

Unpacking the Standards

Robert Marzano notes that teachers cannot possibly cover all standards; instead, schools should prioritize them so that depth of learning results. This activity will help educators to translate content standards into essential pedagogic questions.

1. Prepare for the activity with staff.
 - Choose a content area.
 - Find released state test questions that are matched to standards for that content area.
 - Enlarge the test questions so they are more readable.
 - Write each standard number and language on the top of legal-sized paper. Legal-sized paper is preferable to butcher paper because it can be copied for distribution later.
 - Spread the legal-sized paper on desks in a classroom, and prepare teachers for the activity.
2. Direct the activity.
 - Ask teachers to cut and paste the released test questions on the sheet of legal-sized paper that represents the corresponding standard.
 - Have teachers analyze the released questions for each standard.
 - Request that teachers rewrite the standards in student-friendly language.
3. Follow up on the activity.
 - Copy the legal-sized papers (each should include one standard, its rewording in student-friendly language, and representative questions from released tests).
 - Distribute to each classroom teacher a packet that contains a complete set of state standards for that grade level's content area.
 - Suggest that each instructor use the packet as a resource for interpreting and mastering content standards in order to prepare students for state tests.

