

Already on our way

A principal uses the BC Performance Standards to engage students, address individual needs and move the learning forward.

by Deborah Koehn

Under the guidance of Dr. Linda Kaser and Dr. Judy Halbert, members of the Network of Performance Based Schools understand that they already have a tool that is moving them into 21st Century learning. They have been accessing provincially developed tools that will enable students to engage in personalized learning, the *BC Performance Standards*. Educators in British Columbia already are well on their way to personalized learning because British Columbia's *Performance Standards* are being used in their classrooms.

Read the conversation (*opposite*), typical between learning partners at Glenview Elementary School. Students are in grade one and two and are using a *Grade Two Quick Scale* for informational writing.

A typical conversation between learning partners

Sarah

What are you working on?

Josh

The form aspect.

Sarah

Oh! You have a title. *The Marmot*. You wrote about the marmot. What is a marmot?

Josh

It's a Canadian animal.

My learning intention was I can tell about a Canadian animal.

Sarah

I don't know about marmots. Where did you meet the criteria?

Josh

I used a topic sentence. I told that the marmot was not only an Olympic mascot, but lived in the mountains where the Olympics were held. Then look (*using a highlighter*) I told four or five facts about the marmot in the following sentences. My ending sentence kind of tells why the marmot was chosen for an Olympic mascot.

Sarah

(*highlighting on the form strand*) You have a title, a topic sentence and sentences that tell about the marmot. And you have a good ending sentence. And now I know some ideas about the marmot. What will you work on next?

Josh

I need to add a diagram and some labels telling more about the marmot. Sarah, what did you do?

Sarah

I don't think I have a topic sentence. I'm going to add that before we look at my stuff.

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The students are using the Form strand (it is printed across the top of their writing sheet). Josh and Sarah have worked independently to address the learning intention, “I will write a paragraph describing a Canadian animal” and are now working as peer coaches to move each other forward. Using the performance standard they co-constructed criteria with the teacher. The teacher then clearly displayed the learning intention and criteria in the classroom, easily seen by each member of this learning community. The students can refer to the strand as they are completing the task, referring to each component, ensuring that they are meeting the requirements. When they self and peer assess the task, the strand is equally easy to refer to. The teacher has given them the tools to discuss the work as well; they refer to the printed strand at the top of the page.

In a blog entry, Dr. Judy Halbert stated, “For years, we have been saying that the BC *Performance Standards* are an invaluable resource for teachers, parents and students.” The performance standards are a reliable assessment tool that gives teachers information that informs their practise. When teachers use the *Standards*, they create a snapshot of each student’s learning. The students can answer the three key questions for student engagement and ownership:

- Where are you going with your learning?
- How is it going?
- Where to next?

Josh clearly knew he was missing the visual component when he referred to the performance standard. Sarah was able to affirm that Josh had met the learning intention and criteria. Her examination of Josh’s work will help move her own learning forward.


After the peer and self assessment takes place, and students move their

learning forward, it is the teacher’s turn to assess the students task, referring to the performance standard aspect of form, looking beyond what has been accomplished, to what comes next for this learner?

Student engagement depends on the educators’ understanding of individual needs, addressing those needs and continuously moving the learning forward.

Dr. Kaser and Dr. Halbert work to remind us that our students must be at the center of the learning. Using the *Performance Standards* ensures that everyone is learning, the student is learning, the teacher is learning about the students’ learning and parents are given access to the learning taking place in language understood by all parties. All parties can identify goals – it is as simple as looking at the aspect – and identifying the evidence of what has been learned and what needs to be learned next. Together, teachers and students can then develop a set of strategies that will enable the students to reach individual goals. Students have information about the progress they are making, how to

make the progress and they are aware of when goals are successfully met. Using the *Performance Standards* provides a practical means of meeting individual and group learning challenges and ensuring that learners have the means to move their work forward. Students are engaged, have a purpose for achieving and the means to access the knowledge and skills they need to achieve. Students and parents have access to the source of evidence of the learning and can understand how to move the learner forward. An inquiry cycle is established, always asking the three questions: “Where are you going with your learning? How is it going? and Where to next?”

Using BC’s *Performance Standards* has proven an effective tool for addressing the individual learning needs of students. As well the standards provide an opportunity for teachers to examine their own effectiveness as teachers by reflecting on what is being learned and what needs to be revisited. The standards are moving BC teachers into personalized learning for both themselves and their students. 

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Cover Art

Our cover art this month is by Daniel Hoffman, a grade 11 student at Edward Milne Community School in Sooke. Daniel’s piece was exhibited at the Sooke Fine Arts show. We thank Daniel, his teacher Sue Garat, who has been teaching AP Art at EMCS since 2003, and Principal Roberta Kubik for sharing this work.