

# Making the Most of INTASC Standards

Ken Henson: The Citadel

The Interstate New Teachers Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) was created to provide instructional support to new teachers and raise the level of learning in U. S. classrooms. To reach this goal, INTASC created 10 standards. This article reviews each INTASC standard and aligns each with a classroom activity that can be used to help meet the standard. The contributors of these activities are professors who have used these activities in their classrooms and found them to be successful and enjoyable. These contributors are identified throughout the article. Appreciation is expressed for their contributions.

The Interstate New Teachers Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) was established to provide support to new teachers and raise the levels of learning in U. S. classrooms. To reach these goals, ten standards were created. Each standard requires teachers to possess and use essential knowledge required to meet these goals. The following is a statement of each standard and an activity that is currently being used to meet that standard. The activities are taken from *Supervision: A Collaborative Approach to Instructional Improvement* (Author, 2010) and are used with permission from their contributors.

**Standard 1: Subject Matter - The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and can create learning experiences that make these aspects of subject matter meaningful for students.**

The first INTASC standard requires teachers to focus on major concepts in each lesson. The power of formative assessment to clarify concepts and increase learning has been recognized in recent years (Armstrong, Henson, & Savage, 2009). By definition, formative evaluation is never used to determine grades but is used to improve instruction and learning (Author, at press). Christopher (2007/2008) described formative assessment as “the arrows students

shoot along the way in the learning process” (p. 75). Research shows that when correctly used (i.e. when both cognitive and motivational factors are addressed), formative assessment can be a key factor in raising student achievement (Brookhart, 2007/2008). Formative assessment has been found to have the power to raise student performance by almost a grade level (Wenglinsky & Silverstein, 2006/2007) and the power to double the rate of student learning (Clymer & William, 2006/2007). Reeves (2008, p. 85) says that “The best grading practices provide accurate feedback designed to improve student performance. The teacher should always cite student strengths and errors (Brookhart 2007/2008).”

Lynn Varner shares an activity for using formative assessment to increase student performance.

## Correcting Tests

*For short answer tests like multiple-choice, after the tests have been graded and returned, I often have students find the correct answer in the text. They submit the correct answer, the page number where they found it, and an explanation of why that is the correct answer. I then give them ½ a point, or some small amount of credit, for each question toward their grade. This moves*

*me closer to my goal of everyone knowing and understanding the material. Those who missed more items have more to correct, but also get more credit. I have found that this helps to increase performance on cumulative examinations even though the questions are not the same as they were on the previous tests.*

**Standard 2: Student Learning - The teacher understands how children and youth learn and develop, and can provide learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social and personal development.**

INTASC's second standard requires teachers to understand how students learn and develop and to use this knowledge to promote learning. To help herself and her students understand how the students in her classes learn, Ellen Reames requires each student to create a personal learning web. See Figure 1, Creating Personal Learning Webs.

*When mentoring new faculty members, a useful strategy is to have the mentee and mentor each create a "personal learning web," which is a pictorial representation of how past experiences have influenced one's present knowledge and place. Mentors and mentees who are able to clearly reflect on past experiences are more likely to learn, improve their practice, and become productive members of their learning communities. The only rule for this activity is that the drawing must focus on how the individuals see the development of their personal and professional learning experiences and how these developments have influenced where they are presently. To create the learning web, participants can use any shapes they wish (i.e. circles, ovals, squares, triangles, stars) and any types of lines (i.e. dotted, solid and arrow lines) to show how these experiences have influenced and impacted their present knowledge. A simple example is shown in Figure 1.*

**Standard 3: Diverse Learners - The teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to learners from diverse cultural backgrounds and learners with exceptionalities.**

This third INTASC standard requires teachers to address all types of diversity found in U. S. classrooms and adapt instruction to meet all students' learning needs, including students with exceptionalities. The first step in addressing special students' needs is recognizing that the particular needs exist. Jacques Singleton and Gwendolyn Neal offer an activity that makes teachers sensitive to the needs of special students.

**Build a Tower**

*Inclusion can be frustrating for both the student and teacher. To help teachers gain a better understanding of the frustration we often employ an activity that is fun and interactive. We have used the following activity as a part of our introduction to special education courses as a way of detailing some of the possible mistakes teachers make when including all students in the regular education classroom. The activity is called the Build a Tower Game. The class is divided into groups of four. The task is to build a tower on a table as high as possible, using straws and tape. The group has each individual playing the following roles: "normal" functioning person, person who cannot use the dominate hand, blindfolded person, and a person not able to speak. Once the activity is complete, members of each small group discuss, first, among themselves, and then with the whole group: how they felt, did they participant in the group, were they treated differently and what did they learn. Through this discussion, teachers experience some of the frustration that students with disabilities feel when trying to work with their non-disabled peers in the regular education classroom. The major objective is for teachers to take these experiences*

*back to their classrooms and consider them when planning activities for the entire classroom.*

This third standard holds teachers responsible for meeting unique gender needs. Meeting the needs of both genders requires understanding the differences in how males and females learn. Vickie Robinson uses the following exercise to make teachers sensitive to the learning style differences between the sexes.

### **Using Diaries**

*In order to correct gender-biased classroom behavior, teachers need to be exposed to gender equity issues. This activity starts them on their journey. I ask my students to close their eyes and imagine that they are sitting next to a bubbling brook with the sun casting shadows through the trees. As the birds chirp and the wind rustles the tall grass, they pick up a diary and begin to read it. It is the story of their life with rich description of daily routines, parental guidance, academic and extra-curricular school experiences, fears, joys, and plans for the future. Everything in this diary reflects each student's life (same family, school, neighborhood etc) except for one detail: it is a story of their life having been born the opposite gender. Asking them to keep their eyes closed, they are asked to think how this diary might read differently than what they actually experienced. After three minutes of thinking time, students conduct a ten minute walk and talk with a classmate describing what they thought and felt as they considered how their life story might be different if born the opposite gender. Students reconvene and report their conversation to the large group. Issues of stereotyping, bias and advantages and disadvantages of being either male or female come to light during this discussion.*

**Standard 4: Instructional Strategies - The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students'**

**development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.**

Today, much discussion in the professional literature focuses on critical thinking. Most everyone agrees that critical thinking should be a goal of all teachers, but in their methods classes, teachers are seldom or never taught how to foster critical thinking. This fourth standard requires teachers to help students develop their critical thinking skills. Marjorie Ringler uses technology to engage teachers in critical thinking.

### **Using Blackboard to Discuss Current Curriculum Topics**

*Students work in groups on a current curriculum topic and develop a brochure or informational flyer to summarize the topic and share helpful resources for instructional leaders. The document is typically developed with the help of a publishing software (i.e. Microsoft Publisher) and then saved as a PDF file (free download cutepdf.com). The brochure or flyers are posted as separate forums for discussion on Blackboard discussion board. Students access the site via the Internet and provide comments via online discussions on the topic of the forum. The use of technology allows for the extensive curriculum content to be presented in condensed sections or forums. In addition, because students have time to read and think through their responses before typing them onto the discussion board, the quality of feedback is typically more in depth and thoughtful. Students typically appreciate the fact that the asynchronous method of learning provides meaningful learning to them. Many share that they print the informational flyers and brochures and share them with their instructional leaders at their current jobs.*

**Standard 5: The teacher uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.**

INTASC's fifth standard requires teachers to motivate students through social interaction. Barbara Morgan-Fleming has a unique way of socially engaging her students:

### Using Old Books

*When teaching curriculum history, I start by bringing in old/antique textbooks. (I generally find them at garage sales and thrift stores, rarely spending over \$1.00). I have each student select a book, browse through it and report on the underlying premises of the book (e.g. What is knowledge? What is the purpose of learning in the subject presented? Who is the audience for the book?) After each student reports, I have them select a current textbook and go through the same process – asking how someone from the future would complete the above exercise on this book, and what their answers to the questions would be.*

*Finally, I have the students form curriculum committees (by curriculum subject) looking at both sets of books. They decide the strengths and weaknesses of each book, and whether they would adopt any of the textbooks. The committees then put together their own textbook, choosing sections/topics from all the books, and adding sections that will be needed for present and future students.*

**Standard 6: Communication - The teacher uses knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.**

Standard 6 emphasizes collaboration and requires teachers to be supportive of interaction in the classroom. But every time a teacher uses groups, there seems to be a few introverted class members who tend to “sand bag” and let their classmates do all the work. Lynn Varner has an excellent activity for ensuring that all students participate in, and contribute to, group work. Notice that this activity also enables students

to see how their classmates interpret verbal and nonverbal communications, which is also emphasized in this standard.

### Group Moves

*Often when students are working in small groups of four or five, I will use this system to move the groups around and get them to share their ideas. To form the original groups, I number around the room from one to five (this keeps those sitting together who are usually already friends from being in the same group): it is important that they remember their number. After a portion of the time (e.g. they may have a case study with five questions to which they must respond, I'd do this after the first or second question), I ask all the threes to move one group to the right. The persons who moved are responsible for explaining what their last group thought about the question. Then they go on to the next question; this time I'll ask all the twos to move one group to the left and explain their last group's answer to the second question. There are several benefits to this approach. The groups change so they don't get stagnant; if there is one student in a group who is difficult (too talkative, way off track, etc.) no one has to be with that person for too long; it saves time when the class is large and students are sharing their thoughts with the entire class would take too much time.*

**Standard 7: Planning Instruction - The teacher plans and manages instruction based upon knowledge of subject matter, students, the community, and curriculum goals.**

Like the No Child Left Behind Act, Standard 7 holds teachers accountable for their choice of teaching methods. This seventh standard also requires teachers to base their lesson plans on their knowledge of the subjects, students, and the community. Co-teachers are perhaps the most important members of a school's community. Holly Kunert uses the following activity to facilitate teachers' sharing in lesson planning.

## Shared Planning Period

*One of the most important pieces that every campus seems to really benefit from is shared planning periods. While research indicates that having a shared planning period is helpful for aligning curriculum, I have found it to be very helpful for several reasons. To begin, it seems to help faculty to develop shared interests and congeniality with each other within their departments, especially in a larger school. It also is extremely beneficial to have a common area to go each day or week to allow curriculum and instruction to be better aligned, as there is not need to “make time” to facilitate that task. Finally, as an administrator, it is a wonderful opportunity to stay abreast of the curriculum that is being used with students, and allows faculty to see a friendly, administrative presence that is non-threatening, communicative, and helpful. It has been my experience that a daily (or even weekly) meeting of faculty within a department for a shared planning period helps morale, perceptions of administrative support, and organization of lesson planning.*

**Standard 8: Assessment - The teacher understands and uses formal and informal assessment strategies to evaluate and ensure the continuous intellectual, social and physical development of the learner.**

INTASC Standard 8 requires teachers to use assessment to ensure continuous student learning. Tom Oldinski uses the following activity to help teachers improve their tests so that they align with the expectations they hold for students.

### Assessing Assessment

*Most teachers have never been taught how to make a good test. For the most part, they rely on their own experiences of being tested and giving tests, or simply depend upon a published test bank or use their own former tests in the same fashion. To improve the quality of classroom assessments,*

*the supervisor can expose teachers to principles of good test making, for example, by reading *Test Better, Teach Better, The Instructional Role of Assessment* by W. James Popham, (2003, ASCD), or having a professional development program on constructing good tests.*

*Teachers then are asked to evaluate three to four of their own classroom tests from the perspective of these guidelines and to share these evaluations with the supervisor or within a group of teachers. Teachers are usually amazed to find out how poorly their tests are and unsuitable for assessing what actually was taught and learned. Teachers identify ways they can improve their self-constructed tests.*

**Standard 9: Reflection and Professional Development - The teacher is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effects of her/his choices and actions on others (students, parents, and other professionals in the learning community) and who actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally**

Standard 9 says that teachers are reflective practitioners who evaluate themselves and continue to grow professionally. Patricia Hoehner uses the following activity to help teachers use data as reflective tools to enhance student learning.

### Replicating Research

*The value of our leadership as educators is based on the value of our thinking. And, to be skilled in thinking we need to be skilled in asking the difficult questions. Coupled with the importance of implementing research into the classroom, I challenge my students to replicate the research on an article entitled, *Research: Self-discipline may trump IQ when it comes to school success and ask the question, why?* The students are to address the following in their schools which ranged from urban to rural.*

- *Demographics: Size of school, poverty, ELL and number of 8<sup>th</sup> graders in the school*
- *Merit Roll: Define your highest honor roll only (grade range) and number of 8<sup>th</sup> graders on honor/merit roll*
- *Standardized Test/IQ Test: Identify your standardized test (Number of 8<sup>th</sup> graders who had a total score of 95 or higher) and identify your IQ test (Number of 8<sup>th</sup> graders who scored at 120 or above)*
- *High Ability Learners Program: Identifications Procedures and Program Offerings*

*The students learn the importance of keeping abreast of current publications and the analysis of data. This miniature study addresses research skills, current trends in curriculum, collaboration, and most importantly, reflection.*

**Standard 10: Collaboration, Ethics, and Relationships - The teacher communicates and interacts with parents/guardians, families, school colleagues, and the community to support students' learning and well-being**

This last standard requires teachers to build relationships with colleagues, parents, and other community members and use these relationships to foster students' learning and well-being. Thelma Roberson takes advantage of technology to enrich communications among her teachers.

**Start a Wiki**

*A wiki is a web-based collection of ideas and opinions created, edited and added to by its members. Wikis are great tools for engaging teachers in ongoing professional learning. They invite differences of views and opinions and collaboration. School leaders can create and post induction and professional development materials including PowerPoints, videos, handouts, handbooks, and blogs. Teachers can engage in professional conversations about teaching and learning and can share resources*

*while creating their own lesson plans and educational materials. Efforts to provide face-to-face opportunities for professional development and collaboration are often limited by time constraints, scheduling conflicts, and budgets. The asynchronous nature and low cost of wikis make them viable solutions to these problems. To learn more about wikis read, "Wiki Wisdom: Lessons for Educators" at <http://www.edweek.org/dd/articles/2007/09/12/02wiki.h01.html>*

**Summary**

The Interstate New Teachers Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) was created to give support to new teachers, helping them improve learning in our schools. Without knowing how to engage students with each standard, meeting the standards can be challenge; however, with a repertoire of activities to use to meet the standards, the requirement is no longer a threat. Each of the activities found in this article has proven enjoyable, and each is being used to meet one or more INTASC standards.

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#### Author's Note

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### Appendix

Figure 1: Ellen Reames' Sample Learning Web

