

Teaching and learning for all

By **Carla Thomas McClure**

Researchers at the University of California-Berkeley recently examined the effects of research-based standards for effective pedagogy on student achievement gains. Earlier studies had found teachers' use of the Five Standards for Effective Pedagogy, developed by the Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence (CREDE), to be associated with student achievement gains on standardized tests in elementary schools serving primarily low-income Latino families. Results of the present study confirmed earlier findings that use of the Five Standards can benefit all students. But, as usual, there's more to the story.

What are the Five Standards for Effective Pedagogy?

The Five Standards are guidelines for effectively educating K-16 students of various cultural, language, and economic backgrounds. The standards do not embrace a specific curriculum but establish principles for instruction and classroom organization across subject areas. The Five Standards were distilled from education research involving students at risk of academic failure. They were developed and refined over time by researchers at CREDE.

Collaboration and dialogue among teacher and students are at the heart of the Five Standards, which call for (1) teachers and students working together; (2) developing language and literacy skills across the curriculum; (3) connecting lessons to students' lives; (4) engaging students with challenging lessons; and (5) emphasizing dialogue over lectures.

What do the Five Standards look like in action?

The five standards for effective pedagogy

- **Teachers and students working together.** Use instructional group activities in which students and teacher work together to create a product or idea.
- **Developing language and literacy skills across all curricula.** Apply literacy strategies and develop language competencies in all subject areas.
- **Connecting lessons to students' lives.** Contextualize teaching and curriculum in students' existing experiences in home, community, and school.
- **Engaging students with challenging lessons.** Maintain challenging standards for student performance; design activities to advance understanding to more complex levels.
- **Emphasizing dialogue over lectures.** Instruct through teacher-student dialogue, especially academic, goal-directed, small-group conversations (known as instructional conversations), rather than lecture.

Classrooms that incorporate the Five Standards model might be described, in simple terms, as having a teacher center and several activity centers connected by a common learning objective. As the teacher holds an academic, goal-directed instructional conversation with a small group of students, other small groups engage in purposeful, student-led activities.

What was the design of the recent Five Standards study?

The researchers used a quasi-experimental design that involved 3rd-, 4th- and 5th-grade students in two public schools in California. Researchers matched the two study schools as closely as possible by ensuring that they were similar in demographics, academic performance, and location (the schools were less than a mile apart). The teachers in the experimental school had been working informally with the Five Standards for several years, although they had received no systematic professional development in their use. By contrast, teachers in the control

Research-based standards for effective pedagogy have the potential for improving learning outcomes for all students, especially those with cultural, linguistic, or economic challenges.

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school had received no exposure to the Five Standards. Across the two sites, 23 teachers and 394 students participated in the study.

What did the researchers hope to learn?

The researchers wanted to know two things: (1) whether teachers' use of the standards would reliably predict student achievement and (2) whether achievement would be highest for students whose teachers had demonstrated extensive use of the standards. During multiple classroom observations, trained researchers rated the degree to which the Five Standards guided instructional decisions. At the end of the school year, they analyzed students' standardized achievement test (SAT-9) scores for comprehension, language, reading, spelling, and vocabulary — and the relationship between these scores and the degree to which teachers implemented elements of the Five Standards model.

What were the findings?

The study showed that teachers' use of the standards accounted for a small but significant proportion of students' achievement gains. Achievement gains were greatest among students

whose teachers organized their classrooms according to the Five Standards model. Low-English-proficient students benefited the most, but the model was effective for other students as well. According to researchers, their study does not prove a causal relationship between the model and student achievement, but it does provide additional evidence for the relationship between the Five Standards model and student outcomes.

What's the rest of the story?

The findings of this study illustrate that “translating research into practice” is not as easy as some might wish. As the researchers themselves admit, fully implementing the research-based Five Standards model requires teachers to transform their practice, which takes a great deal of effort.

Reference

Doherty, R.W. & Hilberg, R.S. (2007). Standards for effective pedagogy, classroom organization, English proficiency, and student achievement. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 101(1), 24-34.

See the standards in action

Learn more about the Five Standards for Effective Pedagogy and watch video clips of the standards in action at <http://crede.berkeley.edu/standards/standards.html>

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