

August 4, 2006

Looking At The ISSUES

Controversial Issue: Standards in Education

What are Standards in Education? Standards are statements of what it is learners should master at particular points in their educational careers. Standards arise from the quality movement and have roots in the notion that educators should teach what is specified in the standards and then what is taught should be tested yearly to quantify how well learners mastered the content.

Who Determines Standards in Education? Each state developed standards in each subject area with committees of educators, citizens, and often business people. When the committees finished their work, states adopted the standards.

What Does A Standard Look Like? Below are several examples from Ohio:
9th Grade Math – Define function with ordered pairs in which each domain element is assigned exactly one range element.

11th Grade Math – Represent complex numbers on complex plane.

12 Grade Math – Apply combinations as a method to create coefficients for the Binomial Theorem, and make connections to every day and workplace problem situations.

Why Are Standards Controversial? Standards are controversial for several reasons:

- Standards in each state for each subject area are similar, but different. A number of national studies have rated the standards in each state. These studies usually find deficiencies in the standards¹ and critique the variance in the level of difficulty of the tests that measure student performance on the standards², leading some to call for a national curriculum and a national testing program. Those who favor states rights object strenuously to such a notion regardless of the state by state differences in the standards and level of difficulty of the testing programs.
- Some say that there are so many standards per subject area in each state that teachers must choose what to teach by studying what is tested in that state. Some call this process the selection of “power standards,”³ others say that this process narrows the curriculum to what is tested. Still others say that learning content in most subject areas is not a linear process as is implied in the standards and the

U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Awards Jobs for America’s Graduates (JAG) Out-of-School Youth Recovery Program

DOL has awarded \$250,000 to Stark State College of Technology to develop a recovery program for high school dropouts with a team of local partners, which includes the Workforce Initiative Association (WIA), Choices High School, Jobs for Ohio’s Graduates (JOG), the Stark County Educational Service Center and Stark Education Partnership. Each of the partners also will provide financial and in-kind resources for the dropout recovery program in Stark County, including \$150,000 from WIA. The other two colleges funded under this grant are Florida Community College (Jacksonville, FL) and Louisiana Technical College (Baton Rouge, LA). The Ohio Board of Regents is the portal for distributing funding to the three colleges. (continued on back side bar)

Questions or Comments?

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subsequent alignment discussions. Daniel Pink⁴ suggests that imagination is what will be needed to get ahead in the later part of this century, yet none of the state standards include imagination.

- Standards are not dynamic—they are not reviewed yearly or even at regular intervals. As a result, various groups continue to issue reports calling for new standards that reflect 21st Century Skills.
- Willard R. Daggett from the International Center for Leadership in Education surveyed more than 40,000 high school students nationally, asking if they were performing to their full potential in high school. Many said no and noted that they are not challenged because their schools have become “test factories.”⁵

What is the Result of the Standards Controversy? When the results of the testing data are released by each state and each school district is rated, there is cynicism about the results from the public because they have read the criticisms of the standards and the tests. The challenge for school districts is to not only achieve good student performance on the tests that measure the standards but also to expand the curriculum to include additional standards reflecting what some have labeled as 21st century skills.

What is happening in Stark County regarding the Standards Controversy? School district ratings are improving in Stark County demonstrating that teachers, school, and district administrators are making sure that students are mastering the standards and the tests administered in Ohio. Additionally, teachers, school and district administrators in Stark County are studying and incorporating new standards into the curriculum.

¹ For latest example go to <http://www.edexcellence.net/foundation/global/log.cfm?main=150> and review the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation’s report on world history.

² Pace Policy Analysis for California Education University of California, Berkley and Davis Stanford University. (2006). Working paper 06-01: *Is the no child left behind act working? The reliability of how states track achievement* (http://pace.berkeley.edu/NCLB/WP06-01_Web.pdf)

³ Center for Performance Assessment. (August 2, 2006) http://www.makingstandardwork.com/professional_development/power_standards.htm

⁴ Pink, D. (2005). *A whole new mind*. New York: NY. Riverhead Books.

⁵ <http://www.daggett.com/>

Under the grants, Stark State and the other colleges will *develop pilot projects that will provide a replicable national model that can offer a solution for employment of out-of-school youth and meet the workforce needs of financial services and other career fields*. The grants are part of the President’s High Growth Job Training Initiative, a strategic plan to prepare workers for jobs in expanding industries.

National business partners in this initiative include Allstate, Bank of America, Citigroup, First Data Corporation, Freddie Mac, JAG, Sallie Mae and JP Morgan Chase. National City Bank is the local business partner for the Stark County project.

Looking At The Week

Dr. Adrienne O’Neill and Dr. Joe Rochford attended the *Stark County Administrators Annual In-Service* on August 1-2. Judge Michael Howard, member of the Stark Education Partnership Board of Directors, led the school law discussion with his staff in the morning on August 2nd.

Adele Gelb attended the *OCAN Advisory Meeting* on August 3rd in Columbus.