

INTRODUCTION

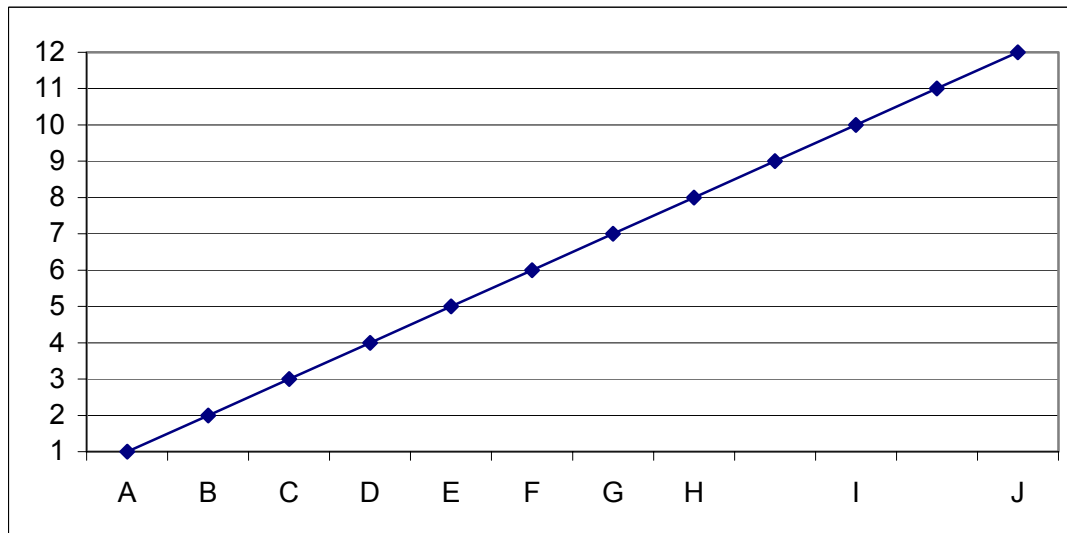
Design for Performance Standards

The Illinois Learning Standards are content standards that describe “*what*” students should know and be able to do in grades K – 12. Each content standard includes five benchmarks that describe what students should know and be able to do at early elementary, late elementary, middle/junior high, early high school, and late high school.

The challenge for the 2000-2001 school year was to produce performance standards that would indicate “*how well*” students should perform to meet the standards. To address this challenge, a number of perspectives needed to be considered. For example, the National Governors Association¹ raised two pertinent questions policymakers should consider for the design of performance standards:

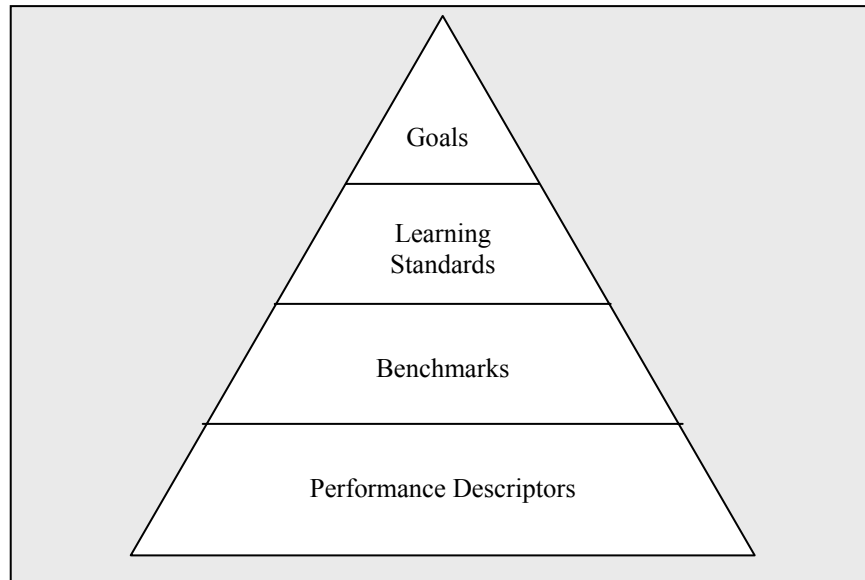
- Do the performance standards indicate the levels of performance students should attain, descriptions of performance at each level, and rules that enable educators to determine whether students have reached a given level?
- Do the performance standards include a range of work . . . to show that students can meet the standards in a variety of ways?

The performance standards describe how well students perform at various points on an educational development continuum. This continuum shows how students can demonstrate mastery of progressively more difficult content and cognitive skills over ten incremental stages of development. Performance within each stage can be assessed by the extent to which students are meeting the standards (i.e., starting, approaching, meeting, exceeding). Performance standards include four essential elements: performance descriptors, performance levels, assessment tasks, and performance examples.



¹ Ouellette, M. (2000). “Maintaining progress through systemic education reform: Performance standards,” Washington, DC: National Governors Association.

The performance standards are classroom resources for voluntary use at the local level. They are not intended to replace the Illinois Learning Standards. Instead, they supplement them by providing sufficient detail and examples to enable teachers to establish appropriate grade-level performance expectations for students. The performance descriptors are a direct outgrowth of the state goals for learning. Whereas the benchmarks filled in detail on each of the standards at five grade-level clusters, the performance descriptors provide additional detail at each grade level.



Definitions

performance standards: the knowledge and skills that students are to perform at various stages of educational development (*performance descriptors*) and the performance expectations (*performance levels and assessment tasks*) for student work (*performance examples*) at each of the stages.

performance descriptors: statements of how students can demonstrate the knowledge and skills they acquired.²

performance levels: descriptions of how well students have achieved the standards, that is, the range, frequency, facility, depth, creativity, and/or quality of the knowledge and skills they acquired. Students can demonstrate levels of achieving performance standards along six dimensions:

PERFORMANCE LEVEL =	RANGE +	FREQUENCY +	FACILITY +	DEPTH +	CREATIVITY +	QUALITY
Exceeding	extensively	consistently	automatically	profoundly	inventively	excellently
Meeting	fully	usually	quickly	deeply	imaginatively	well
Approaching	partially	occasionally	haltingly	cursorily	commonly	marginally
Starting	narrowly	rarely	slowly	superficially	imitatively	poorly

² New Standards. Performance Standards. (1997) Washington, DC: The National Center on Education and the Economy.

assessment tasks: descriptions of what students can do to demonstrate they have met the standards and a means for evaluating the levels of their performance.

performance examples: student work samples resulting from the classroom-based assessment tasks that illustrate performance levels.

Template For Expanded Performance Descriptors

BENCHMARKS ⇒	early elementary			late elementary		middle/ junior high			early high	late high
STAGES ⇒ PERFORMANCE LEVELS ↓	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
Exceeding										
Meeting										
Approaching										
Starting										

Vision for Social Science Performance

Knowledge and understanding of the social sciences place students in position to understand themselves as citizens within a global society. Each of the social sciences provides information about and gives special insight into the human condition. Social science students demonstrate knowledge and understanding of each of the principal social science disciplines, and give evidence that they understand the relationships among them. Among the integrated social science disciplines are political science, economics, history, geography, sociology, anthropology, and psychology.

In seeking an answer to a question about either the past or present, a student first draws upon the knowledge and understanding provided by each of these social sciences, and then synthesizes the appropriate information to reach an informed and reasonable conclusion. Students of the social sciences employ a methodology that requires them to ask questions, form a hypothesis, collect and analyze a variety of data before drawing a reasonable conclusion that is communicated to other people. When students present their findings, they demonstrate that they have searched carefully and thought critically about the sources of information and the evidence. The knowledge and understanding gained from the study of the social sciences is applied to evaluate differing perspectives on historical, political, economic, geographic, or social issues.

Preparation in the skills of social science inquiry prepares the student to engage in rational decision-making as both an individual and as a citizen.

Goal 14 - Understand political systems, with an emphasis on the United States.

The preservation and advancement of a free society within a constitutional democracy demands an informed, competent, and humane citizenry. Toward this end, civic education must be provided to students to help them learn, practice, and demonstrate the traits of a responsible citizen. This goal can be accomplished through developmental steps by giving students the knowledge, skills, and opportunities to illustrate their understanding of the following:

- the fundamental concepts, principles, and traditions underlying our political system
- the significance and meaning underlying constitutional documents and court

decisions which have established and continue to shape our political and legal systems;

- the need to respect the civil rights and viewpoints of other individuals and groups;
- the skills needed for participation in political and civic activities
- the relationship the United States shares as part of an international community of nations and regions.

In order to live in a more productive, cooperative, and safe nation and world, we must prepare citizens who can identify, understand, and solve problems affecting an increasingly diverse nation and interdependent world

Goal 15: Understand economic systems, with an emphasis on the United States.

People's lives are directly affected by the economies around them. All people engage in economic activity: saving, investing, trading, producing and consuming. By understanding economic systems and learning the economic way of thinking, students will be able to make informed choices and more effectively use resources. Such understanding benefits both individuals and society as a whole.

Initially, young students should gain knowledge of basic economic concepts and develop the basic skills of economic decision-making that will enable them to:

- make good consumer choices;
- develop the habits of saving and investing;
- recognize the connection of what they learn in school to their future work opportunities;
- and recognize the contribution of governments to their economic world.

As students progress through the stages, additional economic skills will enable them to:

- identify economic problems, alternatives, benefits and costs;
- analyze the incentives at work in an economic situation;
- compare benefits with costs;
- examine the consequences of changes in economic conditions and public policies; and
- collect and organize economic evidence.*

And student knowledge will expand to include:

- an understanding of basic economic concepts that form the basis for logical reasoning about economic issues that affect their lives;
- an understanding of how these basic concepts apply to them as consumers, producers, and voting citizens (personal finance/applied economics);
- comprehension of pertinent facts about the American economy, past and present;
- an understanding that economics provides tools for analysis of economic issues;
- recognition that differing viewpoints on economic issues exist because individuals and groups, even when using the same economic reasoning tools, bring differing criteria (based on values and experience) to the analysis of those issues.*

Gaining economic knowledge and skills will enable students to function more effectively in the economy, assuring that they will be able to both contribute to and benefit from the economic system in which they live.

Goal 16 - Understand events, trends, individuals and movements shaping the history of Illinois, the United States and other nations. History encompasses the whole of human experience, from the earliest times to the present. As such, it provides perspectives on how the forces of continuity and change have shaped human life, both our own and others'. The study of history involves more than knowing the basic names, dates, and places associated with an event or episode. This knowledge is an essential first step to historical interpretation of the past, but historical study also moves on to a methodology that develops a deeper understanding within an individual.

Young students should gain knowledge of basic skills of historical interpretation that will enable them to:

- Recognize the importance of the past;
- Provide examples of significant events and people in the past;
- Understand the geographic, social, economic, and political relationships in history; and
- Recognize the contributions of significant people and events in the past to their present world.

As students progress through the stages, historical knowledge will enable them to:

- Explain differences and similarities in major historical eras;
- Use historical skills and sources to further interpret and understand past events, ideas, and people;
- Examine differing perspectives on significant events, ideas, and people; and
- Relate the past to their present world.

Student application and evaluation of these historical skills will include:

- Synthesizing history with the other social sciences;
- Evaluating the causes and effects of major developments in history;
- Predicting the impact of continuity and change across time; and
- Understanding the many viewpoints and perspectives which history incorporates across cultures and eras.

Ultimately, as the student grows in these skills of historical analysis, they will demonstrate an understanding of the profound significance that the past has in their lives and the lives of others.

Goal 17: Understand world geography and the effects of geography on society, with an emphasis on the United States. The study of geography is a lifelong learning process vital to the well being of students, the state of Illinois, the United States, and the world. As an integrative discipline that brings together the physical and human dimensions of the world, geography strives to make sense out of the spatial arrangements of people, places, and environments on Earth. Geography is a field of study that enables us to find answers to questions about the world around us. Geographers ask and attempt to answer questions about where something is located, why it is there, how it got there, how it is connected to other things and places, how it is arranged in relation to other things, and the significance of its location.

It is important that our students are taught the necessary geography content and skills to enable them to:

- function effectively in an increasingly interdependent and interconnected world.
- perform successfully in the workplace.

- participate in civic decision-making.
- understand the connections and relationships among themselves and other people, places and environments at local to global scales.
- compete effectively in the global economy.
- ensure the viability of Earth's environments.
- comprehend the cultures of the diverse peoples who share our planet.
- lead fulfilling and responsible lives.

Geography provides an avenue for understanding Earth, our home. This understanding for our students is more urgent now than ever before because of global relationships. The standards will provide a goal toward which students will strive and a benchmark against which teachers can measure performances.

Goal 18 - Understand social systems, with an emphasis on the United States.

Humans belong to groups from the moment of birth. In order to better understand their roles as individuals and group members of a diverse society, students must know and understand how culture has changed and how it is expressed. Students should also understand how and why groups and institutions are formed. When students understand these concepts, they are better able to contribute to their community and society.

Young students should gain knowledge of social systems that will enable them to:

- identify values held by their culture and community;
- recognize how cultures other than their own have influenced their culture;
- identify major social institutions in their community, along with the roles these institutions play; and
- understand how individuals and groups interact to obtain the basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter.

As students progress through the stages, additional knowledge of social systems will allow them to:

- describe how culture is shared and expressed through languages, literature, the arts, and traditions;
- predict how media and technology impact their culture;
- evaluate the effectiveness of social institutions in addressing social problems; and
- relate changes in production and population to changes in social systems.

As students reach the later stages of development, knowledge of social systems should enable them to:

- examine the influence of political, environmental, economic, and technological changes on social systems;
- examine the impact of various sociological and psychological theories on society and culture.
- analyze what it means to live in a pluralistic society; and
- use methods of social science inquiry to study the development and functions of social systems.

Intended Use and Interpretation

When the task force, charged with writing the expanded performance descriptors for social science, met and discussed the task, we were excited about the possibilities and the potential for helping teachers. In order for the materials to meet their potential, there are several key points the writers would like to bring to your attention before you start looking at this document, and begin to implement changes in the classroom that reflect these expectations for students. What follows is important to the intended use and implementation of this document.

- 1) ***Different goals receive different amounts of emphasis each year.*** It is not expected that every topic will be addressed each year. Rather, students will reach a certain depth of understanding of the concepts in social science and acquire certain levels of skill development each year as they progress through school.

Even though each of the 23 Social Science standards applies to all grades, emphasis on content will vary among grade levels. For example, in the primary and middle grades, the majority of instructional time would address local and regional culture, geography and some history. In middle school, students would learn more about ancient civilizations, United States History, Geography and Government. In high school, students will study in depth to gain a deeper understanding of both the concepts and skills of the social sciences.

- 2) ***The document is intended to be a developmental guide.*** Stages are not intended to define grade levels. Instead, they represent the developmental stages of student learning, and show a progression through which students develop understanding of social science concepts and knowledge. As a result, it is not enough for a teacher to look at a single stage and decide what content he or she will teach that year. He or she must look at a series of three stages to see the progression of understanding students should experience in order to move from one stage to the next. For example, a third grade teacher may initially look at the descriptors for stage C. However, not all third grade students would be at that level. Therefore, it would be beneficial to look at stages B, C and D to ensure that students are prepared to move to the next stage.
- 3) ***The document is a curriculum development tool.*** The stages of development presented in this document can help a school district develop curriculum that will meet state standards. By using the stages, corresponding curricula can move students through the stages of development without teaching every topic every year. Most units are developed using concepts from all five social science goals throughout the school year. Therefore, not every topic in stage F would be mastered before going on to further study Stage G and Stage H. In this manner the EPDs are used to help develop a curriculum, rather than to prescribe a state-mandated curriculum.
- 4) ***Each stage is intended to represent growth from the previous stage.*** An idea is repeated in a stage only if new content or concepts are introduced with respect to that topic. It is assumed that students will expand on their knowledge and skills in each stage. This is designed to remove isolated review from the curriculum. All review should be done in context of the new content being presented.

- 5) ***The document uses appropriate social science terminology.*** Occasionally, a reader may encounter an unfamiliar term. It is our hope that a vocabulary shift will occur and the correct social science terms will be used. To assist the reader with terminology used in the descriptors, a glossary written with specific terminology for each of the social science disciplines can be found at the end of this document.

- 6) ***The document is based on the current form of the state learning goals and their benchmarks.*** It is assumed that the state goals and benchmarks will undergo continual refinement. This document will need to be revised as that happens. This document has also been carefully aligned with the discipline standards for all of the social sciences. All descriptors are written to indicate the "meets" level of performance for each stage and are not intended to limit instruction. Curriculum should be fluid and change as needed. As such, this document should always be considered a work in progress.