



Literacy Connects

A Content Literacy Newsletter from Regional Professional Development Program-Issue LIII



Introduction to the Nevada Educator's Performance Framework

Next year, Nevada's teachers and administrators will be using the newly developed Nevada Educator's Performance Framework (NEPF). Within this Performance Framework, the Instructional Practice portion sets the parameters for measuring teacher and student behavior in the classroom by putting forth Five High Leverage Instructional Standards.

These instructional standards reflect the practice of effective teaching in the classroom. Drawn from an extensive review of current research and theory about learning, and from an analysis of the Common Core State Standards and the Next Generation Science Standards, they are applicable to all content areas and grade levels. Although the standards are described separately, in actual classroom practice they are best considered as interwoven. For example, a teacher could be providing students with a learning task that has high cognitive demand (Standard 2), engaging students in discourse (Standard 3), and using the task and the discourse as sources of evidence about how the student's learning is progressing (Standard 5). These Five Instructional Standards demonstrate an immediate and important connection to fostering student success in post-secondary environments by building students' 21st century skills, so they graduate college and career ready.

The Five Instructional Standards and corresponding educational research is as follows:

Standard 1: New learning is connected to prior learning

Learners select and transform information using existing cognitive structures (schemata) that enable them to organize knowledge and experiences, and apply their knowledge to new situations (Anderson, 1977; Bruner, 1966; Rumelhart & Norman, 1978, 1982). Experts have extensive stores of knowledge into well-connected schemata. It is this "organization of knowledge that underlies experts' abilities to understand and solve problems." In situations where students' prior knowledge is not engaged and preconceptions are not revealed, students often retain new information long enough to perform well on tests, and revert back to their preconceptions (National Research Council, 2005, p.15).

Standard 2: Learning tasks have high cognitive demand for diverse learners

The success of students in developing high-level cognitive abilities and skills is dependent on their engagement in deep and rich tasks that afford such opportunities (Lin, 2005; Stein, Grover & Henningsen, 1996; Stigler et al., 1999). When planning activities that have high cognitive demand for diverse learners, educators should take into consideration that the nature and level of a task will vary among students. Teachers should engage students in learning that is within their ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development—Not too easy and not too hard) through tasks and interactions that involve a gradual release of assistance so that the learning ultimately becomes part of the student's independent achievement (Tharp & Gallimore, 1989; Vygotsky, 1986).

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Standard 3: Students engage in meaning-making through discourse and other strategies

Students are active learners who construct understanding for themselves (Piaget, 1970; Piaget & Inhelder, 1972). To engage students in active meaning making, students need to participate in discourse in all domains, both orally and in writing. These discourse patterns include developing arguments, explaining, critiquing, using logic, and giving evidence to support or refute a claim (Kress, Charalampos, Jewitt & Ogborn, 2001; Halliday & Martin, 1993). The importance of active learning and student engagement has been well-documented in the areas of productive discourse, representations in meaning making, and community-centered classroom cultures.

Standard 4: Students engage in metacognitive activity to increase understanding of and responsibility for their own learning.

“Metacognition is a foundational cognitive process for effective learning in all disciplines. At its most basic, it is thinking about thinking” (Flavell, 1979). Extensive research in the area of metacognition has shown that students who monitor their own thinking and take action based on that thinking are more successful in academic activities than their peers. The ability to properly regulate one’s emotions, respond effectively to feedback, and adapt to new and different situations have been identified as 21st Century skills directly related to academic success through motivation (Bandura, 1986; Eisenberg, Valiente & Eggum, 2010; ray & Smith, 2010). Instructional strategies for teaching metacognition and encouraging motivation to use metacognitive strategies need to occur at a comprehensive level rather than at a performance.

Standard 5: Assessment is integrated into instruction

Evaluation which is directly related to the teaching-learning process as it unfolds can have highly beneficial effects on the learning of students, the instructional process of teachers and the use of instructional materials by teachers and learners (Bloom, 1969). Extensive research has shown that formative assessment, when effectively implemented, can impact student achievement as much or more than any other instructional intervention (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Hattie, 1999; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Feedback to students that is descriptive and evaluative and engages students in mindful activity, in contrast to feedback that gives current achievement, has the greatest benefit in student achievement (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Tunstall & Gipps, 1996; Shute, 2008).

The next five *Literacy Connects Newsletters* will focus on each of the Five Instructional Standards and how they translate to classroom practice.

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