Module 1

Setting the Context for Standards-based Instruction

Module Outcome

Participants will develop an understanding of the critical components and capacities of a standards-based accountability system focused on assuring the achievement of high standards for all students.

This module contains a variety of tools and processes presented in a sequence to teach the critical components and capacities of a standards-based system.

In this module, each tool is presented and discussed briefly. A much fuller and deeper discussion could certainly have value in another setting and may meet the needs of your audience and support your workshop outcomes.

On the other hand, if time does not permit using the tools and processes as presented here, select and use those that most support your audience and outcomes.

Content Overview

A. WAC’s Working Definition of a Standards-Based Accountability System.

B. A Coherent Accountability System

C. A District System of Standards-Based Accountability

D. Three Questions Driving Standards-Based School Practice

E. Inquiry that Drives Standards-Based Practice

F. Systems to Support High Standards

G. Making Good on The Promise: High Standards for All

Materials

- Overhead: WAC's Working Definition of a Standards-Based Accountability System
- Overhead: A Coherent Accountability System/S-Based Management Systems
- Overhead: A Coherent Accountability System/Data Availability
• Overhead: A Coherent Accountability System/Standards and Consequences
• Overhead: A District System of Standards-Based Accountability
• Overhead: Three Questions Driving Standards-Based School Practice
• Overhead: Inquiry that Drives Standards-Based Practice
• Overhead: Systems to Support High Standards
• Video: "Making Good on the Promise: High Standards for All"

"Making Good on the Promise: High Standards for All" is published by Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform. The video can be purchased online at www.crosscity.org, or by calling 312.322.4880
I.A WAC’s Working Definition of a Standards-based Accountability System

1) Present WAC’s Working Definition

Educators at all levels of the system struggle to understand what it means to design and lead standards-based instruction.

This definition is in process of continual revision. It is still evolving as we continue to further our learning and understanding of standards-based instruction and what it means for an entire system. Read the definition to the participants and explain it making the following points:

Key Points:

“high expectations for every student”
- The core idea is to change educational practice so that not only does the traditionally predictable top 20 percent of students achieve to high standards but everyone does well. That is a major change for school systems and the people in the system. This requires changing our assumptions about what success looks like in our classrooms as well as our practices.

“resources will be made available to each student”
- Maximizing student achievement for all students will involve some students receiving additional opportunities to learn, a better opportunity with more support. This may require the reallocation of resources.

“agreed-upon standards for what students should know, be able and be disposed, to do”
- Outside of a standards-based system, teachers often operate in a “closed door” environment, and do not share his or her techniques, challenges, and student outcomes with each other. Developing and applying common standards for both the content taught and the performance expected of students requires teachers to work together in an “open door” context, giving feedback to one another to raise outcomes for all students.
- Where and how do we decide what is "good enough" in our student’s work? To develop clear, agreed-upon, and universally implemented criteria for successful performance, the school community must work together to decide. It takes all of us. To make sound decisions, we have to know how much progress students have made. We need credible assessments.
2) Individual Activity: Reflect on WAC Definition
Make a copy of Overhead #1 and hand out to participants. Have participants read WAC’S definition of a standards-based accountability system silently. Tell them to use a highlighter to highlight any key words or phrases that they react to or that strikes them in any way.

3) Pairs or Small Group/Team Activity: Share Key Words and Phrases and Why
Have participants discuss the highlighted words or phrases providing explanations about why he or she made those selections.

4) Whole Group Discussion
Possible Prompts for Discussion:
   o What are your key words and phrases? Why did you select them?
   o What comments or questions does your group have?
   o What questions did this activity raise for you?
     • What does "good enough" mean?.
WAC’s Working Definition of a Standards-Based Accountability System

Standards-based accountability institutionalizes a system of high expectations for every student. It is grounded in a commitment that school-community resources will be allocated to assure that every student achieves (or goes beyond) agreed-upon standards for what students should know, be able and be disposed to do.

A standards-based accountability system is guided by clear, agreed-upon and universally implemented criteria for what is “good enough” in the performance of all students and all adults in the system. Decisions about the nature, quality and direction of the work that students and educators are expected to do are driven by credible (valid, fair, reliable and useful) assessments of progress toward and achievement of those criteria. Incentives and consequences for individuals and groups within the system are designed to maximize student achievement.

An essential characteristic of standards-based accountability is a pervasive sense of both personal and shared responsibility. The system functions as the result of individuals (students, parents, teachers, administrators, policymakers etc.) who accept responsibility for their role in the system and who understand the interdependent nature of their work and the work of others.
I.B   A Coherent Accountability System: Data Availability

1) Present the Graphic
Walk through the graphic emphasizing utility, accessibility and capacity.

2) Group Discussion
Possible Prompts for Discussion:
   - How are we using data to make decisions at our school sites? In our district?
   - Are there ways to improve the collection, access, and timely delivery of data?
A Coherent Accountability System

Data Availability

Considerations:
- Utility
- Accessibility
- Capacity
I.B  A Coherent Accountability System: Standards and Consequences

1) Present the Graphic

Walk through the graphic commenting on the considerations of credibility, fairness and appropriateness. Note that it will take all people in the system to assure that all students will achieve to high standards.

Systems must define both the role of each group and how it will hold them accountable.

2) Group Discussion

Possible Prompts for Discussion:

- What is “accountability”?
- What might it look like for each of these groups?
A Coherent Accountability System

Standards and Consequences

Considerations:
- Credibility
- Fairness
- Appropriateness
I.B A Coherent Accountability System: Standards-based Management Systems

1) Present the Graphic
Walk participants through each of the elements in the management systems emphasizing coherence and credibility as key considerations. Note that most districts do not have all of these fully aligned and in place, but most districts are working on certain parts of the system. Working on one part of the system typically leads to the need to align another part.

2) Group Discussion
Possible Prompts for Discussion:
- Which of these elements are in place in our system?
- What will be our next steps towards alignment?
- Is there coherence in our system? Is our system credible?
- What does it take to establish credibility? To build coherence?
A Coherent Accountability System

Standards-Based Management Systems

Considerations:
- Alignment
- Credibility
I.C. What Would This District System Look Like?

1) Present the Graphic

This graphic depicts a kaleidoscope, showing the many facets of the system that interact with one another.

Use the question, “What would good performance look like in a district system?” as a frame for commenting on key aspects of the kaleidoscope.

- Instruction is the core. Characterized by high levels of teacher expertise and high expectations for all students in every classroom. The system focuses on supporting this.
- Content standards and performance standards developed through public and professional dialogue. Promotion criteria in place, aligned to assessments and curriculum and instruction.
- Aligned resource allocation systems, student information systems, human resources systems and reporting systems are in place and focus on the support of teaching and learning.
A District System of Standards-based Accountability

- Content Standards
- Performance Standards
- Teacher Expertise and Expectations

Student Information Systems

Resource Allocation Systems

Curriculum & Instruction

Public & Professional Dialogue

Human Resource Systems

Assessment

PROMOTION CRITERIA

Reporting Systems
I.D. Three Deceptively Simple Questions

Standards-based practice is driven by three, deceptively simple questions.

Comment on “deceptively simple”

Points to make:

1. What do we want students to know and be able to do... and how well?
   - Agreed upon content standards
   - Performance standards that define “good enough”

2. How will we know that they know it?
   - An assessment system aligned to standards.
   - A comprehensive system of assessment. More than large scale or high stakes assessments.

3. What will we do about it if they don’t?
   - Structures in place to support collective action, reteaching, giving all students adequate opportunities to learn, and providing a variety of intervention strategies.
Standards-Based School Practice is Driven by Three (Deceptively Simple) Questions:

1. What do we want students to know and be able to do... and how well?

2. How will we know that they know it?

3. What will we do about it if they don’t?
I. E  Inquiry that Drives Standards-based Practice

1) Present “Inquiry that Drives Standards-based Practice” chart

The chart describes the inquiry that is critical to standards-based practice. It poses the questions that students, teachers and the school community would ask themselves in a standards-based system.

2) Group Discussion:

Possible Prompts for Discussion

- In what ways are these three columns aligned? What are the common themes?
- What structures might support the development of this inquiry?

Additional questions that may come up during a discussion of this overhead and some suggested paths for discussion:

What do we do when students make a decision not to learn? At the high school level, this is a huge issue. This work may take a few generations of students to have widespread impact. That means that teachers will be working with students, teachers and even colleagues who may not have the same expectations. Schools have tended to respond to low performing students by moving them on to the next grade, in part due to the expectations of parents and others. But once students attend kindergarten classes where standards are in place and move on to standards-based practice in all subsequent grades, then there is a good chance that high school can be a dynamic place where students will be engaged with their learning. The key is that students have the experience in each classroom throughout their years in the system.

It sounds as if it will take the next 15 years to bring the educational system up to the level of these standards. Working in a standards-based system means that many pieces of the system must work together, including pieces that tend to change slowly. There are some hopeful signs. For example, in some places teachers’ unions are taking the position that teachers need to increase their skill level and learn new skills to assure that all students meet standards. The unions are providing professional development and support for their own teachers. This is an important shift in professionalism and responsibility.
# Inquiry that Drives Standards-based Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>The School-Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do I need to know and do; and how well do I need to do it?</td>
<td>What do my students need to know and do?</td>
<td>What data will convince us that students are performing “to standard” or better?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>↓</td>
<td>How will I know that they have achieved to an acceptable level?</td>
<td>↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What have I achieved so far?</td>
<td>What curriculum and instructional opportunities will they need to be sufficiently prepared to perform to an acceptable level?</td>
<td>Which students are achieving which standards? Which are not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>↓</td>
<td>Did all students achieve to expected levels or better?</td>
<td>↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do I need to do to improve my work?</td>
<td>What do I need to do differently to assure that they do?</td>
<td>What is true about the experience or characteristics of students who are and who are not achieving?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>↓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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I.F. Systems to Support High Standards

1) Present the Chart

The chart describes a system in which “quality” is known and understood by all.

It details what students would be able to do; the capacities teachers would need if students were to do those things; and the school practices that would need to be in place if teachers and students were to do those things; and the leadership and support systems that are critical to ensure that students, teachers, and school communities can incorporate these practices.

2) Group Discussion

Possible Prompts for Discussion

- Select a column for your role (i.e., teacher, site administrator, district office administrator) and assess which of the practices you are currently doing and which practices you personally would like to work on next?
- Select a column, carefully read it, and examine the connections between it and other columns.
- What does this chart add to the discussion of issues raised around “Inquiry That Drives Standards-based Practice”?
## Systems to Support High Standards

### When "Quality" is Known, Students Would...
- Be actively engaged in producing high quality work
- Be able to describe what is expected of them and why they are doing it
- Demonstrate habits of rehearsal and revision
- Discuss work-in-progress in terms of its quality
- Be better able to describe what assistance they need
- See their teachers as advocates and coaches

### Requisite Teacher Capacities
- Understands the expectations for student performance
- Designs and conducts effective instruction aligned to standards
- Designs or selects assessments that provide credible evidence in relation to standards
- Has content knowledge and pedagogical expertise
- Makes fair and credible judgements of student work
- Analyzes student work and uses regularly to plan and adjust instruction
- Communicates expectations and gives clear and specific feedback

### Requisite School Practices
- Invests in assessments that provide credible and useful data to those at all levels of the system
- Constructs shared understanding of performance standards
- Validates performance standards in the larger community
- Builds collective instructional capacity through collaborative analysis of student work, goal setting and action
- Maintains the expectation of collaboration and collective action
- Is responsive and flexible in allocating resources to identified needs

### Requisite Leadership and System Support
- Facilitates input into and communication of standards
- Assures every student access to a high level curriculum aligned to standards
- Articulates standards for instructional quality
- Creates a culture of expectations around standards of instructional quality
- Uses multiple measures and data sources to understand the conditions that inhibit or promote student achievement
- Focuses system resources (energy, expertise, materials, time, money) on identified needs
- Holds all leaders accountable for enhancing the knowledge and skills of others

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I.G. Video: Making Good on the Promise: High Standards for All (Produced by the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform)

1) Before showing the video
   - Divide participants into three groups.
   - Assign each group one of the sections on the handout, Video-Making Good on the Promise
   - Ask participants to watch for and record evidence for their section as they watch the video.
   - Make sure participants understand the meaning of their sections. Although there is overlap, each section is asking for something different

2) Play Video (28 minutes)

3) Process Video (Small Group Process)
   - Have each group discuss and record on a chart the evidence they found for their section
   - Have each group share their evidence with whole group
   - In whole group, discuss the connections among the evidence the groups found.

Examples of evidence from the video:
- Expectations and standards were posted, along with rubrics and scoring guides;
- Assessments were shared by teachers, along with student work;
- Assessment was both formal and informal. Ongoing.
- Expectations were high. Everyone was expected to do “A” work. It was clear what “A” work looked like.
- Clear task definition: teachers made it clear to students what was expected and made every step clear;
- Belief that effort outweighs ability;
- Detailed scoring guides that make success clear. Students knew why they got the score they did.
o Cultural norms included sharing responsibility for student learning

o School and organizational structure allowed time for dialogue and professional development. Vertical articulation between grade levels.

o High expectation for communication with students. They didn't dumb down the vocabulary they used with students.
Video – Making Good on the Promise: High Standards for All
Produced by the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform

Record specific evidence of:

1. Standards-based instructional practices

2. Cultural norms that support standards-based accountability

3. School/Faculty practices that support standards-based accountability
Video – Making Good on the Promise: High Standards for All
Produced by the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform

Small Group Process

- Discuss Evidence
- Organize and Chart Evidence
- Present Evidence to Whole Group