M. & Schalock, D., 2002, p. 133). Objectives have verbs that describe an explicit behavior a student is to learn to perform; e.g., the student will select from the set of paintings, all of the three which exhibit the two elements of composition discussed in class. Objectives are typically written by a teacher, or at least modified by the teacher, to fit her students. The assessment of the students’ abilities to exhibit the explicit behavior sought is to be accomplished by the teacher. Objectives often take a day or two for students to attain as opposed to goals and standards which may require weeks, months, or even years to accomplish.

All of the above definitions are outgrowths of the emphasis on standards. The set of educational outcomes includes standards which are another form of goals, and are translated into benchmarks to clarify at what point in his/her academic career a child will encounter them and in which class, and objectives are tailored by classroom teachers to fit the needs and ability levels of their specific pupils. In others words, there is a progression from abstract to specific in the development of the outcomes—but each is an outgrowth of the outcomes or standards chosen for a school, district, or state.

Figure 4.2 below portrays how we intend you think about the words we just tried to
define along with describing their relationship to one another.

Fig. 4.2: All K-12 Outcomes

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**Goals** for all K-12 subject areas including cognitive, physical, and affective outcomes as well as general, non-discipline based, outcomes for the total educative experience.

**Standards** for each subject area—from external (national or state) or internal (district or school) sources. Typically, external authors are the source for most sets of standards.

**Benchmarks** set for each subject and often a set of grades—where a “good-enough” criterion or description is added

**Objectives** are restatements of a benchmark or standard by the teacher for a group of students for a subject area, which makes it highly specific.

The need that standards are to be dealt with professionally, is dramatized by St. Jarre. St. Jarre is miffed by those teachers seeking to circumvent their educational responsibilities while they fulfill their personal ambitions as they develop curricula within a school to meet the standards assigned to them.

The electives sometimes get even more specialized with titles like “The Vietnam War” or “Middle Eastern History”, and are not even designed with meeting standards in mind. Often, these courses reflect the pet subjects of the teachers who design them and believe that they meet the “Ah, cool!” test. When we create coursework that is centered not on what standards we are helping students meet, but instead on what we consider to be “cool” we are once again thinking more of ourselves than our students (St. Jarre, 2008, p. 650).

If you now reread the chapter objectives, you will likely notice we do not ask you to recall or even recognize these definitions as one of our instructional outcomes. But for the rest of your career you will need to use these words flawlessly because they are part of the professional language. Your colleagues will expect you to be quite precise in using these words. Learn them well.

Fig. 4.3: Practice
Set A: Reading and Literacy

Listed below are two sets of three types of outcomes. For each set of categorize them from abstract to concrete; i.e., standards, benchmarks, and objectives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Outcome</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. __________________</td>
<td>Students can comprehend what they read in a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Iowa Department of Education web site 2007 for standards and benchmarks.
2. __________________________ Students can identify each of the paragraphs which are examples of fore-shadowing as an author’s literary device.

3. __________________________ Students can recognize aspects of a passage’s style and structure and recognize literary techniques.

Set B: Reading and Literacy

Listed below are two sets of three types of outcomes. For each set, categorize them from abstract to concrete; i.e., standards, benchmarks, and objectives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Outcome</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Standard</td>
<td>The student identifies, analyses, and applies knowledge of the elements of a variety of fiction and literary texts to develop a thoughtful response to a literary selection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Objective</td>
<td>The student will state both reasons for liking and disliking a fictional story he/she has recently read and provide in writing at least one compelling point for each reason.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Benchmark</td>
<td>The student will read and distinguish among the genres and subgenres of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, drama, and media.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Check your decisions against those your authors present below.

Authors’ Responses

Set A

1. Standard We thought the statement we called a standard quite vague while the second sentence was the most specific in describing what students were to do. The last entry seemed to fit between them—it was more specific than #1 and less concrete than #2.

2. Objective

3. Benchmark

Set B

1. Benchmark The third statement seemed to be most useful in guiding what a teacher should do with the students—and that is the definition of objective. The second statement provided the most global view of the reading and literacy content—and that is what a standard is

4 Florida Department of Education web site 2009 for standards and benchmarks.
Summary

Did you notice that as the outcome statements become more concrete they become longer? That isn’t always the case but it often tips off which is the more concrete outcome.

As you read the following sections we will complete our task of attempting to teach you how to meet objective 1.C. We haven’t quite gotten there yet. The preceding conversation was to make sure we are all using five important words similarly.

A Brief History or the Standards-based Movement

To understand what motivated the educational community to orient their instructional and assessment efforts around school standards and how that step looks today one needs to know a bit of the history from the movement. And, thankfully for you, it is a relatively short history.

We present our discussion in the form of a time-line. Only ten dates or time frames are shown because so much of the movement is still maturing. A caveat: When writers employ a timeline it can mislead a reader into believing events occurred in a very linear pattern. The history of the standards movement was neither as linear as it appears nor as simply caused as we may seem to imply. Certain significant events occurred because the time was right. We have shown only those events which were significant in our minds and which depended on the zeitgeist of that time.

1965

Under President Lyndon Johnson, legislation was passed at the federal level which dramatically changed how education in this country operated. This country has long expected its 50 states to manage educational efforts with the federal government taking only a small role in funding and in encouraging new educative efforts. But in 1965 legislation called Title I, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, was passed as part of President Johnson’s war on poverty. The act guaranteed equal access for all to the educational resources of the community.

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) was passed [in 1965]. The ESEA was legislation that provided federal funding for schools for the purposes of improving education for all children, helping children break the cycle of poverty, and fighting inequality in the schools. To ensure that schools would be accountable to the goals of the ESEA, Congress has required schools to evaluate and report on their effectiveness in meeting the ESEA requirements (Horn, 2004, p. 17).
Many schools and districts put children with learning, physical, and emotional special needs in settings removed from their neighborhood peers. These actions came to be considered an affront because these children were, in some cases, hidden away. The federal government passed a land-mark piece of legislation called 94-142 The Education of all Handicapped Children Act. That act specified education was to occur in the “least restrictive environment” for all children. In other words, general educators, as well as special educators were required to teach all children—not just those who were convenient. Today, we provide all children a school setting where we claim it is a “non-restrictive environment”. That bill was a major civil rights law intended to foster inclusive schools for all.

Within Washington DC, there was a great deal of concern about the safety of the country from attacks by Communist countries such as Russia, China, and Cuba. The federal government, influenced by “military-driven security needs, stressed academic standards in mathematics and science” (Horn, 2004, p. 37). This again confirmed for many that education needed to become more like business while focusing on preparing people to be scientifically and mathematically literate; in other words schools needed to be held accountable for preparing students in carefully chosen topics stated as standards.

When Ronald Reagan was elected president of the United States, along with the rise of the Moral Majority, a more politically conservative administration came into power. That administration was instrumental in deciding how public education would be evaluated. Legislation was enacted to bring public education (and private education if it was receiving federal monies) under laws that would bring order to the curriculum and its implementation would, it was argued, benefit the effort to make education a world class effort. Excellence, not equity, became the catchword (Horn, 2004).

Because of this conservative power surge, business leaders (typically conservative in view) pushed for a focus on a business type model of education. Outputs, pupil learning, would become the point by which students, teachers, schools, districts, and states would be judged. To accomplish that task many agencies and organizations began to write statements defining what schools should be teaching students and how test data used to assess those outcomes would be used to judge which sets of people were performing their tasks fruitfully. The former, outcome statements, became known as educational standards. That latter or second set of expectations became accountability systems—or commonly referred to as a need for accountability within the schools.
Publication of the book *A Nation at Risk* fueled further dissatisfaction which had begun in the 1970s. In that document it was written that “….unless public education received a major overhaul and unless expectations for student achievement were raised, America’s economic security would be severely compromised” because comparisons of the test results and dropout rates of American public school children portrayed a picture of mediocrity (Nichols & Berliner, 2008, p. 4). The fact that those testing procedures and comparative analyses have been shown to be dramatically flawed did not slow the wide-spread view that our nation was truly at risk of losing its leadership position due principally to the decline of American education. A major change in public education was called for. Please do recall that the standards movement received much of its initiation from the publication of *A Nation at Risk*.

When this reform notion emerged in the late 1980s, educators and policymakers were still experiencing the despair about lagging American achievement that drove the publication and response to *A Nation at Risk* (Fuhrman, 2001, p. 1-2).

….policymakers at the state and local level responded by raising standards for both students and teachers (Fuhrman, 2001, p. 2).

States were to report not just whether each standard had been met by the student-body, but the degree to which prescribed sub-sets of students were approaching attainment. Those two requirements were based on the need for accountability and the expectation that individual students would make progress.

In July, 1990, George H. W. Bush signed into law the American Education With Disabilities Act. The ADA is a wide-ranging civil rights law that prohibits, under most circumstances, discrimination based on a disability. It affords similar protections against discrimination to Americans with disabilities as the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which made discrimination based on race, religion, sex, national origin, and other characteristics illegal. Disability is defined as "a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity." In our case, those words meant it was against the law to ignore a part of the student body even in the classroom. Again, educators were told to provide education for all students.

Another piece of federal legislation was passed during that same time period. Improving America’s Schools and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was passed to ensure that all children, specifically, those needing special services had them provided. This congressional action confirmed that education was now expected to provide services to all children.

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5 Nichols and Berliner have been severe critics of the *A Nation at Risk* book, as have several other educational scholars. For example, Nichols and Berliner’s very next sentence following the above quote was “American education became the scapegoat for a host of bad business decisions” (ibid, p. 4).
children. We could no longer “warehouse” special children in separate schools or just refuse to accept children with unusually complex disabilities, both common practices in this country. The focus on all children was a significant breakthrough as was the expectation that schools would report their work to evaluate their progress.

Certainly one of the most controversial pieces of federal legislation ever passed that impacted public schools was that devised by a politically conservative president (George W. Bush) and congress, the act commonly called No Child Left Behind. The most controversial component of the act included a mechanism for requiring accountability. Standardized tests were to be employed with all students, even those for whom the most complex special education services were required. Students who did not yet speak English were also to be assessed though they may have entered school only yesterday. Students, teachers, administrators, and states were to be evaluated on the basis of standardized test scores. If performance was judged to be too low, consequences followed that included public announcements and eventually, if inadequacies continued, a school could be shut down and reformed under the management of the state, the federal government, or a privately owned company. As you might guess, those steps were met with fierce debate. Almost every scholar in education agreed then, and still do, that the use of standardized tests, in their present form, will never answer the question about accountability in a valid manner.

One of the most compelling arguments against the NCLB provisions attacks it “design flaw”. Horn argues that the problems include:

….design flaws in NCLB such as overinvestment in testing accompanied by an underinvestment in capacity building, ungrounded theories of school improvement, weak knowledge about how to turn around weak schools, perverse incentives for quality and performance, and policymaking by remote control (Horn, 2004, p. 21).

As of this writing, mid-2009, the NCLB Act is still being challenged across the nation. But the concept of accountability was strengthened by the NCLB act though some scholars were even more specific in their antagonism for the Act.

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6 The author of this chapter taught the sixth grade in Oregon from 1962-65 in a large district. During that time children who would, in the present time, be receiving special education services in neighborhood schools their age-mates attended were, instead, put on busses and sent to a single elementary school where the entire student body, drawn from the whole district, received special services. Some children likely attended that school with other youngsters they had never see before nor might ever see again.

7 “Here is the heart of NCLB. This is the theory of action behind the law. This law is designed to push lazy teachers and lazy students to work harder. It is based on the premise that children and teachers are not performing as well as they should, an easy belief to hold and an impossible one to verify empirically.
2004 Most recently reauthorized in 2004, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act came into being as a part of the ADA (see above). This law clarified even further the services teachers, schools, and districts needed to provide for *all children* and reauthorized the NCLB legislation. The IDEA stated “students must be provided a free appropriate public education that prepares them for further education, employment, and independent living” (www.ed.gov/plicy/speced/leg/idea/q-and-a Aug. 2009).

2005 A study completed for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation portrayed the intractability of graduation rates. It was found nearly one-third of the U. S. high school students don’t graduate. Those data added additional fuel to the conviction that minor changes in schooling would be insufficient to provide higher graduation rates (Mariotti, 2009, p. 2).

2009 A project called the Common Core State Standards Initiative was organized by the Council of Chief School Officers and the National Governors Association. Speculation exists at this writing (late-2009) that this work will serve as the basis for the first national curriculum. Support seems to be mounting behind this effort (Cavanagh, 2009).

Though much of the most recent legislation has attempted to remove what some members of Congress deemed to be “restrictive requirements” the above pieces of federal mandates are still operational and will influence how you deal with your students.

We hope you noticed the use of Italics within several of the above paragraphs. What we were trying to show was across the last half decade, events had transpired to bring about a *change in education*. Though your authors are painfully aware of the shortcomings of the book *A Nation at Risk* and the *No Child Left Behind* legislation, we are pleased with the impact on bringing about *standards-based education, accountability,* and an educational system that *accounts for all children*. The latter two concepts are still not being managed well but standards-based education is now well established across the nation’s schools.

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**Fig. 4.4: Practice**

Based on our hundreds of school visits, we have come to believe that the percentage of lazy teachers we have is considerably smaller that the percentage of lazy politicians who do not read the legislation they support” (Nichols & Berliner, 2008, p. 12).

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8 Some of you seeking to become a general (as opposed to special) education teacher may have noticed that much of the important legislation governing standards-based education came about as a result of work by those in special education. The earliest influences came from legislation enacted to advance civil rights—and those efforts were directed toward the right of “special” children to receive an equitable education. The efforts from those federal legislative actions impacted special education as well as general education. We hope you don’t think, if you are preparing to become a general educator that special education directed the standards movement. Rather, the standards-based movement owes much of it impetus to the civil efforts of the national government.
In 4-5 sentences, explain how federal civil rights legislation and dissatisfaction with the schools were instrumental in bringing about standards-based education. When you are done check your answers against those your authors have provided below.

Your Answer


Your Authors’ Responses

Read the following two lists and check each entry you mentioned in your answer to the above question. When you finish, add up the number of checks you assigned to your work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Federal Legislation</th>
<th>Public Dissatisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equality—fight inequality, particularly poverty</td>
<td>Need high academic standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required to evaluate and report</td>
<td>Become business-like:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination prohibited—particularly towards those with disabilities</td>
<td>-outputs—pupil learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on all children—provide special services</td>
<td>-clear outcomes needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability mandated</td>
<td>-accountability needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free appropriate education mandated</td>
<td>Economic and national safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Least restrictive environment</td>
<td>compromised—schools not doing well compared to those from other nations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We think you should have checked at least three items in each column to have acquired a good understanding of the national influences on the initiation of standards in the school. If you missed meeting our criterion, please review the segments of the timeline to ensure you understand our answers.

We don’t expect you to recall the details embedded in our time line but we hope you will remember that *A Nation at Risk* and the several pieces of federal legislation encouraged the development of the standards-based movement, accountability, and a focus on educating all children. The intent of this volume is to help you gather your
thoughts as you prepare to enter a teaching world so much different from what your mother and her teachers experienced.

**Sources of Standards or Why are There so Many Standards?**

Standards typically come from groups of experts who identify what they think students need to learn. Such statements come from many sources, but author groups seldom include classroom teachers. Often standards preparation groups are those who have special knowledge particularly about a discipline such as the National Council of Teachers of English, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, National Council for the Social Studies, and the National Science Teachers Association. There are also general education groups who prepare standards which are not discipline oriented, such as American Educational Research Association, Common Core State Standards Initiative, and the National Commission on Excellence in Education. What both these groups offer are sets of outcomes that many people have selected, often after much debate, that are useful to teachers in constructing local educational benchmarks and/or objectives.

Standards, if they are to become integrated into daily instruction, must meet the test of being judged to be “important” by the local educational community. Teachers, administrators, parent groups, and often community leaders are asked to review, for

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9 Here is a fuller listing of organizations which have made available to education agencies their views as to what standards needs to be taught to the nation’s children.

**Professional organizations**
- International Reading Association
- National Science Board
- The American Association for the Advancement of Science
- National Center for History in the Schools
- The Geography Education Standards Project
- National Council on Economic Education
- Center for Civic Education

**Field-based professional associations**
- National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
- Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium
- National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future
- Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium
- Educational Leadership Constituent Council

(Horn, 2004, p. 29)

**Private organizations**
- Fordham Foundation
- Heritage Foundation
- Hudson Institute
- Brookings Institute
- National Education Association
- American Federation of Teachers

(Horn, 2004, p. 30)
example, standards suggested by the National Council of Mathematics to devise local standards for the district’s mathematics program. Standards which meet the local test for “important” are selected and often rewritten to fit with the specific needs of the community and to make them more precise. Those statements are then made available to the district’s teachers as guides for their daily instruction.

Two co-authors made an intriguing point concerning how prospective teachers might think about such sets of standards. Though teachers may initially feel they now know what is expected of them as they design the curriculum for their classrooms, there is much thought still to be accomplished.

Since [a district’s standards are] prescribed, you might think this would reduce the number of decisions you must make, but this often isn’t true. For example, you will often have to interpret the meaning of the standard, which can be more demanding than establishing your own objectives. Then, once you’ve made this decision, planning is similar to what it would be under any other circumstances (Eggen & Kauchak, 2007, p. 411).

What Eggen and Kauchak are warning you of is the need to localize the standards to your classroom and your pupils and your lessons. Standards are not prescriptive for this day’s lessons for your specific class. But they are prescriptive for the topics and tools you are to teach across the year. You will still need to restate standards for your specific classroom. We will talk much more about this in the chapter on Content in the next volume. But do realize once you have read the district’s standards, now your work begins in adapting that standard to your students.

The above conversation was designed to help you attain chapter objective 1.B.

1. B. Recall three types of source agencies influential in the construction and provision of standards.

We recommend you forthrightly decide whether you can meet that outcome easily before proceeding to the next section.

**Teachers’ Roles in Standards-based Schools**

As you recall, you need to think of your teaching actions as being oriented toward all children and making progress while trying to achieve standards. Once we parse those two goals out further, we find there are several actions teachers in standards-based schools must take as they implement those outcomes. That which follows is knowledge we think you will need as you begin your career and, more immediately, you will find it necessary information as you seek to attain chapter objectives 1.A. and 1. E..

In Figure 5.2 we present several professional skills teachers will be expected to exhibit while working in standards-based schools. Throughout the three volumes in this series we will help you acquire these skills. For now, all you need to do is prepare yourself to recall these skills. Later we will help you master them.
Plan:
1. Possess copies of standards and frameworks for each subject you will teach.
2. Translate expectations for learning into explicit objectives.
4. Arrange for external support and assistance to students, and their families if needed, for progress to be made.

Implement
5. Encourage each pupil to seek guidance and assistance from his/her teachers, parents, and peers, to pursue a course of study that leads to steady progress toward each standard of learning to be accomplished.
6. Provide instructional activities that vary in time and type to meet the variety of student needs.
7. Design classroom curricula, instruction, and assessment that will move pupils from where they are to where they need to be.
8. Avoid frequent use of unchallenging student desk work, such as word searches, sentence completion exercises, and puzzles. Other forms of response sheets will be avoided if they are not specifically linked to the lesson’s objectives, the state/district standards, and the immediate status of the learner in terms of progress toward subject outcomes.

Assess
9. Determine the current status of your students in relation to the outcomes to be accomplished and the enabling knowledge and skills needed to accomplish them.
10. Assess students’ progress regularly and provide feedback to each student.
11. Help each pupil and his or her parents to monitor progress being made toward each learning outcome to be accomplished. Determine that the information provided about progress is useful in planning further work.

Review
12. Revise a plan or level of work if progress toward a set of objectives or a standard is less than desired.
13. Retain copies of exemplary student work to use as targets when teaching the lesson again.
14. Reflect on, evaluate, and continuing to enhance one’s effectiveness in fostering pupils’ learning progress.

Your Disposition
15. Hold high expectations for each pupils’ learning.
16. Ensure that each pupil understands s/he is responsible for accomplishing each
outcome.

17. Encourage each pupil to seek guidance and assistance from his/her teachers, parents, and peers to assure steady progress toward the outcomes.

Work with Colleagues

18. Participate in designing, evaluating, and improving opportunities for learning in your school.

19. Collaborate with your colleagues to contribute to the enhancement of teaching and in carrying out your work as a teacher.

20. Communicate the learning status of pupils to parents, colleagues, and others as necessary to continue support for the child’s progress.

All of the above is likely overwhelming though, we hope, you will find the challenge enticing. If you can learn to do all of the above you will become unquestionably an excellent teacher. But we do need to remind you that all of this was brought about through the initiation of a move to standards-based schools.

Teachers in SBS will play the role of: experts in human development, instruction, and learning; coaches for intellectual development and understanding; helpers to students in their construction of meaning; “negotiators” of meaning; evaluators of learning; and “gatekeepers” of standards (Schalock, 1994, p. 199).

You may say to yourself after reading the above, “To do all that seems unreasonable”. For a beginning teacher, it will require that your supervisors are reasonable in what they expect from you; as a beginner, we agree, it is too much to expect that you will be able to demonstrate each of the 19 skills listed above. But certainly the first five actions in the preceding list are feasible for you right now. Those numbered 7-11 will take some time to master as they are more sophisticated professional skills. We will help you master those skills in these volumes. Actions 6 and 12-19 will require some experience and, hopefully, insightful advice from your veteran teaching colleagues. We will help you begin learning those skills in these three volumes. But all those actions will be expected as you become a veteran teacher in standards-based schools.

This section should have helped you meet chapter objective 1.A. as well as objectives 1.E.. Reread those two objectives now to ensure that you are comfortable with your ability to meets those outcomes.

1.A. Prepare a description of how external standards impact a classroom teacher’s lesson design. The description will include a brief explanation of each of the following teacher activities:

• an analysis of the standards to select themes embedded in those statements which seem significant to your students’ lives;

10 Items 3, 8, and 13 are drawn from (Shea, 2005, p. 13-14); items 1-2, 5-7, 11-12, and 14-17 come from the work of (Armstrong et al., 2009, p. 21); and items 4, 9-10, and 18-20 were gleaned from the writings of (Schalock, 1994, p. 242).
translate those themes into objectives with pupil behaviors stated;
• select instructional procedures to help students meet your objectives; and
• state your general assessment plans.

1. E. Select from a list behaviors those which teachers successfully functioning in a standards-based school will likely exhibit.

Pupils’ Roles in Standards-based Schools

Certainly there is more burden upon you as a teacher in standards-based schools. But you should expect that other central players in the educational process will also have responsibilities. If your students are to demonstrate progress, no matter how difficult learning may be for them, then they too need to accept responsibility for learning. Here is a brief listing of actions you need to impress upon your charges.

Students will:

1. Be responsible for making an attempt to progress as fast and far as they can.

2. Have in mind from early on the instructional sequence which both of you will use to accomplish the unit’s objectives.

3. Take responsibility for their learning activities.

4. Orient their thinking about the unit toward progress rather than toward their grade.

5. Understand that their work within an instructional unit is incomplete until they have met the unit objectives.

6. Share with their parents/guardians evidence of their progress toward the unit objectives.

While these changes [with the advent of SBS] do not alter fundamentally how students learn, they do alter what students learn and the level and quality they are expected to bring to their learning. Working to meet established performance standards is far different than working to obtain a “grade” that is acceptable to one’s self or one’s parents. In a standards-based school environment effort tends to be demanded of all, rather than a quality exhibited by a motivated few (Schalock et al., 2006, p. 1).

You will need to impress upon your students that they too are responsible for their progress. You are not in the battle to destroy ignorance all by yourself. The students, their parents, as well as their classmates, are integral parts of the instructional activities. As you initially shift the burden back to students to take a more independent role in their
education, some will surely rebel. This new and much different approach is not consistent with how many of them have been taught in the past. This approach does, after all, expect more of them than traditional schools sought. Becoming independent as a learner will be uncomfortable to some students, at least initially. You likely will need to develop a compelling argument that you will find necessary to repeat often until students come to understand that their world, not just yours, expects them to take responsibility for themselves. That is not a comfortable message to receive when students have spent their previous time in school being irresponsible or merely compliant. But society has come to expect more from their children and it is right and reasonable. As you progress through your career, if you believe in the correctness of this view, you will become ever more persuasive as you invite, encourage, and even compel pupils to become responsible for themselves. In Volumes II and III of this series we will provide much more straightforward advice about how to work with students as they learn to be more independent and accountable as learners. Be patient. We promise to be helpful.

Reread now objective 1.D. to ensure that you believe your can now meet that chapter objective.

1.D. Prepare a description of what expectations are likely to be held for pupils by a school or district employing standards-based education.

District’s Role in Responding to Standards

We don’t want you to believe you and your students are in this endeavor all by yourselves. You are not alone in this effort. State departments of education encourage districts and schools to work diligently and often with teachers to help them become proficient in working in standards-based school. Initially, you won’t be responsible for helping your school or district design activities to aid teachers but you will likely feel more confident in your ability to operate effectively in a standards-based school if you know some of the aids districts often provide. Two authors state well the expectation for leadership from districts in helping teachers.

Ornstein & Levine [2002] have called the standards-based movement a “systemic improvement or reform” because it involves so many components of the education enterprise (Schalock, 2002, p. 517).

This movement has had a “profound impact on administrators. It has shifted public focus, sometime with laser-like intensity, to the building. It has redirected attention from the activities of teachers to the achievement of students. ….the movement has focused on how well individual students and groups of students are able to perform academically.” (Hunt, 2008, p. 583)

Don’t try to recall the following activities, but read them to help you acquire assurance that your supervisors won’t throw you unaided into your classroom.

Here are three quick descriptions of the tasks states and districts have in managing standards-based reform. These descriptors are conclusions that have arisen from research
analyses by scholars of the work of districts and states in standards-based reform activities. Some of what follows will seem to be unduly negative. By the end of this chapter segment, however, we hope you will come to feel more comfortable.

- When district analysis focused on changing teaching behaviors rather than content taught, the reform tended to bog down. More successful efforts came when efforts focused on aligning content, instruction, and assessment (Clune, 2001).
- Districts and states commonly propose huge documents to teachers for the educational unit’s content standards. Next, the standards are usually portioned out to disciplines—science, reading, etc. Finally, the discipline standards are rewritten as benchmarks partitioning them out to grade levels for instruction and assessment. All that reductionism can lead to a fragmentation of the curriculum.

Using committees of experts certainly assures content accuracy and breadth, but it leads to a fragmented curriculum vision if no one evaluates the cumulative effect of the standards. When all the history a child ought to know is added to all the science that is important—and then both of those subject areas are added to all the English, mathematics, social studies, physical education, and arts he ought to know—the result is an overwhelming mass of knowledge. One student cannot realistically attain all of this knowledge in the course of a K-12 education (Carr & Harris, 2001, p. 3-4).

A large district often has only one person, a curriculum director, who knows where all the content standards are assigned. No one responsible for teaching the content knows much about the organization of the curriculum, let alone where all the parts are supposed to be found.

- The assessment of the curriculum, which is often also poorly understood by those teaching it, is also typically mis-aligned.

In some districts, when analyzing a district-wide test, it has been found some standards were assessed but not taught—some were taught but not assessed—and some were neither taught nor assessed. (Carr & Harris, 2001, p. 4).

What the above descriptors portray is that states and districts have a tough task in managing all the standards in ensuring that a responsible assessment of the curriculum occurs. You will not be held responsible in the reform effort for designing or assessing the district’s curriculum. You may, though, be involved in such activities as a committee member. Teachers should be a part of the process of implementing district accountability.

In brief, here is a more hopeful description of what you might find being done in your district to help you and your colleagues implement and maintain the standards-based reform.

Districts will provide or help teachers:
1. …via several identifiable state-sponsored “inputs” to the standards-based educational system:

- lists of standards, often accompanied by performance indicators and other elaborating statements [benchmarks], that describe the knowledge and skills to be acquired by students,
- frameworks that provide information and resources to support the teaching of each standard, including teaching tips, suggested curriculum materials, and vignettes of teaching episodes,
- instructional materials and curricula related to the district’s stated standards, and
- test blueprints and state-released test items with information about standards-based exams used to assess student achievement of the standards (Shea, 2005, p. 21).

2. …with copies of the state’s standards and example learning objectives and other elaborating statements that describe the knowledge and skills to be acquired by students.

3. …with inservice or professional development that includes time and a setting to share with one another ways to involve all students in learning.

4. …to restate state standards to fit better this school’s setting and pupils.

5. …via guidance in restating standards so they fit a specific grade within the school or a specific subject matter class within the school’s offerings.

6. …with guidance in restating the standards as objectives that represent “high expectations” for the school’s students.

7. …with guidance from expert leadership in reviewing student assessment data as you attempt to use those data to determine to what degree each of the district’s standards were met.

Your school and/or district may have provided the faculty, prior to your arrival, activities and documents, such as those above, to encourage teachers to redesign the school’s curriculum to attain the standards devised by the state. If that is true, talk to your principal or department chair about a review of what was done so you don’t have to re-invent curriculum structures about which everyone else already knows.

But be clear about one thing relating to teachers and standards. Everyone expects teachers to be intimately involved in analyzing the standards and rewriting them to make them specific to the local community and its students.
…we believe that teachers need to be deeply immersed in the process of setting learning expectations for their own students. Students will produce standard-meeting work when their teachers set expectations for their learning. Externally prepared guides and curriculum resources can be helpful, but only teachers can make the planning decisions that will result improved student learning (Shea, 2005, p. 26).

You may be perplexed a bit by the foregoing. After all, the professionals who wrote the standards are well educated and have often had significant experience working with the same types of children you will be teaching. How can you be expected to refine their work? “But text book publishers, who certainly know more than me, state I should anticipate these children from disadvantaged backgrounds should learn adverbs and adjectives in this unit. That may be a problem in that some of my pupils can’t really read yet.” You are right in believing the folks who write standards for academic societies and state departments of education typically are very bright people. But who in this room knows more about your students—those writers or you? There is only one answer—and you already know it. Consider their advice but rely on your judgment when selecting the specific words for your educational objectives.

If one thinks about designing standards as similar to designing a restaurant menu, it becomes obvious that we couldn’t design a single menu that would work best for all restaurant customers for the next 15-20 years. Such menus would need to account for community preferences. Standards and objectives, like menus, will always be individualized to some degree, though if a nutritionist viewed any menu there should be some agreement about what children will need to eat. Tailoring standards and objectives to one’s “clientele” should be expected, even demanded.

Building administrators are now expected in standards-based schools to work with their faculty to ensure that everyone is working toward common outcomes. Recently, a scholar summarized this emphasis crisply.

The nature of both building- and district-level administration has clearly changed since the call for a shift in emphasis from management to leadership…. And, for the most part, we have made the move from paternalism to collegiality (Hunt, 2008, p. 584-585).

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11 There are topics having nothing to do with standards which you should talk aver with those who will supervise you as a beginning teacher. Below are some areas for which you as a new teacher would appreciate, we are sure, the help of the school/district in accounting for these parts of the schooling process:

- Attendance
- Discipline
- Homework
- Grading (Danielson, C. 2002).

We recommend you talk to your grade level leader, department chair, or principal about his/her advice for you in working through those four issues before school begins. By the way, if you actually take these steps before school even starts you will put your supervisors and building administrators on notice that you are a bright, insightful teacher. Don’t pass up this opportunity. Ahead of time, from your authors, you are welcome.
Without looking back, list for each of the three categories below the single most important change in each group’s role with the advent of standards-based schools. When you have finished with your response, check your work against your authors’ response which follows immediately below.

The single most important change for teachers is:

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

The single most important change for pupils is:

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

The single most important change for districts is:

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

Authors’ Response

Be sure each of your answers above includes at least one of the following concepts. If you mentioned two or three concepts, you should be proud of yourself. You understand this segment well.

Teachers:
- Encourage students
- Align lessons to state/district standards
- Provide variety in instructional strategies
- Use assessment data to guide lessons
- Review pupils’ and your work to select next steps
- Focus on progress
- Collaborate

Students:
- Accept responsibility for learning
- Focus on progress
- Share progress with parents/guardians

Districts:
Accept responsibility for learning
Focus on helping teachers improve learning
Provide resource documents
Help to interpret assessment data

The most useful summary we have found clarifying responsibilities of the district and the school in managing reform efforts appears below in Table 5.1.

| Staff Development as an Essential Element in School Improvement | FROM a system of schooling where staff development programs are piecemeal and often responsive to an issue that is “hot”, or a program or a practice that is “promising”, but rarely seen as needing to be systematic in design, long-range in focus, and treated as necessary condition for school change and improvement…. | TO a system of schooling where staff development is seen as an essential element in school change and improvement, and as such is elevated in priority for time and funding, and is planned as an integral and continuing part of any school improvement effort. |

(Schalock, 1994, p. 189]

**Post-assessment**

As you may recall, we told you early in this chapter we have provided a post-assessment to help you determine whether you met the objectives for this chapter. That assessment, plus a scoring guide and an interpretation guide will be found in the Teachers’ Edition for these three volumes.

Hopefully, you now believe pupils are also responsible for their learning performances. Even if your professor doesn’t ask you to undertake the post-assessment, we encourage you to complete that test to help you discern whether you met the chapter objectives. A person striving to become an excellent teacher would go the extra step to ensure his/her preparation is complete. Was that enough pressure?

**Closing**

The arguments supporting standards-based schools are logically compelling though the movement is not without its critics (Eliot Eisner; C. Thomas Holmes; and Susan Wilde, 2002).

**The case against state curriculum standards:**

- Standards can serve to remove local control of academic programs, preventing teachers from meeting the needs of their students;
- Standards are heavily influenced by academic specialists who often seem to assume all students will attend higher education, and become academic
specialists;
• Standards-based content is influenced by pressure groups and, therefore, the standards may become distorted and not reflect the needs and desires of mainstream society (Armstrong et al. 2009, p. 149); and
• As standard achievement levels become higher and pressures continue to exist to attain those targets, educators have been found to fall prey to “corruption processes” where they help students cheat (Nichols and Berliner, 2008, p. 4).
• Some teachers and some members of the public have become antagonized by the standards movement. They see standards as usurping their role in deciding about what education should be. “Don’t tell me what to do” (Labaree, 2009, p. 29).

The last bullet may have caused you shock. What seems to be the problem is not standards-based schools but standardized testing which too often is used to assess both students and teachers when those types of tests have been found by scholars to be poorly aligned with what is taught in most classrooms. That mis-alignment has led some teachers to make poor ethical decisions.

…neither standards nor assessment is the enemy of good schooling. The enemy of good schooling is high-stakes testing and the inevitable distortion and corruption that follows its introduction (Nichols & Berliner, 2008, p. 143).

As you should be able to tell from our writing within this chapter, we have presented several arguments favoring the development and maintenance of a standards-based education system.

The case for state curriculum standards:
• Helps to ensure that required content is actually taught;
• Makes it easier for learners to move from school to school by requiring all schools in a state to emphasize similar kinds of content at each grade level;
• Promotes educational equality by ensuring that all children will experience a state’s rigorous content;
• Facilitates comparisons between states, school districts, schools, and even teachers; and
• Provides teachers with greater assurance that what they teach each day is viewed by the community as being important.

For you, the bottom line is the standards-based schools came about as educators and national leaders became concerned about the state of schooling with the publication of the report A Nation at Risk. An additional factor was the call for change embedded in federal legislation known as No Child Left Behind. No matter how abhorrent many educational leaders judged both volumes to be, they did have the effect of instilling a need for change. To guide that change agencies and groups began proposing statements of standards to guide what children were to acquire while in public schools. The
standards-based movement is, then, a response to dissatisfaction with the nation’s schools (Hunt, 2008).

The teacher preparation program you are in now is likely much different than it was just 10 years ago. This change has resulted in a shift to what has been called by Del Schalock and his associates “a clinical teaching profession” (Schalock, et al., 2006, p. 2). That meant to Schalock, teachers needed to not only possess a depth of knowledge in their subject(s) area but a knowledge of pedagogy and how specific pedagogies could enhance learning of a specific outcome. Becoming a teaching clinician also meant the classroom teacher needed to be well versed in research on making those connections as well as being sophisticated in assessing pupil achievement to determine whether a predicted progression in learning was attained. In other words, teaching clinicians need the same range of skills a clinical physician holds to care for the plethora or needs s/he faces.

We turn again to Del Schalock as he compared older models of K-12 teaching to standards-based teaching.

**The Shifts in Teacher Roles and Responsibilities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes Based Instruction</th>
<th>FROM an approach to instruction where textbook coverage is central, where how much is learned or how well something is learned is left largely to teachers and students, and where time for learning does not vary appreciably for students having different styles or needs….</th>
<th>TO an approach to instruction that makes the accomplishment of clearly specified outcomes by all students central, where how much or how well something is learned is couched against state defined standards, and where time for learning and methods or instruction are free to vary as long as they are productive for learning and culturally/linguistically appropriate. (Schalock, 1994, p. 121)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Grouping for Learning</td>
<td>FROM a system of schooling where students commonly are “tracked” into low, middle, and upper ability groupings with expectations for learning, resources of learning, and instructional procedures carrying accordingly….</td>
<td>TO a system of schooling where students are grouped in ways that assure quality in opportunity to learn, exposure to activities that accommodate differences in interests and abilities, and challenged to use the mind well rather than memorize and accumulate information. (Schalock, 1994, p. 47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes Based Assessment</td>
<td>FROM teachers assessing student learning in whatever way they see fit, with neither students nor teachers being particularly clear about learning outcomes to be achieved, and districts assessing student learning through nationally normed achievement tests that cover only a portion of what has been taught….</td>
<td>TO expecting the faculty of a district to define, develop, and use defensible measures of student progress toward outcomes desired, including scores on state administered examinations. [Schalock, 1994, p. 165]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextually Embedded Instruction</td>
<td>FROM permitting performance standards for learning to be established largely by individual teachers, in the forms of requirements for a grade of A through F and permitting these to vary</td>
<td>TO requiring that performance standards for learning be clearly defined and held in common for all students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
from course-to-course and student-to-student….

| Criterion Referenced Measures | FROM viewing assessment as being primarily norm-referenced, and a vehicle for providing information leading to the assignment of grades that are not tied to clearly stated nor widely shared performance standards…. TO viewing assessment as being primarily criterion-referenced and a vehicle for monitoring, assisting, and reporting on the learning progress of students toward outcomes that have clearly stated performance standards. [Schalock, 1994, p. 166] |

| Multiple Uses of Assessment Information | FROM an approach to assessment that is largely summative in nature, that is used primarily for assigning letter grades to student performance, and that is rarely used as either a guide to the improvement of instruction or a sources of information to students about their learning strengths or weaknesses…. TO an approach to assessment that is largely formative in nature, and is used not only to inform students, parents, and teachers of progress toward outcomes to be achieved but it is also used to inform students of where they need to improve their work, guide instructional planning, and improve instructional programs that are not accomplishing the learning outcomes desired. [Schalock, 1994, p. 166] |

In the rest of the three volume set we have written for you, we will try to help you become comfortable in a standards-based setting as well as competent as a “clinical teacher”. We next turn to some of the concerns, as well as the hopeful procedures, associated with the increased emphasis on accountability. We look at the concept from its initiation and then how it will likely affect you, your students, and your district.

References


