

What does a standards-based school look like?

Indicators of a standards-based school

Standards-Based Curriculum

- There is a school-wide vocabulary used for words related to curriculum and learning.
- Standards and benchmarks exist for each subject area and there is a shared understanding of what they mean.
- The curriculum has been "mapped" so that what is actually taught, and when it is taught is known according to the standards and benchmarks and used to make revisions in curriculum and instruction.
- The curriculum is aligned to the standards/benchmarks and the knowledge and skills to be taught at each grade level have been clarified.
- Educators have examined the content of the standards and identified the essential learnings that have lasting value beyond the classroom.
- The school has determined that the content for any course, any grade level can be adequately addressed in the time available.
- Units are designed using standards and benchmarks and the school's model for curriculum development. Model units and/or design standards are available to help the teams so that educators have sufficient detail.

Standards-Based Assessment

- Educators have designed or adopted assessments to measure the achievement of the standards and benchmarks.
- Different types of assessments are used to match the learning they were designed to assess.
- Some school-wide assessments of skills (writing, reading, oral) exist with criteria that are used across grade levels and divisions.
- Students understand the criteria used to score their work and what different levels of performance mean.
- Assessment is ongoing, formative as well as summative.
- Educators examine student work in relation to the assessments.
- There is a common understanding of what student work is "at standard" as well as "above" and "below" standard.

- Student results (individual, class, grade, school) from multiple assessment measures are used to adapt instruction to meet student needs and revise curriculum.

Standards-Based Instruction

- Educators have yearly plans and other curriculum agreements within their teams/departments/faculties.
- A sequence of lessons helps students build their understanding and make the curriculum unit a coherent whole.
- Clear links exist between standards, assessment, and instructional activities.
- Instructional strategies are varied and research based, so that they have a positive effect on student learning.
- Strategies provide for differentiation so that students with a range of language abilities, backgrounds and learning needs benefit from the instruction.
- Instruction is focused on what the students are learning rather than a coverage of content.
- Students and teachers get the feedback they need about progress towards learning.
- There are opportunities for students to self-assess and reflect upon their learning progress.

Leading to...

- Reporting of student progress is aligned with the standards and benchmarks.
- A process for routinely reviewing data on learning, targeting specific areas of underperformance on specific standards and benchmarks, and setting measurable goals for improvement.
- A process for the systematic review of the curriculum.
- Alignment between the intended, implemented, and attained curriculum.
- And driven by, a vision in the school that ensures that improving student learning is at the core of everything.