

*Standards in Practice*TM *Theory of Action*

The Standards in Practice theory of action is contained in the mantra—**students can do no better than the assignments they are given**. Change in student achievement happens in the interaction between teacher and student about assignments, defined as challenges to demonstrate learning. The higher the challenge, the greater the learning, given appropriate context. **What students are asked to do to demonstrate their learning limits that learning**: if you ask students to demonstrate third-grade skills, they will do so, even if they are in sixth grade. Inputs dictate outcomes: if teachers ask for rigorous demonstrations of high-level learning—and teach the relevant skills and knowledge—students will provide them. Or, if they can't provide them, their work will show where learning is deficient and therefore what additional instruction is necessary. That information is not available from low-level assignments.

Questions and Answers

What is *Standards in Practice*?

Professional development for school personnel delivered through regular meetings of teams on the school site.

What happens in *Standards in Practice* team meetings?

Teachers bring their assignments and the work done by students from the classroom to the team meeting. In a six-step process, teachers find out whether their assignments are rigorously aligned with standards; what instruction their students need to reach standards; and how to change their practice so that all students are successful.

Is *Standards in Practice* successful? According to data from the Education Trust:

Standards in Practice raises student achievement in classes where teachers are members of teams.

- One elementary school in Pueblo CO gained 46 points in one year in the writing portion of the Colorado School Assessment Program;
- In Lancaster PA, where all schools are using *Standards in Practice* as their professional development, 46.4% of students moved up out of the bottom quartile in two years;
- In Cincinnati OH, five of seven elementary schools honored for exceptional gains on the Ohio Proficiency Tests use *Standards in Practice* as professional development; in one elementary school, students gained 21% in reading and 14% in mathematics in two years;
- Six elementary schools in Palm Beach County FL all gained on the FCAT in the year they have been using *Standards in Practice* as their professional development; in grade 5 mathematics at Lincoln Elementary School, students went from 7% attaining Level 3 in 2000 to 22% in 2001.

*Standards in Practice*TM

Characteristics of good tasks, assignments, prompts

- Focused on and applying important concepts and essential skills
- Include writing, even in mathematics
- Aligned with at least one standard
- Have a real-life application, if possible (but don't strain!)
- Demand thinking skills on the high end of the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (analysis, synthesis, evaluation)
- Culminate in a product that can be scored, e.g.: written report, essay, letter; graph, chart, table, with written explanation; speech or multi-media presentation; instructions for a specific audience. No worksheets!
- Have more than a simple right/wrong answer
- Give the student all the information necessary to respond.
- Presented to students in writing—not orally, not on the blackboard