

Preface

ON THE RIGHT TRACK ■

Achieving standards should be thought of as the common destination for all students. Aligning standards to classroom practice takes time, practice, and the exercise of professional leadership and judgment. Together with members of the community, educators can construct the track on which students can travel to reach graduation and continue to learn throughout their lifetimes. If teachers are not willing or able to use standards to implement instruction, students run the risk of not meeting benchmarks, putting them behind schedule for achieving the standards or off the track completely.

Much has been written and said about standards, but there are still numerous questions about the implementation and utilization of standards in the classroom. This new edition of this book tries to provide teachers of any subject at any grade level with the tools and background to work with standards as the guiding force in their planning and course design. One of the best tools teachers can use is dialogue. The dialogue in this edition focuses on twenty-first century skills and knowledge. The book offers a structured yet adjustable way to communicate both about standards and about what students should know and be able to do in a global economy. The focus is on what students know and can do as a result of instruction, not on what the teacher will do or “cover.”

Curriculum and instructional processes that educators develop through the use of this book will allow them to become and remain current in their practices. The process strikes a good balance that allows educators to design a curriculum that is unique to their school district yet does not seek to reinvent the wheel. Once educators have used this process, they will not need to start from scratch each time the instructional planning cycle begins. The product that they develop will always remain relevant through constant updating and refining.

As students travel through their school careers, they are supposed to be learning things that will help them become self-sufficient adults. Graduation standards as developed by most states, professional organizations, or local districts are the statements used to define what students should know and be able to do by the time they have completed high school so that they may be prepared for their next steps in life. To achieve conventional standards, milestones—known as *benchmarks*—are established

that students must accomplish in order to demonstrate that they are proceeding along the right track toward the achievement of graduation standards. Smaller or discrete units of accomplishment at levels leading up to the benchmarks are called *criterion standards*. These criterion standards can be used to track student progress toward the ultimate goal of attaining the graduation standard.

Aligning Standards and Curriculum for Classroom Success is presented in six chapters.

Chapter 1: Student Achievement Using a Holistic Approach to Standards defines standards and discusses the strength of the standards concept. It shows how No Child Left Behind is just one factor in setting standards. The other factors—globalization, high-stakes testing, and bipartisan support for high-level skills of the future workforce—have taken standards from an idea to a solid piece of American education.

Chapter 2: The Need for Dialogue explores the necessity for dialogue among all stakeholders in the education process. Mandated state graduation standards and high-stakes testing have provided the impetus for discussion and dialogue between and among educators and noneducators about what students should know and be able to do. This chapter introduces the CAST (Communicating About Students and Teaching) dialogue process, by which individuals can come to a consensus and begin to work together as partners in education.

Chapter 3: The Language of Expectation describes how a common language can be developed so that stakeholders can come to common understandings through the use of a *verb matrix*. This matrix requires the evaluation of student performance based on Bloom's Taxonomy. When schools use the matrix, students are expected to perform beyond the memory and recall levels of learning.

Chapter 4: Designing and Using the Standards-Based Curriculum gives a step-by-step description of how state graduation standards may be translated into distinct elements—criterion standards. The chapter presents permutations of the criterion standard and shows how it can be used as a tool to unlock the power of standards. With the criterion standards, teachers, students, and parents can see the "picture" of the standard.

Chapter 5: Instructional Plans Based on Criterion Standards offers fully conceived instructional plans that begin with standards in mind. These plans are offered as a reminder that student achievement cannot be fully judged by a single event but rather must be measured during a series of opportunities for students to demonstrate what they know and can do. The majority of the plans show how standards can be integrated between subjects.

Chapter 6: Lesson Planning Takes Root offers a number of strategies for using standards to integrate the curriculum. The chapter advocates the use of the planned course document and units of instruction as a means for teachers to make evident their use of standards in their classroom practice. Summing up the sample standards-based instructional plans offered in the preceding

chapters, Chapter 6 gives teachers specific means to develop their own standards-based plans for use in their classrooms.

In addition, *Resource A: Relevant Web Sites* lists sites related to standards and curriculum, and *Resource B: Verb Matrix Survey Material* includes survey materials for creating a verb matrix.

Aligning Standards and Curriculum for Classroom Success recognizes that standards are here to stay and that focusing on standards as the stimulus for and measurement of student achievement is a positive force in educational reform.