

B.C. Performance Standards – A Snapshot

Background Information:

The performance standards have been designed by B.C. educators to assist teachers in assessing student performance in the following key areas:

- Reading
- Writing
- Numeracy
- Social responsibility

The standards are intended as an assessment tool to support a criterion-referenced approach to classroom assessment and evaluation. Teachers, students, parents and administrators are able to use these as a skill-based reference in comparing student performance to provincial standards.

Each subject area has been published as a booklet including three Key Components:

1. Full Rating Scales
2. Quick Scales
3. Student Samples

1. The Rating Scales describe four specific performance levels
 - **Not yet within expectations**
 - **Meets expectations (minimal level)**
 - **Fully meets expectations**
 - **Exceeds expectations**

Using specific criteria for work, students will know exactly what is expected to achieve certain grades. Parents are better able to support their children with clear guidelines for assessment and evaluation.

2. The Quick Scales, a simplified version of the rating scales, are much easier for teachers and students to use for frequent reference and assessment purposes. Not only can teachers use these for assessment purposes, but they are a useful tool for student self assessment as a checklist for regular homework and big assignments.

3. The Student Samples are particularly helpful because they provide model tasks with accompanying student work. This allows our teachers, students, parents and administrators to see how students in other districts have been assessed on a given task using provincial standards.

Use of the Performance Standards:

The performance standards are not mandated, although individual teachers can use them in a variety of ways to augment their other assessment tools. Our teachers can use the performance standards to:

- identify students who may require intervention in instructional practices
- monitor, evaluate, and report on specific student performance
- provide a profile of a group of students to facilitate appropriate program design
- create opportunities to share results with colleagues and plan professional development activities to support instructional goals
- develop evidence for school growth plans
- provide models for creating their own performance tasks as needed for specific assignments
- initiate discussions with parents, students and other teachers about student performance
- provide their students with specific guidelines for self assessment and suggestions for improvement where needed

A Focus on Curriculum

The performance standards have been well received by teachers throughout the province because they complement the curricula described in the Ministry of Education's Integrated Resource Packages (IRP). The standards have been designed according to the prescribed learning outcomes in the IRPs and they describe four levels of learning based on those outcomes. These scales allow teachers to assess the quality of student work by identifying key elements required for given tasks. They also provide examples to illustrate expected performance levels for specific tasks. Teachers can now be assured that their assessments are consistent with widely held provincial expectations for defined grade levels.

Reading and Writing

Many NPBS teachers have found that the performance standards have proven to be an excellent tool to assess student performance. Use of the writing performance standards has been especially successful as teams that are new to using an inquiry approach to developing student learning find them to be relatively simple to use. Guided Reading Programs and Early Literacy Programs are also well supported by the standards and have been of key focus in elementary classrooms over the past eight years. The most recent strides have been made in peer assessment of reading and writing using the standards. Several leading NPBS schools have shared powerful work in this area.

Numeracy

With the rapid developments in Math instruction for today's students, there is a need for up to date assessment and evaluation tools that support student learning. BC teachers can use the numeracy performance standards as a comprehensive outline of expected knowledge, skills and attributes by which to measure student work. The performance standards are one of the few current math assessment tools that link directly to the new B.C. Math curriculum. This accurate information can assist our teachers with curriculum and instruction planning.

Social Responsibility

The performance standards for social responsibility have received a great deal of attention in schools across B.C. As we work to develop important skills in global citizenship, the social responsibility standards have proven to be very useful as a way to measure student skills, knowledge and attitudes in an area that has historically been difficult to track.

Reporting to Parents

The performance standards provide teachers, students and parents with a common language to describe standards and expectations in key areas of learning that can then be used for the reporting process. They are an excellent tool to assist in report card writing and teachers are finding that the criteria used in the standards is often appropriate to use when sharing student portfolios with parents. During the term, students can be trained to use the same language for self and peer assessment and this is an excellent way to help them to become more critical of their work. Through the performance standards, students can understand how teachers assess and evaluate their work using specific criteria. This should facilitate the learning process by enabling students to identify ways to improve their work as needed. The performance standards provide teachers with a strong measurement tool when focusing on formative assessment strategies in the classroom.

Conclusion

The performance standards are not meant to be the only measurement tool used to assess student work in a classroom. They represent one resource available to BC teachers to support classroom instruction. Designed to measure student performance, the standards focus on the application of knowledge. They enable teachers to ask the question: Can this student apply the skills and concepts that he/she has learned to get on with real life?