

8 Tenets of a Standards-based System

1. Standards-based education holds students accountable for specific district-wide content standards that have accompanying benchmarks.
Standards-based education makes identification of standards a district-wide endeavor.
2. Standards-based education holds students accountable for specific thinking and reasoning standards.
Because of the importance to learning, thinking and reasoning is included as a critical aspect of standards-based education. The thinking and reasoning standards may either be set apart as a separate category of standards or embedded in specific subject areas. The preference is to establish a separate category of standards so they might be addressed in a wide variety of subject areas.
3. Standards-based education separates out essential learning standards (student learning goals).
Standards-based education identifies essential learning standards as a unique category. Standards-based education does not necessarily hold students accountable for these standards.
4. Standards-based education has no explicit, mandatory instructional model.
Teachers are free to organize instruction in any manner they see fit. However, they are still accountable for students effectively learning necessary knowledge and skills.
5. Standards-based education emphasizes the application of knowledge.
Standards-based education does not prescribe the manner in which students will be asked to apply the knowledge. Standards-based education encourages the application of knowledge through the use of performance tasks in the classroom and through the use of performance tasks as external forms of assessment.
6. Standards-based education provides direct feedback to students on their standings relative to standards.
Whether reporting is done by specific standards (the preferred method) or by overall letter grades, students within a standards-based system can interpret report cards and transcripts in terms of understanding and skill relative to specific standards. If overall letter grades are used, then a written policy describes the relationship of specific grades to performance on specific standards.

7. Standards-based education relies heavily on classroom teachers for assessment data.

Because student performance on standards is best evaluated by assessing performance multiple times in a variety of ways, individual classroom teachers are the primary source of assessment data in a standards-based system. A standards-based district will commonly use external assessments (i.e., ITEDs, ITBSs) as supplements to classroom assessments.

8. Standards-based education emphasizes student self-assessment.

Although the classroom teacher is the primary source of assessment data, individual students are also a key source of information. Students are asked to self-assess and provide evidence for their self-assessments on all standards.