

Questions, Answers, and Clarifications About Georgia Performance Standards and The Georgia Department of Education

Will the DOE provide pacing guides? When teaching using standards-based unit plans, teachers must have the ability to pace their classroom instruction according to the needs and abilities of their students. With a DOE prescriptive pacing guide, they lose this ability. Pacing guides, from the state level, are not appropriate. Designed at the local level, a concept map would be useful in identifying the concepts to be learned by content area and grade level. However, our thinking should change in terms of benchmarks. In an objective-based curriculum, benchmark assessments can measure mastery of specific objectives. In our new standards-based curriculum, benchmarks should measure progress toward meeting the yearly goals of the performance standards.

So, will the DOE provide concept maps? The knowledge necessary to design concept maps comes with study of the performance standards. As teachers work together to reach consensus on the “big ideas” of each content area and grade level, concept maps can, and will be, developed to aid in unpacking standards at the local level. Days 4 & 5 of the content-specific workshops will include creating sample concept maps; however, because not all systems teach the same courses in the same years or the same progression, within systems, teachers should work together to create concepts maps for their systems.

We have to have it done by when??? The time line for implementing the performance standards is not negotiable. We are all working within the same time constraints and should work together to make the implementation and training go as smoothly as possible. This does not mean that, for those subjects/courses being implemented, every unit should be ready to go by the first day of school. Teachers should work together to have the first unit ready, but subsequent units may be developed during the year. This allows teachers to build expertise as they implement the GPS.

Is there a specific framework required? Do we have to do Understanding by Design? The DOE is not mandating any one framework of instructional planning. We have *adapted* the Understanding by Design model for our delivery and strongly encourage each system to *adapt*, not *adopt*, what works best for the individual system. Max Thompson's *Learning Focused Schools*, Larry Ainsworth's *Unwrapping the Standards*, or any of many other models, should be examined, evaluated, modified, and adapted to meet the instructional needs of the system. The vocabulary differences in these programs should not be an issue. Please remember that the process of examining the standards, determining acceptable evidence of understanding, designing appropriate assessments for producing that acceptable evidence, and planning the learning activities that are necessary to provide the opportunity to understand, is the goal of unpacking. Called by any other name, the process should be the same.

Will rubrics be provided by the DOE? Rubrics are designed to help assess student understanding of a specific task or project. Guidelines for using rubrics and good examples will be shared during the third day of Content-Specific training. It is important to remember that rubrics should be customized to assignments and not used to measure mastery of an individual standard.

Is there a correlation document linking the QCC and the GPS? Had we simply revised the QCC to create a new objective-based curriculum, a correlation document might have been useful. Making the change to the GPS, a conceptual curriculum, required that some content be moved, some content be changed, and some content be deleted. The cross-walk between the two documents is not an effective instructional tool.

Can we still use benchmark assessments? In an objective-based curriculum, benchmark assessments can measure mastery of specific objectives. In our new standards-based curriculum, benchmarks should measure progress toward meeting the yearly goals of the performance standards. Benchmark assessments can still be used, but not as definitive measures of completion or mastery of specific concepts.

Will we be given exemplars to use as guides for teaching units? Each content area specialist has designed sample teaching units. The participants in the Content-Specific Training will also be creating sample teaching units by the end of the fourth and fifth days of training. These will be shared through the participant networks created by the content trainers. We will also have them on-line after the training days are completed. While we do want these units to be made available, we believe the process of writing the units makes teachers more familiar with the standards and therefore, serves to make teachers more prepared to teach the content. Being familiar with the standards will also allow teachers to design and modify teaching units to meet the needs of particular groups of students.

We will also be posting tasks for the standards. These will be posted on the website and made available at the Content-Specific Training. Please keep in mind that some tasks are just that, daily classroom tasks to be used for instruction. Some tasks will actually be performance tasks that could be used as assessments. Tasks have been written – at least one for each standard – for the content areas that are being implemented for the 2005-06 school year. More tasks are being written by teacher focus groups around the state. We are also in the process of working with RESA groups, GYSTC groups, and others to gather and share sample tasks that are being written by other groups.

What about student work? Will we have examples? The process for submitting student work examples is being fine-tuned and will be shared with the Content-Specific Training participants and posted on the website. Procedures, process, and forms will be posted so that all submitted samples can be shared across the state. Keep in mind that all student work samples will not be exemplary work but will demonstrate various stages of progress toward meeting the standards. Administrators can help in collecting student work by encouraging teachers to submit the work to the content specialists for inclusion in the project.

Is the content training the same for all content areas? The Content-Specific Training has been designed using the same basic framework for all the modules. Each content area specialist then works within the content area to design snap-on pieces that are specific to the content area and grade levels that are being implemented.

There are some differences in the training sessions due to the format differences in the curriculum. For example, English/Language Arts is the only place you will find the label *critical components*. These additional descriptors in the ELA curriculum allow for specific elements for different genres of literature and of written expression.

Personality and teaching styles account for some minor differences between the content areas. Just as two classroom teachers could teach the same information in different ways, our trainers use their individual styles to deliver the modules. The scripts, however, are provided for use in redelivery.

The leadership development training and the content-specific training are designed to complement each other. The needs of the attendance groups are very different. While principals certainly need to know what teachers are being taught, there are specific components of curriculum implementation that will be the responsibility of school administrators. The leadership development training is addressing these components while giving an overview of the teacher training. We suggest that principals attend the content-specific redelivery sessions in their systems. Teachers will reap the benefits of the leadership development training as their principals design and implement professional learning communities and work to support the work of the classroom teachers.

There seems to be some confusion about the Reading Across the Curriculum Standard. Some sources say that the twenty-five books have to be outside reading. Others say that the twenty-five books may include textbooks. Who is correct?

The twenty-five book requirement is inclusive of all text. That means all textbooks (including art, music, etc.) are included. It also includes personal reading as well as assigned reading. It includes text from the Internet and other electronic sources. It includes all text.

Who do I contact with questions?

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