DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 371 488 EA 025 949

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TITLE Standards for Student Performance.
INSTITUTION Oregon School Study Council, Eugene.
REPORT NO ISSN-0095-6994
PUB DATE Mar 94
NOTE 55p.
AVAILABLE FROM Publication Sales, Oregon School Study Council, University of Oregon, 1787 Agate Street, Eugene, OR 97403 ($7, nonmember: $4.50, member: $3 postage and handling on billed orders; quantity discounts).
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
JOURNAL CIT OSSC Bulletin; v37 n7 Mar 1994

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; *Academic Standards; *Competency Based Education; Definitions; Economic Factors; *Educational Objectives; Educational Quality; Education Work Relationship; Elementary Secondary Education; Evaluation Criteria; Outcomes of Education; *State Action; Student Evaluation; Student Motivation
IDENTIFIERS *Oregon; *Outcome Based Education

ABSTRACT

Many people believe that a lack of clear goals has limited the quality of education in America, where local school districts have traditionally been responsible for setting educational standards. Working in isolation, schools have failed to reach consensus on goals and standards, and teachers are hard-pressed to motivate students to achieve. The situation can alienate students, faculty, and the community, while shifting economic conditions demand a highly educated work force. In response, government officials are joining forces locally, regionally, and nationally to seek a common definition of educational standards for the 21st century. Two other factors are fueling the current push for standards in Oregon: (1) passage of a 1990 property tax limitation initiative that shifted school funding responsibility from local property taxes to state government; and (2) decreased numbers of high-paying blue-collar jobs, due to declining wood products and other resource extraction industries. Chapter 1 briefly reviews educational standards development in the United States. Chapter 2 articulates some complex considerations arising during discussions about "world-class" standards. Chapter 3 defines a performance-based system to address these issues. Chapter 4 describes approaches to developing performance-based standards, and chapter 5 examines implementation actors and challenges. Included are 45 references and 16 interview contacts. (MLH)

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March 1994 • Volume 37, Number 7

OSSC BULLETIN

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ISSN 0095-6694
Nonmember price: $7.00
Member price: $4.50
Quantity Discounts:
10-24 copies - 15%
25-49 copies - 20%
50+ copies - 25%

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Preface

Educational standards represent an intrinsic element of the school reform movement. Through standards, reformers are defining the goals toward which they are striving. They require such goals to unite educators, politicians, and communities in the cause of improving American education.

However, setting standards depends upon arriving at a common definition of excellence. In a diverse, democratic culture, these definitions vary from individual to individual. Many questions arise. How will such standards be measured? Who has the final authority to decide what the standards will be? and How will the standards balance academic excellence and social equity? Standards must challenge students to attain "world class" levels of achievement. At the same time, they must respect individual differences.

This Bulletin explores the many challenges and potential long-term benefits of moving thoughtfully toward setting standards for student performance that mesh well with current economic and social conditions.

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Introduction

"We cannot substantially increase achievement until we have a clear idea of what achievement we expect," asserts Robert Spillane, superintendent of the Fairfax County, Virginia, public schools. This statement reflects a sentiment that underlies the movement to clarify standards for student performance.

Many people believe that a lack of clear goals has limited the quality of education in America, where local schools and districts have traditionally been responsible for setting educational standards. Working in isolation, schools have failed to reach consensus regarding what education is trying to accomplish. Standards vary from district to district, and vast academic discrepancies exist between affluent and impoverished communities.

Without clear standards, many educators find it difficult to motivate students to achieve. They often find it difficult to articulate what sort of achievement they expect and its significance for students' lives. This lack of clarity can lead to alienation among students, faculty, and community. At the same time, shifting economic conditions call for a highly educated work force.

In response to these concerns, educators and government officials are joining forces locally, regionally, and nationally to seek a common definition of educational standards for the twenty-first century.

Two primary factors, in addition to the standards movement, provided the impetus for the current push for standards in Oregon (David Conley, January 1994). First, the passage of Measure 5, a property tax limitation initiative passed by Oregon voters in 1990, shifted the responsibility for school funding from local property taxes to state government. The assumption of greater financial responsibility by the state caused the state legislature to look more closely at what is being taught in the schools.

Second, economic changes have created an environment in which legislators are willing to support a dramatic overhaul of public schools. The decline of the wood products industry and other resource extraction indus-

tries has reduced the number of high-paying bluecollar jobs in Oregon (Conley, January 1994). Consequently, the state government is intent on improving public education to ensure Oregon's economic future.

Chapter 1 offers a historical perspective on some issues that have traditionally divided educators. Chapter 2 articulates some complex considerations that arise during the discussion of "world-class" standards. Chapter 3 defines a performance-based system, the strategy many educators and politicians are proposing to address these issues. Chapter 4 describes approaches to developing performance-based standards; it also briefly discusses the role of state and national legislation in this process. Chapter 5 examines the people involved and the issues that arise in the implementation of such standards.

Chapter 1

A Brief History of Educational Standards

Historically, American educators have failed to agree upon the purpose of education. This chapter discusses the polarization of educational goals since the 1800s, then describes how lack of clear goals hamstrung reform efforts of the 1980s. Finally, it discusses how past failures have given birth to present strategies to raise educational standards.

Changing Goals

For over a century, educators have attempted to establish academic standards for American children, but the democratic process and changing social and economic conditions have rendered this a complex, cumbersome task. Generally, reformers have vacillated between academic and social goals (Patricia Pine 1985).

In 1893, the National Education Association's "Committee of Ten" established a set of rigorous academic standards. They advocated mathematics, science, and foreign language instruction for all students, regardless of whether they planned to attend college. However, only 10 percent of teenagers attended high school at that time (Diane Ravitch 1983).

Twenty-five years later, the *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education* recommended emphasizing life skills instead of academic disciplines. It suggested building the character of students through studies of health, ethics, citizenship, and vocational education. The document's scanty reference to academics, "command of the fundamental principles," was added only after completion of the first draft (Pine).

In *The Troubled Crusade*, Diane Ravitch (1983) attributes this shift in focus to the Progressive Education Movement. As changing social conditions

(such as an increase in the compulsory school age and a decrease in jobs for teenagers) brought more students into the school system, educational goals changed. Ravitch summarizes the new philosophy:

> In the pedagogical literature, the new education was consistently described as democracy in action, because it substituted teacher-pupil cooperation for teacher authoritarianism, stressed socialization to the group instead of individualism, and championed an educational program that was for all children in the here-and-now rather than for the minority that was college-bound.

Unfortunately, cultural prejudices led educators to conclude that noncollege-bound students, especially nonwhite and female students, had little need for a challenging academic education. Ravitch states that John Dewey, the father of progressive education, hoped that educating the masses through more democratic methods would utilize "the-school-as-a-lever-of-social-reform." The *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education* instead conceived of "the-school-as-a-mechanism-to-adjust-the-individual-to-society":

> Because Dewey's ideas were complex, they were more easily misunderstood than understood, and his disciples proved better at discrediting traditional methods and curricula than at constructing a pedagogically superior replacement.

'Sputnik' Reforms

The launch of the Soviet "Sputnik" satellite created a sense of uneasiness in the U.S. during the 1950s. Americans feared that U.S. schools were inadequate to match those of international competitors. This gave rise to many reform efforts, including the implementation of "new math." Thomas Romberg (1993) of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics refers to new math as "an elitist attempt by university mathematicians to better prepare college-bound mathematics students for a changed collegiate curriculum." Ravitch attributes the failure of this movement, which lasted into the 1970s, to its college-bound focus and its lack of teacher involvement.

Social Change and Relaxation of Standards

Meanwhile, during the 1960s and 1970s, the pendulum swung back in the direction of social goals. "Equalizing opportunities in the classroom and increasing access to quality schooling for all children without regard to background or economic circumstance" became the focus of the movement (National Center for Education Statistics 1992). According to Ravitch, the "racial revolution. . . presented a forceful challenge to the political, social,

and economic basis of American schools." Traditional academic subjects were scrutinized for racial and gender biases.

Many schools returned to the "student-centered" methods of progressive education. Universities relaxed standards as social changes and the growth of specialization led to "confusion or disagreement about what knowledge was of most worth"; this reduction of college course requirements led to a reduction of high school course requirements.

The 'New Basics'

In the early 1980s, however, declining SAT scores and pressure to compete internationally triggered a movement to raise academic standards. *A Nation at Risk*, published in 1985, stated that "the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity . . . that threatens our very future as a nation and a people." It called for the implementation of "New Basics," which included larger doses of traditional academic subjects (English, mathematics, science, and social studies) and computer literacy for all students, as well as foreign language courses for the college bound (National Center for Education Statistics). Following the publication of *A Nation at Risk,* most states toughened their high school graduation requirements, though only three—Florida, Louisiana, and Pennsylvania—adopted all the study's recommendations (National Center for Education Statistics).

Researchers have found it difficult to measure the success of these reforms in raising standards. First, little data were gathered by states to assess the impact of reforms. In many cases, changes were based on "common sense expectations that certain actions will produce certain results," rather than on research of effective educational methods (National Center for Education Statistics).

Second, the lack of "carefully controlled studies" renders any "after the fact" conclusions about the effect of reforms "highly speculative" (National Center for Education Statistics). American students experienced the reforms "in a variety of contexts, at different points in time, and under different conditions from state to state." It is impossible to accurately measure all factors that influence student achievement after the fact. While many students were required to take more academic courses, the quality of the courses presumably varied. In light of this variation, the "relationship between academic courses and the ultimate ends of raising achievement scores and producing skills for the workplace" remains unclear (Clune).

Finally, the lack of research reflects a deeper problem—defining *higher standards* (National Center for Education Statistics). The term *standards* holds different meanings for different people.

Nevertheless, researchers have been able to reach certain conclusions about the success of the reforms. For one thing, affluent schools experienced little change as a result of the reform movement (William Clune 1989). These schools, taking their cue from college entrance requirements, already held their students to higher standards than those mandated by the state. Only middle- and low-achieving students experienced stricter requirements. While "raising the minimum is consistent with the goals of reform," the initial goal of "national competitiveness" triggered by *A Nation at Risk* never materialized (Clune). However, by the end of the 1980s, reformers had learned a great deal about what it takes to improve education.

Defining Success

To improve American education, communities must define common goals. Setting standards could provide a means to articulate these goals. The prospect of setting standards raises many questions, however. How will such standards be measured? Who has the final authority to decide what the standards will be? and How will the standards balance academic excellence and social equity?

To evaluate education's success in achieving high standards, a reliable method of evaluating student achievement must be found. Traditionally, American schools have measured student progress in terms of course completion; experts currently advocate basing assessments of student progress on "outcomes" rather than inputs (see April 1993 OSSC Bulletin, *Outcome-Based Education*, by Gwennis McNeir). At the 1989 education summit, President Bush and the nation's governors, led by then Governor Bill Clinton, created the *America 2000* program. They concluded that American students should be required to "demonstrate . . . competency in challenging subject matter" (Conley, January 1994). Merely passing courses should no longer be sufficient reason for advancement. *America's Choice: High Skills or Low Wages!*, the 1990 report of the Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, advocated a system of standards based on "performance" (National Center on Education and the Economy). These standards should match "the highest in the world."

The question of how to implement such a system of outcome-based education has triggered a movement to revamp education entirely. President Clinton recently signed his Goals 2000: Educate America Act into law. This act incorporates the original America 2000 goals, including the implementation of performance-based standards. Robert Spillane (1993) believes that this is more than a passing fad:

> While those of us who have worked in education for 20 or 30 years

> have seen many trends come and go (and several come around again once or twice), I believe that this one is not just a trend but what T. S. Kuhn called a "paradigm shift"—a whole new way of looking at education with a whole new set of expectations about what schools and students ought to be doing and showing.

This new approach must tackle the thorny issue of who should be the final authority in defining educational standards. Bill Osborne (1993), director of the Grants Research Information Center at East Central University in Ada, Oklahoma, describes shifting philosophies in the 1980s. In the mideighties, "top-down" efforts to raise standards through state mandates went out of vogue in favor of "bottom-up" efforts to "empower" teachers. Because teachers were closest to students, it was assumed that they were in the best position to define and monitor quality. In the late 1980s, this philosophy was taken a step further when a movement arose to "empower" students. By cultivating students' capacity for higher order thinking and desire for ongoing learning, educators hope to enable students to function in a complex, ever-changing world.

Osborne describes the emerging philosophy as a "systems approach to organizational improvement." The "empowerment" of all the participants is essential for the system to succeed as a whole. The Goals 2000: Educate America Act reflects this philosophy:

> Simultaneous top-down and bottom-up education reform is necessary to spur creative and innovative approaches by individual schools to help all students achieve internationally competitive standards.

Any attempt to reach a consensus on standards, however, must address the traditional division over goals. Many people perceive a push for excellence as a threat to equity, while others view a push for equity as a threat to excellence. However, cultural changes necessitate a rethinking of traditional assumptions.

Predicting slowed economic growth in the 1990s, the National Center on Education and the Economy asserts that if the United States fails to reform education to create a highly skilled work force, American workers will be fated to work in low-skilled, low-wage jobs producing cheap goods for mass consumption, not unlike many third-world countries today. Clearly, the document does not consider academic and social goals to be at odds with each other.

Adam Urbanski (1993/94), president of the Rochester (New York) Teachers Association and vice president of the American Federation of Teachers, urges educators not to assume a black-and-white view of standards:

> Try to resist the temptation to unnecessarily polarize the issue of standards and assessments, to unnecessarily feel compelled to chose

> between standards and standardization, between local and national, between old and new, between depth and breadth, between rigor and rigidity, between teaching and testing, between equity and excellence.

The Goals 2000: Educate America Act reflects this "best of both worlds" philosophy. It calls for standards in "English, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography" that are "internationally competitive and comparable to the best in the world." It also links these stringent academic standards to social goals:

> Every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our Nation's modern economy.

Some of the stated "objectives" of these goals take this social agenda even further: "All students will be involved in activities that promote and demonstrate good citizenship, good health, community service, and personal responsibility."

The current movement for standards depends upon reaching across traditional differences and finding common goals. As the movement gains ground, this challenge extends to defining what exactly the term *standards* means.

Chapter 2

What Do We Mean by Standards?

The historic dispute over the purpose of education manifests itself in current debates over standards. Proponents of clear standards argue that students must be challenged to levels of achievement matching or surpassing those of other countries. Others express concern that standards could destructively limit the focus of American education and threaten democratic traditions. The difficulty of defining "world-class" standards stands at the forefront of the debate; the term *standards* holds different meanings for different people. This chapter discusses this issue and weighs some of the reservations that some people have voiced.

Excellence and Flexibility

Most teachers who are concerned about possible negative consequences of educational standards fall into one of two categories. Some fear being overwhelmed by an avalanche of new information that they will be expected to somehow force down the throats of their students. Others fear that the standards will be too rigid, forcing them to suppress creativity and induce conformity among their students.

The British opted for standardized national tests, the least costly method of measuring student achievement. This shifted the responsibility for assessing students' work away from the teacher. Teachers are now faced with teaching "exhaustive" amounts of new material. At the same time, because they must prepare students for a standardized test, they lack the flexibility to develop ways of effectively conveying the information to students.

The Issue of Quantity

Richard Aieta, chairman of the social studies department at Hamilton-Wenham High School in Gloucester, Massachusetts, told education writer Debra Viadero (1994) he is concerned that the various standards being produced by national organizations are a "set up to blame the teacher." After spending a summer studying the suggested standards in his field, he remarked, "The standards are going to fit if you give me the latitude not to graduate students until they're 28-years-old."

Viadero summarizes this concern:

> As the standards-setting movement continues to gain momentum, worries that the documents may turn out to be too numerous, too lengthy, too much to teach, and too different from one another are being voiced with increasing frequency.

As different educational groups develop numerous sets of standards, educators fear being overwhelmed. Diane Massell, research associate at the Consortium for Policy Research in Education at Rutgers University, warns that the "documents [will] just end up sitting on the shelf if you expect teachers to read them the way they are" (Viadero).

This fear may also stem from the nature of traditional achievement tests. Francie Alexander (1993), deputy assistant secretary for policy and planning in the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, describes a 1992 National Science Foundation study that examined the six most recently used math tests. The study revealed that "97 percent of the questions tested only low-level conceptual knowledge and 95 percent tested only low-level thinking."

A fifth-grade teacher in the study speaks of the difficulties she encountered while attempting to prepare her students for a standardized test:

> Teaching to the test leaves little time to bring in things—connect things. I can't branch out in the way I would like—I'm working on a strict timeline to cover all of the objectives. (Alexander 1993)

Traditional "behaviorist philosophy" suggests that if students absorb a sufficient quantity of "bits" of information, they will eventually acquire complex reasoning skills (Conley 1993). For learning to be optimally effective, both the "bits" and higher order thought processes should be taught simultaneously, claims the Commission on Chapter 1 (1993), an independent body that studies the effects of federal Chapter 1 spending. Some educators fear that "higher standards" will translate into an even greater quantity of "bits" that they will have to teach, leaving them with even less time to embed the information in a context that will make it meaningful and memorable to students.

Clearly, expecting teachers to teach an excessive quantity of material

could deal a fatal blow to quality. For standards to succeed, they must be pared down, made manageable to classroom teachers. This need raises another important question: How should standards-setters decide what knowledge is most essential for students?

The Issue of Quality

Many educators believe it is impossible to have one set of standards for all students. Deborah Meier, principal and cofounder of the Central Park East Schools in New York City, argues that standards must not be set in stone:

> Is there a movie that everyone agrees is a great movie? Is there a book that everybody loves? Even when we say there's a book that everyone loves, to some extent it's because everybody has been intimidated. There are a lot of great pieces of literature that some people don't like at all. That's the nature of the human condition, that there will always be disagreement about such standards. . . . I believe it's enormously helpful never to fix our standards absolutely. (Anne Lockwood 1994)

Chester E. Finn, Jr. (1990), professor of education and public policy at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, argues that students will be held to national standards whether the society consciously takes responsibility for setting them or not:

> We already have a sort of de facto national curriculum. It is pretty shoddy; we backed into it. It is compounded by the products of the textbook companies; the testing industry; the television industry; popular culture; music, movies, and magazines; the fast food companies; and the national publications. It is also compounded by the efforts of the professional education associations, of which there must be two trillion, and of their journals and meetings. It is time to turn this creeping sameness into a virtue by getting clear about the results we would like to achieve.

Students come to the classroom having experienced different opportunities to learn, possessing different motivations and interests. Respect for individuality comprises an important aspect of the American democratic tradition. However, respect for individuality has often been distorted into what Spillane calls American education's "dirty little secret." Traditionally, educators have contended that variations in students' innate abilities render it impossible to hold all students to high standards (Pine). The practice of "tracking," whereby students are grouped according to their supposed ability, has led to reduced educational opportunities for poor children, especially poor children who are black or Hispanic (Jeannie Oakes and Martin Lipton 1992). While advocates of standards sympathize with the plight of these

children, they believe that higher expectations will help rather than harm them (Spillane, Ravitch 1992).

Nevertheless, asserts Linda Darling-Hammond, the question of diversity cannot be ignored (Lockwood). Standards must retain some flexibility, not only because of differences among students, but because of the malleable nature of knowledge itself:

> The questions of what children should learn are irresolvable in some sense, because knowledge is expanding at an ever-more rapid rate. Decisions about particular ways of construing that knowledge are always arbitrary, in some sense.
>
> And in another sense they are determined by the context within which people operate. What is important knowledge for someone who lives in one region of the country or in one kind of context may be differentially important for somebody who lives in another area of the country.

The purpose of raising standards is to increase student achievement, but excessive or overly rigid standards may actually be counterproductive. Standards must allow teachers the flexibility to convey information and adapt to changing societal needs. This notion applies on a global as well as national level.

World-Class Standards

Variation among the educational systems in other nations makes it difficult to define *world-class standards*; however, some common threads can be found. Other industrialized nations do have national standards against which students are assessed. High achievement is expected of all students. In an increasingly global economy, the American educational system must learn from the experiences of other countries. Thomas Romberg (1990), of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, argues that future economic survival depends upon an entirely new attitude toward the importance of mathematics skills in particular and, by extension, education in general:

> It is false to argue that educators should return to the practices of some romanticized past. Earlier in the century, we were able to ignore overall poor performance because enough students were continuing to study mathematics to meet our economic needs or we were able to recruit mathematically trained persons from other countries. Furthermore, we excused ourselves by claiming that most students only needed to know how to perform arithmetic operations, that it was all right not to do well in mathematics (particularly for women and minorities), and if one did well, it was because of ability, not opportunity, effort, or interest. Today, we know these assumptions are false.

In fact, some research indicates that American assumptions about education limit U.S. students.

Different Attitudes

A U.S. General Accounting Office study compared the American educational system with those in England, Germany, Japan, and Sweden (Warnat 1991). The study found that the other four countries have high expectations for all students, while in the U.S. some students are expected to "lag behind." Also, the other countries utilize "competency-based" standards whereby students are required to demonstrate what they have learned. In American schools, students are judged according to whether or not they have accumulated a specified number of credits in a particular subject area.

Advancement in the Japanese educational system depends upon scoring highly on nationally normed exams. These exams are developed in Tokyo by "the senior members of parliament who [care] about education, and the leaders of Japanese society, principally Japanese captains of industry" (Doyle 1991).

Students in Germany are expected to complete *Abitur* examinations at the end of their high school career

Standards in Other Countries

Most countries embody their content standards in curriculum guides issued by the ministries of education, or their equivalents. Typically, ministry officials consult with education professionals in the course of establishing curricula and standards. In some countries (for example, Japan) consultation draws on the experience of secondary school teachers; in others (for example, France) members of the schools inspectorate play a large role. We observe a general tendency, however, to move away from consultation strictly with educators, to involve a wider spectrum of interests—especially employers and parent groups. This has been evident, for example, in England/Wales.

Stanards that exist on paper are not necessarily followed at the classroom and school level. In order to increase observance of curriculum guidelines, inspectors of education are appointed to visit schools and classrooms to report on the extent to which the official curriculum is being implemented and on students' and teachers' performance. In addition, many countries require that textbooks used in the schools receive official approval. Ministries of education may commission textbooks embodying the principles and content of the official curriculum, arrange for their publication, distribute them, and require their use in the state schools (for example, China).

A national examination system provides a further mechanism for setting standards, through specification of examination syllabuses and regulations, preparation of tests, grading of answers, and establishment of cutoff points. In most countries these examinations are within the jurisdiction of the ministry of education, but are prepared and administered by subordinate (sometimes semi-independent) authorities. In China, England/Wales, France, Germany, and Japan the examinations have national currency and are high-stakes events for students and schools. Their backwash effect on what actually goes on in classrooms is formidable and reaches far down the grade levels.

Reference to a less tangible, less "institutional," and certainly less malleable factor is in order at this point. Even though the judgment of teachers and school administrators about what levels and kinds of knowledge, skills, and attitudes students should attain will to some extent be formed by the official regulations and requirements, in the final analysis it is the values and expectations internalized by teachers and administrators and expressed in their pedagogical work that are likely to dominate standards-maintenance in practice.

Source: National Education Goals Panel (1993)

(Conley, January 1994). While these tests vary according to the needs of a given locality and according to whether a student has been tracked into a vocational, technical, or college preparatory school, the standards are high for all.

Harold W. Stevenson (1993), of the University of Michigan's Center for Human Growth and Development, compared the expectations placed on Chinese, Japanese, and American children. He found that while most parents had high expectations of their children's performance, most American parents surveyed said they would be satisfied with lower achievement levels than they expected their children to attain, whereas Asian parents would be satisfied with higher levels of achievement. When Stevenson surveyed American students, he found that they were aware that they performed poorly compared to Asian students, but they felt no compulsion to perform at a higher level:

> Clearly, American students are aware of their poor showing in international studies. Nevertheless [they] expressed the greatest confidence that they were performing as well in school as their parents and teachers wanted them to. . . . In short, they believed they were meeting the standards of their society.

Stevenson (1992) believes that America does its children a disservice by holding them to lower standards than students in Asian countries. In an earlier discussion of self-esteem, he argued that children's self-esteem would be higher if they were challenged to attain high-level skills. Stevenson predicts that low expectations and tolerance of mediocrity will ultimately erode self-esteem because students find themselves lacking concrete skills at the end of their education.

However, attitudes alone do not hamper American students. Cultural factors also contribute to whether educational standards succeed.

Standards Encourage Effort

Certainly, in the United States we do ourselves immense harm when we insist on testing children frequently for "aptitude" and "ability," using the results to label, classify, and track them. The results are predictable, and the contrast with Japan, where effort not "ability" is seen as the prime mover of achievement, is startling. Good standards will help elicit high levels of effort by learners, not just high levels of measured achievement by the "able."

Source: National Education Goals Panel (1993)

Japanese Culture

Many aspects of Japan's culture support uniform national standards in education. Mass conformity allows Japan's 124 million inhabitants to live harmoniously in an area the size of California (Conyers 1991). Children learn to think of themselves as part of a group and to work well together from an early age. Students in Japanese schools share a common language, ethnicity, and cultural heritage.

Education is considered extremely important in Japan. Parents "buy two or three books a month for their children and spend as much as 40 percent of their income on their children's schooling" (Conyers). As for the government, one education minister told Representative Augustus Hawkins that they were "commanded to spend whatever is needed to stay ahead" (Nick Penning 1991). An eighteen-year-old Japanese student has spent as much time in school as an American with a baccalaureate degree (Doyle 1991).

Teachers and principals are highly respected in Japan. They are well trained and highly paid. Although they work longer hours than their American counterparts, they teach fewer classes. This allows them more time to prepare lessons, correct work, and confer individually with students (Stevenson 1993). As for discipline problems, they are almost nonexistent. Denis P. Doyle (1991), former chief executive officer of Xerox Corporation and author of *Winning the Brain Race,* sums up the Japanese situation as follows:

> If students were to be rowdy, severely undisciplined, or to vandalize a school building, that would be national news. If there were serious incidents of violence against other students or, almost unimaginably, against a teacher, that would be top of the news on the evening TV across the nation.

All these characteristics create an environment that is conducive to educational excellence. Obviously, American educators face a different cultural situation than the Japanese. While they may admire some aspects of the Japanese system, many view American cultural traditions as a strength rather than a weakness.

Democratic Traditions

Some American observers assert that the Japanese emphasis on conformity contradicts American democratic principles. The Japanese believe that students learn whatever they need to "think" by rote memorization of what they are taught (Doyle). In class, students absorb the teacher's lecture without asking or answering questions (Larry Pettersen 1993).

When Japanese students come to American schools, they exhibit different strengths than American students. John G. Conyers, a superintendent in Illinois, describes his experience with the children of visiting Japanese business people in his district. While Japanese students often shoot to the top of the class because of their alert concentration and unceasing work ethic, they find it a challenge to speak in class, exercise creativity, and "analyze and synthesize complex terms and ideas."

The German system of academic standards allows for more diversity.

However, it initiates "social sorting" through its rigid system of tracking (Conley, January 1994). Conley considers this a "goal inconsistent with the basic principles of American education," which are aimed at providing equal opportunities for all students.

With the advent of a global economy, other nations must also adjust to change. The United States offers its own unique contribution to the growing worldwide discourse about effective education. At the same time, America must import successful practices from abroad to raise standards.

Learning from Each Other

Conley is quick to point out that, in spite of differing educational philosophies, there is much to be learned from other countries:

> This process has caused American educators to take a much closer look at the curriculum that is offered in a number of countries to all students (and which the vast majority master), particularly at the elementary level. There is emerging evidence that these curricula are, indeed, much more challenging than the curriculum offered in the typical American school, and that it may not be unrealistic to expect improved student achievement and performance if the content and challenge levels of the curriculum are raised.

As for the Japanese, they also face the need to adjust to a global economy. Many Japanese believe that their schools should put a greater emphasis on creativity, flexibility, and higher order thinking (Tonegawa 1991). Doyle predicts that their faith in effort will allow them to integrate certain aspects of American culture into their own system:

> a sense of excitement, energy, innovation, inventiveness, [and] creativity which our best schools still exhibit to a fare-thee-well . . . things that we take for granted: the opportunity to ask teachers questions, to engage in colloquys (sic), give-and-takes, to actually have a good time in the classroom, which is what we do in our best schools. . . are things that the Japanese can profitably borrow, and I can confidently predict that they will in fact borrow them.

Setting world-class achievement standards in light of these differing traditions will be a complicated affair. In a 1991 interview, Ikuo Idaka, consul for cultural affairs and education for the Japanese consulate in New York City, remarked, "We have to learn from one another" to find a balance between discipline and respect for "the individual student character."

Idaka's comments suggest that the difficulty of determining what students should know and be able to do extends to the entire world. Even some educators in countries with successful national standards foresee a future in which current methods will become outdated. To prepare for this future, a new way of defining standards must be developed.

Chapter 3

Rethinking Standards

The complexity of the modern world renders traditional achievement tests obsolete as a method of evaluating students. At the same time, the need to increase student achievement is undeniable. To increase achievement, we must define quality and be able to measure it. Therefore, we must rethink the way we view standards. "Standards doesn't have to mean making things more rigid," explains Urbanski. "Standards ought to mean setting benchmarks for what quality is."

The movement toward outcomes-based education has altered many people's conceptions of standards. *Outcomes* are the skills students acquire as a result of their education. If students are judged in terms of outcomes, the quality of their performance becomes the focus. Such a performance-based system can accommodate individual student differences, while still holding students to rigorous standards. Defining standards becomes a matter of identifying a set of criteria that define excellent student work. Spillane explains:

> Standards must be based on the idea that there are things all students (with exceptions for students with particular handicaps) should know and be able to do. In this regard, similarities are more important than differences. All kinds of variation is possible in *how* children acquire this learning and in *how* schools convey it; this is where real differences are accommodated. It is even possible, though probably difficult and expensive, to have variation in how students demonstrate what they have learned.

Portfolios, projects, and exams in which students must demonstrate their skills may measure achievement more accurately than computerized tests (Commission on Chapter 1). Setting standards in such a performance-based system, however, is more complex than numerical ranking. It requires communication and consensus among educators and other stakeholders (Spillane).

This chapter begins by discussing the characteristics of a performance-based system. It defines the types of standards within such a system, then discusses the system's increased emphasis on "proficiencies" rather than traditional academic disciplines.

Types of Standards in a Performance-Based System

Raising Standards for American Education, the 1992 report of the bipartisan National Council on Education Standards and Testing (NCEST), conceptualizes a performance-based model that is comprised of four types of standards. *Content standards* establish what must be taught to students. *Student performance standards* measure the quality of a student's performance when demonstrating the skills he or she has learned. *School delivery standards* provide the community with a means to determine whether a particular school offers its students sufficient opportunity to achieve high standards. Finally, *system delivery standards* allow the public to evaluate the success of local, state, and national school systems in assisting all children to achieve high standards.

Eventually, NCEST hopes to see a national examination system based on this model (O'Neil 1993). The council calls for a "system" as opposed to a single test. Such a systematic approach will alter educators' conceptions of their curriculum. The focus shifts from disciplines to processes.

Content and Process Proficiencies

Conley (January 1994) advocates setting standards in terms of both content and process proficiencies. He defines a *content proficiency* as "a body of knowledge with an information base, rules, laws, or principles that constitutes a generally recognized discipline or subject." *Process proficiencies*, on the other hand, are "intellectual and social processes. . . thinking and learning skills of varying description." Content proficiencies may be defined in terms of literature, mathematics, or science. Generic skills that apply across disciplines, such as teamwork, problem-solving, and critical thinking, may be classified as process proficiencies.

Conley points out that the distinction between content and process proficiencies is always somewhat arbitrary: "Content does not exist in the absence of cognitive processes that integrate it into the mind, and these intellectual and cognitive processes do not exist separate from content."

Process proficiencies should not be too rigidly defined because "the act of specifying exactly what critical thinking is . . . may have the effect of destroying it," states Conley. Instead, standards for process proficiencies

should be set only in relation to content proficiencies: "Problem solving should not be taught as an algorithm or series of steps, but should be developed by solving many complex and challenging problems, and drawing lessons from these experiences" (Conley, January 1994).

Central Park East

The Central Park East Schools in New York City have developed a set of process proficiencies. Principal Deborah Meier asserts that such standards must not become too rigid. Meier's schools have incorporated process proficiencies into their curriculum (Lockwood). The staff has defined five "Habits of Mind":

1. How do you know what you know?
2. Can you think of another way of looking at the same thing?
3. Can you see connections between that and other things?
4. Can you imagine it being very different from that?
5. So what? Who cares? What difference does it make?

Meier claims that these habits apply "in the science classroom, the history classroom, the lunchroom, in a debate about whether the kids behaved appropriately, in their job placement, and so on." These schools have also developed five "Habits of Work": initiate activities, meet deadlines, revise, work, and reflect to see how it might have been done differently. Students are evaluated according to whether they have applied these habits of work and mind to their assignments.

For such process proficiencies to work, Meier says, they must remain flexible:

> It's difficult because we keep reinterpreting them. Every time we revisit one of those habits we see new things, new possibilities, other meanings. We realize that the kids interpret them differently than we had in mind, and we add their interpretations to them. Every time we look at a student's work, we have to ask: What is the evidence that this student does or does not have these habits of mind? The student has to be brought into it too, and she may argue with you. Some other person may have another point of view. In the process of the discussion we change each other's minds all the time.

In a performance-based system, education becomes a dynamic process in which nothing is taken for granted. Students learn to think independently and apply what they learn to their own lives. Consequently, they continually redefine what they learn, and traditional labels become obsolete. Even the traditional division of education into separate disciplines may become too limiting for future students.

Disciplinary Distinctions

Standards for content proficiencies are being developed nationally in traditional subject areas. However, Conley points out that distinctions between disciplines, like content and process proficiencies, are also arbitrary. A performance-based system emphasizes skills that students must demonstrate rather than course completion. Boundaries between disciplines become less rigid:

> The lines between, say, science and math blur, or between social studies and humanities. These proposed proficiencies serve to create an overall framework that describes an educated person. . . . It is not critical, nor is it particularly useful, to concentrate on strictly delineating the sphere of each content proficiency. Each contributes to the others. The student blends and combines them as she or he applies new knowledge and skills to real-world situations. (Conley, January 1994)

Arthur L. Costa, (1993) professor emeritus at California State University in Sacramento, also predicts that "compartmentalization of the disciplines" will relax under a performance-based system. He anticipates greater cooperation between teachers in different fields as they assume an integrated approach.

Performance-based standards will require American education to change gears. The next chapter addresses current political and educational efforts to develop standards in such a system.

Chapter 4

Developing Standards

Nationally, educators and researchers in various disciplines began developing standards for content knowledge in the late 1980s (Conley, January 1994). The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), for example, published *Curriculum and Evaluation Standards for School Mathematics* in 1989, which "is being adopted in many states as an outline for curriculum development and frameworks" (Conley 1993). While the NCTM created performance-based standards, other groups remained more traditional (O'Neil 1993). The consensus-based process used by the NCTM, however, established a model that is guiding reformers in other subject areas. Several groups have created standards in science. Standards are also being developed in English, writing, social studies, foreign languages, fine arts, and physical education.

Both the federal government and the Oregon legislature have officially authorized the development of standards. This chapter offers a brief overview of this national and state-level legislation. It then provides examples of some methods used to develop performance-based standards.

National Legislation

The Goals 2000: Educate America Act officially involves the federal government in the process of developing national standards (Hoff 1994). The National Education Goals Panel, which monitors the implementation of the America 2000 goals, will now receive federal funding.

The goals panel, composed of state and federal political leaders, will oversee the National Education Standards and Improvement Council (NESIC). This council, composed of education experts and community leaders, will develop voluntary national content and student-performance standards. It will also create school-delivery standards that the act refers to as

"opportunity to learn" standards. States can use these standards as models. Once they develop their own standards, they can submit them to NESIC for federal certification. The state of Oregon has already begun the process of developing its own standards.

Standards in Oregon

In July 1991 the Oregon legislature passed the Oregon Educational Act for the Twenty-first Century, also known as House Bill 3565. This act is designed to create a "restructured educational system . . . to achieve the state's goals of the best educated citizens in the nation by the year 2000 and a work force equal to any in the world by the year 2010."

One area that will be affected by the act is the four-year structure of Oregon high schools, which will be replaced by two distinct programs—the Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM) and the Certificate of Advanced Mastery (CAM). At age sixteen or the end of tenth grade, students will have the opportunity to obtain a CIM by demonstrating "the capacity to learn, think, reason, retrieve information and work effectively alone and in groups." The CAM "leads to a college preparatory endorsement, an academic professional technical endorsement, or both, in one of six 'broad occupational categories' " (Conley and others 1993).

Students must demonstrate mastery through a variety of performance-based means, such as work samples, tests, portfolios, and projects. Conley summarizes the intent of the certificates:

> These certificates were designed to serve as functional replacements for the high school diploma by creating two sets of performance-based standards which all students would be required to achieve. . . . These standards would be high, geared to "world-class" levels, and would be demonstrated through "authentic" assessment. Student knowledge and skills would be applied to complex problems and situations. (January 1994)

The Oregon State Board of Education has already delineated the skills it wants students to acquire. The standards—the levels of proficiency students must demonstrate in specific skill areas to receive a certificate—are still being worked out (NCEC). The Oregon plan reflects a growing trend toward performance-based standards throughout North America.

The following sections describe some educators' experiences with developing standards elsewhere in the United States and Canada.

The New Standards Project

The New Standards Project is a part of the National Center on Educa-

tion and the Economy, the organization that published *America's Choice: High Skills or Low Wages!* Director Lauren Resnick and Director of Equity Initiatives Warren Simmons (1993) describe the project's scope and goals:

> The New Standards Project is a consortium of 17 states and a half dozen leading school districts, which together serve nearly half of America's school children. State and district partners are working with a cluster of specialists—learning and teaching researchers, curriculum specialists, assessment and testing experts, staff development professionals, and leaders in systemic education reform—to design and implement a system of performance standards, authentic assessments, and professional development intended to change the way the American school system works.

As a precondition for implementing a performance-based system, the project believes "teachers, curriculum developers, and those involved with assessment [must] no longer work in their own separate niches." New Standards recommends that teachers serve as "senior leaders" at the state or district level and "school leaders" at the school level. These leaders will facilitate communication between schools and the project's educational experts outside schools.

Benchmarks

The New Standards Project advocates defining "world-class" standards through a process known as *benchmarking*. Benchmarking is "a process both for determining best practice in a particular field and for learning from it." A benchmark program in Toronto, Ontario, defines a *benchmark* as

> information to which teachers, students, and parents can refer to daily as they teach, learn, and assess achievement. Benchmarks may be shaped in any number of ways, depending on the needs of the users, but the standards they represent are clear to all. The philosophy behind the program is that instruction, learning, and evaluation should occur simultaneously in the classroom on a continuous basis. (Sylvia Larter and James Donnelly 1993)

Benchmarks provide guidelines regarding the most effective points in children's development to teach them particular knowledge and skills (Ahlgren 1993). The Oregon Educational Act for the Twenty-first Century also calls for the use of benchmarks. Appropriate levels of mastery for grades 3, 5, 8, and 10 are being determined through this process.

The New Standards Project is using six questions to determine international benchmarks:

1. What are students in other countries expected to know and be able to do at key transition points in their schooling?

2. What kinds of performances are used to demonstrate competence?
3. What counts as "good enough" in these performances?
4. What percentage of children are meeting the standard?
5. What reform efforts are underway or on the horizon?
6. How does New Standards benchmark? (Conley, January 1994)

The following section describes how this process works in Toronto.

The Toronto Program

Toronto implemented its benchmark program in 1987 (Larter and Donnelly). The Toronto Board of Education advocated clear standards so that schools would be accountable to parents. The board declared that parents have a right to know where their children stand "in relation to systemwide standards." They also "have the right to participate meaningfully in decision making about their children's education."

Consequently, the board established over one hundred benchmarks for grades 3, 6, and 8 in language and mathematics. To define these benchmarks, they began with a set of "loosely connected, broadly stated learning objectives." They then formulated tasks in which students could demonstrate their proficiency in attaining these objectives. Based on videotapes of the students' performances, they consensually defined the criteria for scoring students at different levels.

Larter and Donnelly describe an eighth-grade benchmark in language arts. The "key objectives" of the benchmark are for students to "read" two paintings, communicate, and "demonstrate aesthetic appreciation." In the top-rated, or level five, performances, students were able to describe, interpret, and express emotional and intellectual reactions to the paintings. Performances at levels four, three, and two require consecutively less description, fluency, and insight. Finally, at level one, the student "is unable to respond or gives a very limited response."

Larter and Donnelly point out that Toronto uses benchmarks as "reference materials"; they do not "administer" them to students like "traditional standardized tests." Teachers and principals familiarize themselves with the benchmarks and adapt them to their own curriculum. Videotaped examples of student performances comprise an essential component of any benchmark. Such concrete examples, along with the written objectives and criteria, allow teachers to set high standards in their own classrooms.

Benchmarks have facilitated greater communication between schools, students, and the community:

> Unlike externally developed and scored tests, Benchmarks allow teachers, students, and parents to collaborate and remain in control of learning and evaluation. Because Benchmarks can be observed, they

> demystify the goals of education and illuminate the nature of good performances. Students use them as models of excellent performances. Parents consider them to better understand today's complex menu of educational objectives and to make meaningful decisions about their children's education. (Larter and Donnelly)

Benchmarks represent a fluid process of continually defining excellence in education, not a rigid set of rules. They challenge educators intellectually, rather than handing them simple answers from a higher authority. Efforts to develop such a system must take into account the inherent complexity of such a process.

A Complex Process

Project 2061, an organization dedicated to high standards in science education, has developed benchmarks for science. Those charged with developing the benchmarks began with ideal expectations of what twelfth-grade science students should know and be able to do, and then worked backward to formulate the sequence of learning leading up to those capabilities. Both teachers and research findings were consulted to determine children's capabilities at different ages.

Andrew Ahlgren (1993), associate director of the project, describes the complexity of the process:

> We have found that it is seldom possible to work backward from 12th grade goals one at a time to create a neat stack of previous levels of sophistication. Usually there are convergences (several ideas required to understand a subsequent idea) and divergences (several ideas depending on one prior idea).

For example, Ahlgren notes that at some point between kindergarten and twelfth grade, children learn that "everything is made of invisibly small atoms, linked together in many different patterns." This knowledge stems from separate pieces of information converging, rather than from a linear sequence of prior ideas. The knowledge of atoms, in turn, leads to the understanding of various divergent scientific principles. In this model, knowledge overlaps and branches out in different directions instead of moving in a straight line. Consequently, deciding what a student should know at a particular point in his or her schooling becomes somewhat complicated. Ahlgren quotes Pat Heller, a University of Minnesota researcher, who offers suggestions for benchmark clarity:

- Make Benchmarks not so specific as to be limiting and not so general that no one is quite sure what you are talking about.
- Have a clear sequence where necessary within a grade level.
- Have a progression from one grade level to the next that illustrates

increasing sophistication.

- Show connections between Benchmarks under different goals.
- Write them to be developmentally appropriate, assessable, and relevant to the child's world.

Not only the amorphous nature of knowledge, but also the amorphous nature of student ability dictates that benchmarks remain flexible. Ahlgren points out that future children who have experienced optimal learning experiences may demonstrate greater intellectual capability than current students.

New considerations that may arise in setting standards are potentially limitless. Benchmarks lend clarity to this complexity. They provide clear criteria through which educators can communicate complex ideas to students, parents, and communities. The next section describes these criteria in greater detail.

Rubrics

Criteria for excellence form the heart of high standards in a performance-based system. These criteria are known as *rubrics*. Conley explains:

> Rubrics are defined as a series of statements identifying aspects of performance in both its parts and its whole in terms that raters can be trained to apply in a reasonably uniform fashion to a range of student work. Many rubrics contain more than three levels, offering more feedback to the learner regarding degree of mastery of a standard. (January 1994)

The following examples illustrate how teachers have used rubrics to set standards and raise student achievement.

Collaboration in San Diego

Teacher Christine Sobray Evans (1993) describes California's gradual shift to a performance-based system. When she first started teaching, she taught and graded students directly out of textbooks. Then the new report cards stated that grades would be based on collections of student work known as portfolios. At first, portfolios were merely stockpiled by teachers and sent home with students at the end of the year. Eventually, however, teachers started meeting regularly as a team to evaluate student work as a team using the portfolios.

Evans and her peers at Bernardo Heights Middle School in San Diego formulated a six-point rubric system to establish schoolwide standards. They first gave students a forty-five-minute writing assignment, then divided students' work into "high," "middle," and "lower" piles. Papers in the lower

pile were assigned ones and twos; papers in the middle pile were assigned threes and fours; and papers in the high pile were assigned fives and sixes.

Evans reports that the "discussion and negotiation" that occurred during the evaluation process were invaluable:

> The power of looking directly at student work as a team cannot be overstated. Real student work gives teachers a starting point for conversations that get to the essence of what happens in classrooms. Samples of student work are concrete demonstrations of what is known and what is not known. They also provide teachers with signposts that mark how far we've come and point us in the direction we must follow.

As was the case in Toronto, the clear standards brought parents and students into the dialogue. Students are asked to rate their own work and that of their peers in terms of the rubrics. They can then use the criteria to improve their work. The school involves parents by offering evening workshops about rubrics. "This is not easy," noted one mother after a workshop. "However, I think that I can help my daughter better now."

Collaboration in Ann Arbor

The Ann Arbor, Michigan, public schools are involving students in the process of formulating rubrics (Doris Sperling 1993). Fourth-grade teacher Gail Hughes witnessed little improvement in her students' writing ability until she involved them in setting standards. First, she defined her own criteria with the help of specialist Doris Sperling. Then she gave her students examples of papers that she had rated "check minus," "check," "check plus," and "A." They in turn graded the papers in pairs and explained their reasoning. Ultimately, teacher and students agreed upon a set of criteria:

> An A paper contains long, detailed sentences, at least three of which are special "Plus" sentences exhibiting humor, colorful adjectives, similes, or personal observations. The overall paper is neat, and words are spelled correctly. The essay has an introduction and conclusion, and each sentence begins with a different word.
>
> At the opposite end of the continuum, a messy paper with incomplete sentences, little or no punctuation, misspelled words, and problems with clarity would earn a [check minus].

After this rubric was established, Sperling developed a form that lists four criteria for each grade. Students refer to this form while working on writing projects and then evaluate themselves before turning in their papers. Hughes then evaluates them using the same form and returns it before the next assignment. The form has been refined and developed in accordance with student needs.

Hughes claims dramatic improvement in writing quality among all of her students, especially the low achievers. Sperling asserts that the "results" of teacher-student collaboration "far outweigh" the extra effort involved.

Rubrics allow educators to clearly define what they are trying to teach, thereby illuminating a clearer definition of the purpose of education in America. Coming to grips with the purposes of education involves acknowledging the relationship between a student's schooling and adult life. The next section deals with developing higher standards for work-bound as well as college-bound youth.

Vocational Standards

Performance-based standards are being developed in occupations as well as academic disciplines. Other industrialized nations invest a great deal in the education of their work-bound youth; the "school-to-work transition" is smooth, whereas "in the United States it is left mostly to chance" (Warnat). According to the National Center on Education and the Economy, the United States spends three-quarters of its educational funding on "college preparation curriculum," even though only one-fifth of all American students obtain bachelor's degrees.

On a national level, representatives from labor, industry, and education are working together to determine what skills will best prepare students for the workplace (Lynn Olson 1993). Each occupational area is establishing its own competencies. President Clinton hopes that every American industry will eventually have its own set of standards (Olson).

After Oregon students earn a CIM, the work they complete toward the CAM will facilitate their transition from school to work or higher education (Conley, January 1994). Initially, the bill that was to become Oregon's educational reform act would have created a vocational track and a college-bound track. This plan generated public controversy because it would force teenagers to make permanent life decisions. Ultimately, the bill was revamped to create six content areas in which all students would demonstrate the same general skills:

1. Arts and Communications
2. Business and Management Technology
3. Industrial and Engineering Systems
4. Health Services
5. Natural Resources
6. Human Services

The general processes that students must learn have not yet been adopted.

However, preliminary processes include critical thinking, teamwork, communication, self-direction, and use of technology (Conley, January 1994).

Clatsop Community College President John Wubben points out that vocational programs such as office systems, welding, and auto mechanics have always been performance-based. However, some research indicates that an education comprised of rigorous academic *and* vocational training best prepares a student for the work force (Clune). The Oregon act reflects this philosophy. The North Coast Educational Consortium (1993) paraphrases the rationale of the act's creators: "Educators and business people working with the bill came to the conclusion that, these days, all students need similar skills, from technical skills to communication skills to organizational skills."

The consortium is one of six Oregon "pilot sites" for the act that received state funding to put ideas contained in the act into practice. The Consortium is composed of seven high schools, a community college, and an ESD, all located in small communities. The other five pilot sites are high schools in urban areas.

Some consortium schools are working with local industries to develop CAM projects. Teachers form relationships with practitioners who work in the fields they teach. The consortium emphasizes that the intent of this collaboration is to broaden students' view of education, to help them see that education has relevance beyond the workplace.

The goal of reform, according to the consortium, is to motivate "all students to be lifelong learners in preparation for their six life roles as: Citizen, Learner, Family Member, Individual, Producer, and Consumer, using student-selected contextual learning, experiential-based curriculum, outcome-based assessment, community resources, and the unique environment of the area."

Clearly, developing standards requires team effort among schools, experts, and communities. Once these standards are developed, their implementation requires the same mutual effort.

Chapter 5

Implementing Standards

It is one thing to create standards and quite another to implement them. National Council of Teachers of Mathematics' performance-based standards in mathematics have been praised by educators and politicians alike; however, two years after their publication, a survey found that only a minority of mathematics teachers had read them (O'Neil). NCTM member Thomas Romberg (1993) disputes some claims of change:

> To appease demands for change, producers often change labels but not substance. For example, since 1990 the authors of the National Assessment for Educational Progress have claimed substantial changes in items in the test battery in light of the reform expectations. In fact, both the 1990 and 1992 batteries show little alignment with the NCTM *Standards*.

O'Neil observes that the existence of performance-based standards alone cannot elevate standards in the classroom. Many experts believe only systematic alterations in the "culture" of schooling can bring about the necessary changes (Oakes and Lipton). To implement performance-based standards, Urbanski urges the community and the society to pull together and address the many challenges.

> In the end, teachers are the purveyors of standards. Whatever is written on paper will remain on paper unless teachers incorporate the standards into their values, teaching, and behavior. After standards are certified and adopted by this or that state or school district—then comes the hard part.
>
> *Source:* National Education Goals Panel (1993)

As can be seen in nations where students excel academically, an environment that supports education promotes high student achievement. This chapter discusses the ways in which educational leaders can facilitate school and community cooperation. It also discusses some of the challenges and issues they must address during the process.

Who Should Be Involved?

According to most experts, everyone who is involved with children's education must be involved in implementing performance-based standards. School boards, administrators, teachers, parents, colleges, universities, politicians, local businesses and organizations, as well as students must work together to bring about change.

School Boards

Vickie Totten, of the Oregon School Boards Association, considers it crucial for boards to understand the goal of Oregon's educational reform law: to achieve world-class standards through systematic educational reform. The

What Can Schools Do Now To Prepare For This System?

In general, the preparations schools make to implement the CIM and CAM will also help prepare them for the Oregon State System of Higher Education proficiency system. The most important single thing a school can do is to begin to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment with clear exit standards and complex, authentic assessment. Such a move generally requires greater teacher communication and collaboration, more integration, and greater flexibility with time. It also requires high degrees of familiarity with various instructional and assessment techniques, including student demonstrations, portfolios, projects, critiques, essays, research projects, and technology-based learning.

One example of a concrete action a school could take now is to implement a senior capstone project (with simplified versions in the tenth and eleventh grades). The capstone project should have clear criteria and standards for success and should employ a variety of assessment methods.

Other possible changes include the development of more humanities and literature courses in place of general English classes; the infusion of literacy, particularly writing, into the total curriculum; the use of portfolios that are eventually assessed against some external standard; exposure of more students to higher levels of math and science through interdisciplinary applications of mathematics and science concepts; a general review of the curriculum to establish a proper balance between low-level factual information and higher-level thinking, acknowledging the importance of both; a greater emphasis on student self-study, goal-setting, and self-evaluation (as a developmental, not judgmental, skill); increased opportunities for independent work; and the development in students of a quality, not quantity, philosophy as they approach academic tasks.

One of the most important ways in which any school can prepare for this new admission system is for it to change its view of itself from a bureaucracy to a learning community. Schools that are able to adapt and reshape themselves rapidly will be much more successful than those where staff feel they are unable to have any effect on the structure of the school or the content of the educational program. Environments that can move their focus from the class to the learner as the unit of analysis will be more capable of determining the changes that need to be made. The specific changes necessary in any given school cannot be dictated; each school must be able to reshape itself to maximize teacher efficacy and student success.

Source: David T. Conley (June 1, 1994)

legislation's emphasis on "team effort" instead of "top-down" management is particularly important. School boards should "enable" things to change by setting good general policies. They should also "enable" site councils to meet to "develop and coordinate school improvement at the school site" (See February 1994 OSSC Bulletin, *School-Site Councils: The Hard Work of Achieving Grassroots Democracy*, by David Peterson - del Mar). Each school has a site council to determine how its own CIM and CAM will look. The fundamental values must start with the board, but each building, subject to board approval, should decide for itself how to implement changes.

Communication among the school board, the school, and the community is critical, says Totten. Although teachers, not board members, best understand how change will affect a particular school, the board "answers to the community" when problems arise. Without good communication, things "unravel."

Totten stresses that site councils must not work in isolation. When determining students' eligibility for a CIM, teachers review students' work from kindergarten through tenth grade. Therefore, elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools must continually communicate with one another to provide some districtwide continuity. Above all, school boards must not lose sight of the ultimate goal—improved student learning. "Everything we do is for the kids," states Totten, "not for teachers, administrators, or the community." She considers it crucial that the board remember the common goal: to produce "citizens with world-class educations."

Administrators

The role played by administrators is pivotal in any form of schoolwide change. Jeannie Oakes and Martin Lipton (1992), coauthors of *Making the Best of Schools,* advocate greater professional understanding between teachers and administrators:

> School systems must avoid dividing the tasks of inquiry and experimentation according to conventional notions of "who's good at what." Usually, inquiry into new policies and practices is thought to be the purview of the principal or the superintendent. These leaders are expected to read, discuss, and investigate research findings; to attend symposia on new topics; and so on. Conversely, teachers are expected to gain the technical competence to try out new teaching strategies—with little attention to theory and research.
>
> Much is lost by this division of effort. . . . Where changes are occurring, site and district administrators take the time to become immersed in new practices and to become familiar with the new roles teachers will be asked to assume. When they do, administrators sense firsthand the full range of schoolwide changes that are needed to support new

> classroom practices, they can better explain and defend new practices to their communities, and they can more completely assess the effectiveness of those practices. Teachers, on the other hand, must be able to make sense out of the new practices and structures—not simply implement them. If teachers' roles are reduced to simply following new sets of teaching protocols or simply learning new classroom scripts, they are unlikely to be effective—if indeed they adopt the new practices at all.

Grant W. Simpson (1990) has observed performance-based education at DeKeyser Elementary in Sterling Heights, Michigan. The principal's leadership style, referred to as "participative/collaborative," is characterized by "persuading more than ordering, team building, seeking input from others, showing political sensitivity, and sharing recognition." The principal employs this approach to leadership in her communications with the faculty:

> The addition of concerns-based staff meetings, which rank-order and confront issues germane to the organization. . . have led to working definitions of shared expectations, teaching at DeKeyser, approaches to teacher evaluation, and elements that form the school's ecology.

Two school districts that are members of the North Coast Educational Consortium have started to implement reforms through what Seaside School District Superintendent Harold Riggan calls a "ground up" process. Both Riggan and Astoria School District Superintendent Len Carpenter have provided time and resources for motivated teachers to attend classes, communicate with each other, and experiment with using performance-based curricula in their own classes. These teachers then conduct inservice training for other teachers in their buildings. Carpenter considers it preferable to "nurture" enthusiastic schools and faculty, rather than mandate change across the board. He suggests finding commonalties at the building level first, then districtwide.

Reactions to Local Control. Bill Parrish, principal at Astoria Senior High, believes his school has flourished as a result of "taking risks." Several teachers developed programs after Parrish encouraged them to use performance-based education. This approach "empowered" teachers to "get creative, try out new theories" and implement practices that research indicates are effective.

Rainier High School Principal Hugh Fulton, however, has found the ground-up approach less comfortable. He admits to "floundering a little bit" due to a "lack of models." Rex Crouse, a specialist on the Oregon Department of Education's Twenty-first Century Schools Council, notes that many schools desire further guidance regarding how to implement statewide standards. To meet this need, the Department of Education will provide models and develop tasks that schools can use as reference points.

Communication. Jewell High School Principal and Superintendent

Kenneth Lehman reiterates that communication is critical in a performance-based system. At Jewell, where implementation is well under way, the first year was "traumatic" for both parents and teachers, said Lehman. Communication proved essential in the transition from a system that everyone understood to one that was foreign. Lehman worked hard to clear up misconceptions and garner community support. The district's small size also made clear communication a more manageable task.

Lehman describes parent involvement as "critical." He met with each set of parents and their child individually to explain the changes. This process took him about six weeks. He continues to communicate with parents through letters.

In a performance-based system, "people have to get to know each other," states Lehman. Because larger schools have student-teacher ratios similar to those at Jewell, he suggests that they subdivide. Collaboration is difficult, he asserts, with "kids running to different classes all over the school."

Teachers

When asked if a performance-based system would make things more difficult for teachers, Rex Crouse, a specialist in school reform at the Oregon Department of Education, offered a mixed response. Prior to implementation of such a system, a great deal of education and skill building must occur, he said. Although there is extra work initially, many teachers have found their jobs easier in the long run because such a system allows for greater "flexibility and variety." Crouse believes that standards will increase student learning, and this improved success will boost teachers' self-esteem.

A publication produced by teachers in the North Coast Educational Consortium, which informs the community of the consortium's activities, reflects similar beliefs. Warrenton High School teacher Carolyn Ramey discusses her experience:

> I got involved in the Consortium because Oregon House Bill 3565 made me really nervous. I could see that it could either be a really good thing or a really bad thing. . . . It is a real relief to me that instead of saying schools need to do more, they're saying schools need a different focus.

Teachers do require more planning time, however. Classes at Rainier High School and Clatskanie High Schools begin late one day each week to accommodate this need.

The teachers at DeKeyser Elementary in Michigan also hold weekly "Tuesday lunches" to confer with each other. This time is "for sharing, thinking, and planning, not for announcements, administrative matters, or

paperwork" (Simpson). These lunches allow teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of what they are doing and plan for the future based on what has worked.

Dick Laughlin, superintendent of the Clatsop County Education Service District, notes that performance-based education takes teachers "out of the classroom." Many consortium teachers, for example, undertake community internships during the summer.

The Local Community

If a certificate is actually to make a student more employable, employers must see it as a meaningful indication of students' skills (Olson). To ensure this, local businesses and organizations comprise a vital component of CAM programs.

The aquaculture programs at Astoria and Warrrenton High Schools, in which students work with local fisheries to raise trout and salmon, are an example of school-business collaboration. The project combines the study of biology and ecology with hands-on experience.

In another form of school-community partnership, both students and teachers go to job sites to learn more about the inner workings of various professions. Called "job shadowing," this experience expands students' knowledge of how what they are learning in the classroom relates to the community beyond the school.

Consortium members hope to involve more members of the community in CAM projects. They plan to accomplish this by soliciting community input, providing inservice training on cooperative learning for teachers, and sharing information on successful student-community projects.

Higher Education

In response to the Oregon reform act, the Oregon State System of Higher Education has decided to implement a system of performance-based admission standards (Conley, January 1994). College admission requirements, of course, have always influenced educational standards for college-bound high school students. Conley, who uses the term *performance indicators* to mean more detailed specification of content to be mastered, notes the importance of using this influence to support reform efforts in secondary schools:

> It is possible to develop indicators that appear quite challenging to those who develop them, yet result in little change or improvement at the classroom level. Any set of standards to which the average high school teacher might react by saying, "Yes, I already do all of that; I

Sample College Admission Proficiencies

Proficiencies in several core subjects were formally adopted by the State Board of Higher Education on May 27, 1994. The proficiencies serve as the framework for the development of assessment tasks and performance levels for college admission. This work will begin fall 1994, with prototypes available in fall 1996. Work on foreign language proficiencies is already well under way. To give an example, the science proficiencies are listed below.

Science

Extended Definition: Science is the rational and systematic observation, identification, description, experimental investigation, and theoretical explanation of natural phenomena. Natural and physical sciences include physics, chemistry, biology, geology, astronomy, and ecology. Science attempts to answer questions about the physical and living world. It involves critical thinking and logical reasoning. Science uses various methods of investigation, such as observation, comparison, experimentation, and mathematical manipulation of data. Science has practical application and has to be understood in its larger cultural context. It is through inquiry that students are able to view science as an interdisciplinary study applicable to society.

Proficiencies:

a. Use writing, speaking, reasoning, and mathematics to recognize and state scientific problems.

b. Design an experiment using principles of scientific inquiry. Collect and analyze data pertaining to a natural phenomenon or problem. Communicate the results in a way that can be understood clearly. Critique experimental designs, including those that do not appear to work.

c. Use technology for scientific research including the use of computers for data collection, data analysis, graphic display, and literature searches. Recognize the limitations of these technologies.

d. Understand unifying concepts of the life and physical sciences including but not limited to: cell theory, geological evolution, organic evolution, atomic structure, chemical bonding, ecological relations, biodiversity, and transformation of energy.

e. Understand and correctly apply basic principles and terminology from among the following topics:

- physics—rotational motion, angular momentum, fluids, thermo-dynamics, simple harmonic motion, electricity and magnetism.
- geology—solid earth, biological, hydrological, and atmospheric processes.
- chemistry—states, structures, and reactions of matter; solutions; energy changes; equilibrium; kinetics; periodic classification.
- biology—molecular and cellular aspects of living things, structure and function in plants and animals, genetics, evolution, plant and animal diversity, principles of classification, ecological relationships.

f. Read and critically evaluate the accuracy of information and claims presented in popular and science-oriented magazines. Demonstrate awareness of the implications of the information and the claims presented for the individual and society.

g. Identify the social and cultural context of major scientific theories and concepts.

h. Consider the moral, ethical, and philosophical implications of scientific research and discoveries.

i. Describe the social significance of contemporary research, such as medical and ecological research.

Source: David T. Conley (June 1, 1994)

> don't need to change much of what I do" is probably not descriptive or challenging enough to warrant a restructuring of the current admission system. The proficiency indicators should be constructed in a way that will clearly result in significant change in secondary schools, leading to significantly enhanced student knowledge and performance.

The college admission requirements are defined so that students can simultaneously meet them while meeting the requirements for their CAM.

Clatsop Community College is also working to support performance-based standards in secondary schools. Although stringent admission requirements are inconsistent with the mission of a community college, states John Wubben, Clatsop is implementing a performance-based curriculum and maintaining joint programs with high schools. The North Coast Consortium cites the Principles of Technology program as an example:

> This program is a series of classes designed to teach students the foundation skills behind a variety of technology-related fields. This is a "2+2" program, meaning that high school juniors can enter it, continue through their senior year, then enter two years at the community college. They end up with a smooth, steady program that will advance their skills to a level that will qualify them for good jobs when they finish.

Parents

Oregon's education act envisions parents as an integral part of a student's personal development plan. The Commission on Chapter 1 (1993) concurs. The commission argues that a performance-based system would best ensure quality education for poor children; it also considers "family support [vital] to a child's success" in such a system.

The commission urges schools to "look beyond familiar but often superficial strategies such as asking parents to serve on advisory committees or sending them newsletters." Instead, "parent training and involvement program[s] designed to empower parents to make important contributions to their children's education" are recommended. These programs would involve written parent-involvement plans that parents would help formulate. They should also facilitate family literacy. Information about standards and assessment, as well as reports on individual student progress, should be available to parents. This information should be clear, even "to parents with limited literacy or English proficiency."

Rainier School District Superintendent Gene Carlson raises some concerns about parent-teacher collaboration in Oregon. Teachers must always outnumber parents on site councils, yet parents greatly outnumber teachers in the community. Carlson believes a site-council structure that requires teachers to be in the majority gives parents insufficient influence

over curriculum development. Parents who have a grievance with their site council must appeal to the school board. The board and the council could subsequently find themselves pitted against one another. Carlson would like to see a system based on trust between educators and parents. An "enlightened" district, he suggests, will find ways to encourage greater parent participation. A subcommittee composed only of parents represents one possibility.

Students

Disenchantment among high school students is another issue that must be addressed:

> Often college-bound students work in school so they can get good grades and get into college. They view the task as a necessary chore they can't wait to end, and find activities to do in school outside their classes to make high school tolerable. Others have a hard time relating their required classes to "real life." They tend to focus more on their lives outside school. (North Coast Educational Consortium)

The North Coast Educational Consortium hopes a performance-based system will motivate students to achieve higher standards by alleviating this alienation. Students quoted in *Partners in Change* testify that this approach is effective. Seaside High School junior Kristine Powell, for example, says she enjoyed serving on a city council-appointed committee as part of her high school curriculum: "If you're there, you can get a better understanding than if you're just reading about it." Rainier High School student Ryan Whitney says his grade-point-average has risen from a 2.2 to a 3.0. He attributes the improvement to the program in which he "shadows" health care professionals: "I don't know, I feel more responsible. More serious. When I'm in the nursing home or the hospital, I feel capable of doing a lot more."

Students may gain "hands-on" experience by performing tasks that would otherwise remain undone. Astoria School District Student Assistance Director Robin Andrea hopes that performing this service will link students to the community:

> We want students to be resources so that what they do is helpful to the community. We want to get to the point that it would be difficult for the community to operate without them—where students have a place, a role in the community.
>
> It becomes awfully difficult for students to start thinking about getting into mischief when they know they have vital roles in the community. That way there's bonding going on between students and school and family and community. (North Coast Educational Consortium)

The implementation of a performance-based system requires broad societal changes. Such changes will not occur easily. The next section dis-

cusses some challenges and issues the parties involved must address during the process.

Challenges to Implementation

Schools face many challenges as they attempt to implement performance-based standards. The following issues should be thoughtfully considered.

The Difficulty of Change

Rex Crouse, of the Oregon Department of Education, notes that there is "discomfort in change." Changing a system that has been in place for over one hundred years is not an easy task. Bernard LaCasse, superintendent of the Warrenton-Hammond School District, states that while some teachers on the northern Oregon coast have embraced reform, others are "resisting." Many educators feel pressure to implement changes even when all parties involved do not fully understand or support the changes.

Principal Carl Odin characterizes Seaside High School's transition to a performance-based system as being "in the muck." Working through change is a slow process. It is difficult to challenge the existing system, the one that the faculty and community members are familiar with. Odin says people want to know why they must now focus on outcomes when focusing on inputs was sufficient in the past. Expecting standard grading policies between teachers and within curriculum used to be a violation of professional integrity. In a performance-based system, it represents an essential component of setting standards and staying accountable to the student.

Dick Laughlin, superintendent of the Clatsop County ESD, states that consortium members are "stepping on each other's feet" to meet state time constraints. All districts are expected to complete a plan for implementing the act by January 1995. Odin notes that the state analytical scoring system, a performance-based examination that he praises, required ten years to develop. Oregon educators are currently attempting to develop standards in other areas in less than two years.

Vickie Totten, of the Oregon School Boards Association, encourages leaders to recognize that some people adapt to change more easily than others. Districts that have already initiated the reform process of their own volition usually experience an easier transition. She envisions the school-improvement program as a twenty-year process in which districts will change at different rates.

DeKeyser Elementary in Michigan alleviated some of the tension

through implementing weekly rituals such as assemblies that exhibited student work, "Tuesday lunches," and staff meetings (Simpson). Repetition altered the culture of the school and helped staff to accept the new system.

A performance-based system will fail without the support of those involved. Therefore, educators and communities must be granted sufficient time to come to terms with the change.

Is the Research Adequate?

Superintendent Gene Carlson also expresses concern that Oregon is moving too quickly. Although he believes that performance-based education "makes some sense," he would like to see long-term research that utilizes control groups and takes local variables into account. He believes Oregon has "leapt upon" performance-based education "because it sounds like a good idea."

Conley asserts that there is strong evidence to support a performance-based model. In fact, he states that there is ample research indicating the ineffectiveness of current practices. And he notes that many training programs for medical professionals, for example, already use performance-based standards. "Anyplace where we cannot accept substandard performance, we have performance-based standards," states Conley.

Limited Resources

Duane Scott, a soon to retire superintendent of the Columbia School District in Westport, Oregon, sites limited funding as his primary obstacle. Teachers are expected to do more with less money.

Crouse, of the Oregon Department of Education, advocates looking at "the business side" of schools. "Refining and restructuring" allows schools to address "current inefficiencies" created by old restrictions. Crouse predicts that changes will give schools the freedom to try different things. He believes that the standards will increase student achievement and schools' efficiency.

Totten points out that the implementation of the act on a statewide basis is not mandatory if schools have insufficient funding. She observes that it will be very expensive to implement the act on the state's schedule. However, like Crouse, she predicts that costs will balance out over time.

The Goals 2000 legislation releases some federal funds to assist states in developing and implementing performance-based standards. It also provides financial assistance to particularly impoverished districts.

Equity

High expectations and educational opportunities for all American

students represents one goal of the standards movement. In the diverse American culture, preserving equity remains a constant challenge.

The Goals 2000: Educate America Act authorizes the creation of "opportunity to learn" standards. These standards, like NCEST's School Delivery Standards, should provide a means of measuring schools' and districts' effectiveness in implementing performance-based standards. The voluntary standards of Goals 2000 will take the following factors into account:

- the quality and availability to all students of curricula, instructional materials, and technologies, including distance learning
- the capability of teachers to provide high-quality instruction to meet diverse learning needs in each content area to all students
- the extent to which teachers, principals, and administrators have ready and continuing access to professional development, including the best knowledge about teaching, learning, and school improvement
- the extent to which curriculum, instructional practices, and assessments are aligned to voluntary national content standards
- the extent to which school facilities provide a safe and secure environment for learning and instruction and have the requisite libraries, laboratories, and other resources necessary to provide an opportunity-to-learn
- the extent to which schools utilize policies, curricula, and instructional practices which ensure nondiscrimination on the basis of gender
- other factors that the [National Education Standards and Improvement] Council deems appropriate to ensure that all students receive a fair opportunity to achieve the knowledge and skills described in the voluntary national content standards and the voluntary national student performance standards certified by the Council

One concern involves the fate of disabled students and students with limited English proficiency under the new system (Viadero 1993). The Clatsop Educational Service District began to address the needs of special education students several years ago. Laughlin describes auto detailing and "green thumb" greenhouse programs available through the ESD's vocational center.

Conley also raises the issue of racial, gender, and cultural discrimination. He believes that schools should closely monitor equity issues:

> As with all systems of standards, performance-based systems are susceptible to influences, conscious or unconscious, that bias the system in one direction or another. This danger is magnified when few people are involved in setting standards and assessments and many

people are involved in administering the system.

> Equity issues argue for wide-scale involvement in all aspects of the system and built-in monitoring devices designed to identify the system's effects on all groups. In contrast to current testing systems, if different groups are performing with vastly differing results, a proficiency-based system must confront this fact and examine its assessments and standards. Tasks that result in differential success are automatically suspect. (January 1994)

Most North American schools with performance-based systems have only implemented them recently. They still have a great deal to learn about how to facilitate teamwork and address the many challenges. While the future may provide solutions, it may also raise more questions.

Conclusion

The discussion of standards touches on fundamental societal issues. It asks the society what students must know and be able to do as adults. The answers to this question are controversial, complex, and uncertain. History suggests that problems in American education defy simplistic solutions. Changing economic and cultural conditions render a precise vision of this future impossible. Therefore, standards must remain flexible, dynamic, and able to unite Americans with a wide variety of viewpoints.

Performance-based standards will allow schools to be accountable to the public. They provide educators with the means to communicate what they are trying to accomplish. They also reveal the extent to which schools are accomplishing their goals. Standards clarify and strengthen the connection between what schools are accomplishing and the demands that are placed on individuals once they leave school. This information allows schools to maintain a vital role in the individual communities that comprise American society.

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