

Process Questions

8 Tenets of a Standards-based System

- 1. Standards-based education holds students accountable for specific school-wide or district-wide content standards that have accompanying benchmarks.**

Standards-based education makes identification of standards a school-wide or district-wide endeavor. Standards-based education holds students accountable for specific content knowledge.

- Q:** What might the phrase "hold students accountable" look like in your district?
In a standards-based system, how might a district be held accountable?

- 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.

- Q:** How does this relate to Dimensions of Learning, Creating Readers/Writers and Exemplars?

- 3. Standards-based education separates out essential learning standards.**

Standards-based education identifies essential learning standards as a unique category. Standards-based education does not necessarily hold students accountable for these standards.

- Q:** Why isn't it always desirable to hold students accountable for these types of standards?

4. Standards-based education has no explicit 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.

- Q:** What does it mean for teachers to be held accountable for student learning?
Should teachers be responsible for student learning? If not, what are teachers responsible for?

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.

- Q:** While performance tasks can be inherently engaging for students, how can performance tasks and other assessments build and support a caring community?

6. Standards-based education standings 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.

- Q:** How will this increase student learning and achievement?

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 school or district will commonly use external assessments (ie. ITEDs) as supplements to classroom assessments.

Q: How does this relate to the Accountability Law?

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.

Q: How does self-assessment support a caring community?

How has your district encouraged student/adult self-assessment in the past? Are there mismatches between what we encourage and what we model?