

Teaching and Learning in a Standards-based Classroom: Key Points

The following points can be used to focus work with teachers around the elements of aligning instruction and assessments.

Target

Focus Your thinking

- Identify the specific content standard(s) you will teach to and assess.
- Study the standard; identify what students are expected to know and be able to do.
- In what ways will you determine how well the students already know these standards?
- Determine if there is an existing performance standard that establishes or describes how well students must perform, i.e., scoring guides.
- Consider what you and your colleagues know about teaching and assessing the selected standard(s).
- Can you connect this with any other standard(s) you have been teaching?

Clarify the Target

- Review what you know about the standards; look at past examples of student work.
- Think about what student work needs to contain in order to demonstrate knowledge/skill in this area.
- If there are no established criteria for assessment, determine what you think you will need to “see” in student work in order to assess the standard.
- Identify ways that you can use the domains of the scoring guides in your instructional dialogues.
- Identify what you need to help students learn to do in order to improve their ability in this area.
- Using all available established criteria and practice, create a descriptive picture of the performance level you want students to achieve for the “meet” level.

Plan

Developing an Assessment Plan

- How can you use differentiation as a strategy to meet a variety of students’ knowledge and skills?
- What are the best ways to assess the critical knowledge and skills in this area?

Tests and quizzes

Classroom exercises or simulations

Writing assignments

Oral or media presentations

Directed performance tasks

Open-ended performance tasks or problems

Student-developed projects

Teacher observation

Self and peer assessment
Portfolio of work collected over time
Other methods

- Identify existing assessments that might be used to measure student knowledge and skill.
- Think about what is developmentally appropriate and meaningful for students.
- How can your assessment provide for authentic, applied, or real-world context?

Planning the Lesson

- What do you know about your students from the learning styles inventories? From the other diagnostic tools?
- How will differentiation help provide appropriate opportunities for all students' rates and levels to be met?
- Think about your learning environment. What types of activities can you handle in the space available? What other spaces and/or resources might you pursue?
- How will your instruction and practice activities help support what students are expected to know and do in your assessment? In other words, will they provide opportunities to connect information and skills with assigned assessments?
- What do the students already know about this unit of study/content standard(s)?
- Do you have any anchor examples to share with students of what quality work looks like?
- Do I have a variety of activities in this unit that will meet the learning styles/needs of all the students, or have a chosen group instruction because it is the most convenient?
- Have I provided for opportunities for group interaction, to ensure that students recognize the standards in the unit?
- Are assignment requirements clear, timely, and fair?
- Is there adequate time for students to ask clarifying questions and/or revise work?
- Have I provided a variety of classroom activities, all of which support the standards which students should meet through this unit?
- Are students able to share new learning with an audience?

Scoring/Grading

- How will you monitor or track and report student progress? How will you adjust your plan if students need additional learning and assessment opportunities?
- What is your purpose in scoring/grading the assessment: student growth over time or a single score from one performance?
- What grading system best works for this assessment? Is this the most comfortable system for you or is it the most fair for students?
- Will you score the assignment work only once, or will you only score the "best work" of the student?
- Will students be able to self-evaluate, as well as evaluate their fellow classmates?
- Am I operating under the premise that every activity in my unit/lesson needs to earn a grade/score? Why?

Resources

- What resources do you need for this lesson to be successful for students?
- How will you gather or contact your resources?
- Will parent or community members review student work? Do they need training?
- How can you communicate your expectations for student work to parents?

Teach

Plan and Deliver Instruction

- Review instructional plans, materials and activities you have used in the past to teach concepts and skills related to the standard.
- With your target, assessment plan, and student group in mind, “design backwards” and plan the teaching you will need to do to get students ready to be successful in the assessment activities.
- Build from, but rethink, revise, and reorganize past practices when necessary.
- Select curriculum and materials that support the standard and your plan.
- Share “anchor examples” with your students. Make sure they can identify and talk about levels of performance, i.e., quality, content, etc.
- Make sure your students know how they will be graded/scored on the assessment(s).
- Deliver instruction and facilitate learning activities that consistently focus on the standard.
- Revisit often your expectations about what students should know and be able to do as a result of the unit/lesson.
- Adopt a “coaching” approach and role in class. Check frequently for levels of understanding. Engage students in sharing what they think they should know and be able to do.

Assess

Assess Student Learning and Performance

- Conduct regular and varied assessments during learning and teaching (formative assessments).
- Conduct assessments at the end of units or cycles (summative assessments).
- Provide differentiated activities that meet the rate and level of all students, as appropriate.
- Think of assessments as opportunities for students to develop as well as to demonstrate knowledge and skills.
- Did you assess student work based on the standards rather than on subjective elements. Be careful to avoid making a judgment on small, miniscule pieces of information that have only a distant connection to the target being assessed. These elements sometimes have more to do with teacher interest or bias than with the content standard. Ask yourself whether it is a good idea to expect to assess students on this information or whether there is another way to ascertain student knowledge and skill in this area.

Assessment for Improvement in Performance and Instruction

- How will you share this assessment data with students? How will it inform them about where they are and how to improve?
- How will the assessment data inform your planning and teaching? How will it help you evaluate the curriculum and instruction that are part of this lesson/unit?

Collect and Review Student Work Samples

- Plan how your students will maintain “working files” of work samples, if these are part of the assessment.
- Make notes either on student work or in your lesson plans that will ensure consistent use of criteria or scoring guide interpretation when you use this assessment again.
- Have students self-evaluate their progress, reflecting on the quality and quantity of their work. Connect the conversation, when appropriate, to the career-related learning standards.
- Can you use peer review in the formative assessments? Practice assessments?

Verify

Verify Student Performance Levels

- Compare student scores this time with scores from the past on the same assessment. Are your judgments and expectations for performance consistent? If they changed, what caused your shift in thinking? Was the same criteria used for each time the assessment was given? If not, why not?
- Share samples of student work with your peers. Would they score/grade the work the same way? Do they believe that the assessment is aligned with the standard?
- Are there other differentiation activities that would have been more appropriate for measuring student performance in this area?

Reflect

Reflect on Results

- How successful do you think this lesson was towards helping students improve their knowledge and skills for this content standard(s)?
- Is this judgment based on assessment data or other information? What other information is likely to be helpful as you make this judgment, i.e., student feedback, percentage of work turned in on time, cost of resources, length of unit, etc.?
- Use student achievement information and other data to evaluate your success, support your conclusions, and guide decisions for future work with these content standards.
- Can you confirm that you selected the most successful means by which to teach and assess students' mastery of the standards?