

# Preface to the Second Edition

## ■ WHY IS THIS BOOK NEEDED AND WHO SHOULD READ IT?

When this book was first published, many state standards were still in development and the full impact of No Child Left Behind had not been realized. I felt the book was needed to help teachers organize all of the knowledge and programs they had in a way that was logical and would lead to student success in meeting the emerging standards. As accountability processes have been solidified, the pressure on teachers has only increased as districts, desperate to improve test scores, have bombarded teachers with programs that promise immediate success but are layered over existing programs and instructional habits. This piling on of approaches to teaching only makes the classroom teacher's job more chaotic and increases the feeling of too much to do with too little time. Therefore, I think this book is more needed than ever because it intends to help teachers focus on what is important: motivating students to learn and remember what the standards say they need to know to be successful as well as enjoying the process.

This book originated from 15 years of presentations, workshops, classroom observations, problem-solving sessions, and planning meetings with teachers and administrators in school systems across the United States and Canada. During that time, I have watched educators working to ensure that all of their students get the best opportunity to meet the national, state, and/or local standards for learning that No Child Left Behind requires. As I work with teachers and administrators, however, it is evident that they are often overwhelmed by the demands being made on schools today. One reason for this is that teachers have been given mandates but very few practical methods or structures for implementing the standards in real classrooms. My intentions in writing this book remain the same:

- to share a clear perspective on what the standards mean for daily practices in public education,
- to offer teachers and administrators a four-part structure for organizing classrooms for teaching the standards, and
- to give them specific, usable strategies for helping students reach the higher requirements of the standards now in place across the United States.

However, in this revised edition there are some additional features:

- Clearer instructions for designing performance tasks
- Additional references
- Resource samples for easier reproduction and adaptation

This book is based on the recognition that standards are a reality and that the pressing issue for teachers is not Where did these standards come from? but How will I implement them in my classroom? I will not, therefore, be discussing the history of the standards movement. There are already many excellent sources that trace the origins and development of national and state standards if a reader needs this information.

My audience is mainly teachers who are working in K–12 classrooms across this country, and who are struggling to help their students succeed on mandated standards and tests. But I am also addressing principals and other administrators who support teachers in their efforts to create appropriate classroom experiences for students. Some teachers are lucky enough to be working in schools or systems that have visionary leaders and have already instituted the changes needed to help teachers create standards-based classrooms. But, for both teachers and principals, who feel alone and overwhelmed by the demands in this era of increased accountability, this book is for you.

I taught in public middle and high schools for 26 years in both rural and urban communities, and I know how hard it is to teach all types of students in the same class, how impossible new curriculum and assessment demands can feel, and how lonely it can be in a room full of children or young adults when you are the one responsible for all of them. I also know how miraculous it is when a group of students begin to take ownership of their learning, how exhilarating it is to realize that lesson plans are working even better than I had hoped, and how energizing it is to see students excited by what they are learning in my class. For these reasons, my heart is always in the classroom as I talk and write about instruction and assessment. When I do presentations to groups who are not classroom teachers, I always tell them that I am a teacher first and that what I will be sharing is the “down and dirty” view of standards. We teachers need to understand what we are doing and why, but the bottom line is, if the ideas and strategies won’t work with 27 kids on Monday morning, they aren’t useful. The ideas for the classroom that I share here do work with students.

Although many instruction and assessment strategies are included here, this book is not intended to be a collection of strategies. Rather, it offers a productive way of thinking about standards and a structure for organizing your classroom practice to give all students the best possible chance at success. The many teachers I have worked with over the last 15 years have found this approach to standards very useful. They often tell me that they have gained ideas and strategies to use in class tomorrow and a lot to think about as they plan future lessons and assessments. And, best of all for me, an experienced teacher who knows what classroom “burnout” feels like, veteran teachers have said that these ideas gave them hope and got them excited about teaching again.

Even though this book is for teachers, building administrators can also use it as they work with teachers to ensure all students learn well. Since

## X HOW TO MEET STANDARDS, MOTIVATE STUDENTS, AND STILL ENJOY TEACHING!

principals now must be instructional leaders, they need to know what the standards-based classroom should look like. This book offers building administrators a view into that world, and at the end of each chapter, I give principals ideas for using the information in their roles as school leaders. Administrators can use the four components of the standards-based classroom

- to determine staff development needs for their schools,
- to model instructional strategies for teachers,
- to facilitate change in classroom practice,
- to support teachers who are working to make their classrooms standards-based, and
- to create appropriate teacher observation and evaluation forms for the classroom that standards demand.

Using this book to start dialogue in schools about standards and what they will require of educators can give principals and teachers a common view of what is needed to meet standards in their schools and a common vocabulary so that everyone can communicate more productively.

One important feature of the information this book offers is that the four practices discussed in the text can be applied to K–12 classrooms in all content areas. In fact, the components are more powerful when a district uses them as a framework for classroom instruction and assessment and for professional development for all of their teachers. If we are to be successful in this era of increased expectations for all students, we must work together from the first day a student enters school until the day she walks across the stage to receive a diploma. That is the main reason this book is aimed at all public school educators and administrators rather than addressing only one content area or grade level. Teachers in various states with differing standards have applied the strategies successfully and benefited professionally from working together across grade levels and content areas to meet state mandates. To illustrate the universality of the ideas presented, the book offers examples of how teachers at various grade levels have applied them.

It is my hope that this book will help educators see the positive side and daily implications of the new content standards. Also, by offering the four practices for classrooms, I wish to give teachers and administrators a usable structure for synthesizing best teaching practices and working together productively to help students succeed in school and in the world beyond.

### ■ HOW IS THE BOOK ORGANIZED AND WHAT IS IN IT?

This book is organized around a logical process that begins by examining the implications of standards for the classroom. Then it explores the four components of a classroom that is aligned with what standards demand

and discusses various ways to use this information to improve student learning. Each section begins from the classroom perspective because that is where the major work of learning takes place and where the standards must be implemented. After listing specific ideas for teachers, ideas are offered for administrators to use in their role of facilitating the development of this type of classroom practice.

The Introduction, using sample student learning standards from numerous states, looks at the wide-ranging implications of what the standards are demanding of students. I offer processes for analyzing the specific standards that a teacher or system must meet and for communicating to students, parents, and the wider community about the standards and changes that are needed in the classroom for students to meet expectations. This analysis of the standards is necessary because it is the rationale for the ideas put forth in the rest of the text.

The Introduction also gives a picture of the type of classroom that is most likely to help students meet the demands standards make on them. It lists the four components that must be in place in a classroom that is aligned with standards and leads into the detailed discussion of these components in Chapters 1 through 4.

In Chapter 1, I discuss the importance of creating a Community of Learners in the classroom. The chapter explores the many facets of creating this community and discusses existing practices and new strategies for doing so.

Building the habit of reflection, the second component needed in a standards-based classroom, is the subject of Chapter 2. As in Chapter 1, we look at the rationale for including reflection and many ways to involve teachers and students in reflection.

Chapter 3 is about the third practice, the necessity to teach both the content and the processes included in the standards. Since schools should already be teaching the essential content, I focus on how to teach the processes that are now mandated in the standards along with content. I explain a learning cycle that includes all of the processes represented by the verbs imbedded in the standards. This chapter also discusses a lesson analysis/planning method based on the learner action cycle.

The final component of a standards-based classroom is the subject of Chapter 4: creating more authentic students tasks and assessments. This discussion clarifies the meaning of "assessment" and "evaluation" as they relate to classroom practice and offers a method and template for teachers to use to design quality performance tasks.

The Conclusion summarizes the previous four chapters and discusses the connections between the standards, the classroom, and the high-stakes tests being used to assess student learning. The topic of this book is the standards and their implications for classroom practice, not the tests. The tests, however, are a reality that cannot be ignored. Therefore, I illustrate that if a teacher uses the four components discussed in the text, students will learn and retain more content, and perform better on mandated testing.

In addition to a list of Resources, the volume also contains sample forms for teachers and administrators to use in implementing the ideas discussed in the chapters.