



ALBUQUERQUE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Report on



WORK SESSIONS ON DRAFT STANDARDS FOR MATH AND LANGUAGE ARTS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	1
Process	3
Comments on the Standards	5
Meeting the Needs of Individual Students	6
Communication with Parents	13
Transition	15
Successful Implementation	17
Commitment	17
Teachers and Teaching	17
Resources	21
On-going Dialogue	22
Accountability	22
Personal Involvement	23
<i>Appendices</i>	
Discussion Outlines	
Summary of Teachers' Survey Responses	

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Approximately 150 participants representing a cross-section of the Albuquerque community—parents, teachers, administrators, and business community—took part in a facilitated dialogue on new APS proposed standards for language arts and math. The majority of participants in these work session enthusiastically supported the effort to raise expectations for students—recognizing that skills in language arts and math are vital to the future of our community and nation and to the success of students in preparing for higher education and careers in an increasingly complex and competitive global environment.

They thought that the standards were generally high enough to challenge students and be achievable for most (but not all) and that exceptions are needed for those with disabilities or other special needs. The higher math standards at the high school level were the subject of most debate, with the parent groups having difficulty with the terminology and questioning whether all students would and should be able to achieve these advanced skills.

The major issue was not with the standards themselves, but with *how* they would be met. Teachers welcomed the emphasis on teacher creativity and autonomy in individualizing instruction. Without individualized instruction, participants saw a danger that *standards* could lead to *standardization*. If there is no respect for the differences among children--in terms of cultural backgrounds and different learning rates-- a uniform imposition of standards across grade levels too quickly could result in demoralization and increasing drop-outs. Learning is a continuum and students make progress individually. The system needs to be geared to this reality—in individualizing the types of assessments and testing that are used; in providing adequate support systems to help students who have fallen behind; in providing sufficient funding for smaller class sizes and assistance in the classroom; and offering incentives to train, retain and attract highly qualified and effective teachers. Individualized instruction is the linchpin of the reform effort. Teachers were clear about what they needed to be effective.

Teachers also need assurance that they are not in this alone, that the whole system and community is behind them with a sense of shared responsibility. They need to know that they will have opportunities to develop the skills and strategies needed—through relevant professional development, time for reflection, and time for cross-level professional collaboration among teachers from different schools and grade levels. Parents are eager to be partners in their children’s education, but they need to understand on a yearly basis what is required. The use of professional jargon is perplexing; there was consensus that the standards need to be re-written for different audiences and use different visual methods of communication—not just words.

All were concerned about implementation – is there real commitment to reform, or will this be just another transitory re-packaging of the same ideas? Another false start is demoralizing and not fair to all the stakeholders – teachers, administration, parents, and most of all students. All agree that change will take time, but what is important is a sense of commitment over time on the part of the administration and community at large. There is a critical need for on-going dialogue and communication at all levels– to assess progress continuously, make changes when needed, and build the needed support. A shared definition of purpose for the standards and the reform effort is needed as a first step.

PROCESS

These work sessions on proposed performance standards were commissioned by the Albuquerque Public Schools through a grant by the Rockefeller Foundation and facilitated by *Shared Vision*, an Albuquerque non-profit organization specializing in public engagement processes. Four half-day work sessions, with a total of ten discussion groups, were held on consecutive Saturdays in October and November 2000.

APS initiated the dialogue with the goal of creating an open communication between administrators, teachers, parents and the community, realizing that the support and buy-in from all these groups—and especially teachers-- would be key to the successful implementation of standards in the classroom. *Shared Vision* provided a neutral third-party role in facilitating the discussions.

APS recruited participants through written invitations and a web site, with drafts of the new standards distributed through principals of elementary and high schools several days before. The first two work sessions were comprised of school system teachers and administrators; the second two sessions added parents and representatives of a variety of community groups invited by APS. The latter two sessions consisted of people already involved in educational issues through participation in parent and community organizations. A broad cross-section of teachers, administrators, parents, business community and other community educational leaders participated in the dialogue.

Each day began with an informational session. To provide a context for discussing the standards, presentations were given by APS Superintendent Brad Allison and other administration officials on their history and purpose.

Smaller discussion groups of 10-15 participants then met for approximately 2 _ hours to explore attitudes and opinions about the new standards, using a discussion outline designed in collaboration between *Shared Vision* and the APS client. (See Appendix 1) A professional trained facilitator guided each discussion, and recorders provided written documentation. Each group then reported out key points briefly to the larger group in a final meeting at the end of the day.

This report was prepared by *Shared Vision* as a summary of the recorded dialogue that took place. After the work sessions, panels of representatives selected by each group reviewed the draft report to ensure its consistency with their groups' discussion.

Appendix 2 is a summary of teacher comments from the written Surveys on Language Arts and Math Standards distributed by APS to teachers and available on the APS web site.

COMMENTS ON THE STANDARDS

APS participants were favorable toward the standards—both the standards themselves as presented in the draft documents, and the new approach to education they represent, often

referring to this new approach as a “paradigm shift” that will be required throughout the system and in each classroom.

Many teachers agreed that the new standards represent a much needed opportunity to hold each student accountable individually rather than continuing to “teach to the middle.” “We need to assess and motivate students into a breaking sweat.” Many welcomed the fact that the standards set consistently high expectations. “The bar has to be up there...we only get close by making sure we all understand what the bar is.”

The parent and public groups understood the value of students knowing what is required of them. Many thought it essential to raise expectations in order to challenge students and enable our society to compete globally.

Others in this group, however, did not so easily accept that raising the bar was good for *all* students. They questioned the reasons for the standards and felt that more justification was needed as to how the required knowledge would help students in the practical world of work and making a living. The outside participants were most interested in how the standards relate to career paths. Some did not see how the standards would individualize teaching, and thought instead that they would encourage “standardization” by setting the same goals for all despite differences in life plans.

Clarity

APS participants agreed that the standards were clearly written, understandable, reasonable and specific. Other descriptors included: measurable, logical, easy to use, student oriented, comprehensive. They felt that new teachers could use them because of their specificity. They found the format attractive and easy to use, mentioning italicized or bolded verbs that catch your eye.

Teachers thought that the standards they were most familiar with and had experience with were the clearest. Although the glossaries were helpful, two APS groups thought that the vocabulary contained some jargon and suggested that a good support system would be helpful to interpret some of the standards correctly. For example, varied interpretations are possible of the terms “contextual forms of literature” (Fourth grade Language Arts Standards) and “Skip counting group” (Math Standards). Professional dialogue about the standards would help staff to understand the terms. “They are clear only with dialogue that is on-going.”

The parent and public groups suggested integrating the glossary into the document on the page with the terms used on that page and broadening the glossary to include more terms. For example, “emergent spelling” is not easily understood by non-professionals. The term “benchmarks” was confusing; some participants felt they should be called something else.

Parents and the public thought that the document would be clear to professionals but that the complicated wording and jargon was overwhelming for non-educators and needed a synopsis. They consistently reiterated the difficulty of assessing and commenting on these standards because the way they are written (i.e. use of “non-standard” English) is difficult for the general public to understand. “It needs to be translated for the public.” “Standards need to be rewritten for different audiences.” “You are going to lose parents because we don’t understand it.” “You need a parent document. Most parents don’t understand the language, especially in math.” This is important because the schools need the parents and community for success. Several suggested having multiple documents tailored to different audiences

Parents and the public liked the fact that the standards were logically sequenced and concise. They found the math standards less clear than language arts, particularly the upper grades of math which they found too abstract and ambiguous. The terms “early or late high school” were not specific enough for some, and they wanted grade specific requirements for algebra.

Regarding the format, parents would prefer to have the information organized by grade level rather than by strand so that they could see exactly what the expectations were for each grade in one place.

User Manual – Many teachers thought that the standards should include an explanation and clarification regarding their purpose, assumptions, and how the standards will be used. “It’s a great document but needs a piece that tells how to use it.” “We have to make a leap of how to use it.”

They thought that standards need to say that they are one piece of a puzzle and explain what’s gone before, how they fit with what teachers are already doing, and what the administration hopes to do later. How do they relate to the Terra Nova and other standardized tests? What is the relationship between the standards and the core curriculum? Will they replace, enhance or modify District Core Curriculum and Scoping Sequence (DCCSS) standards? The document should stand on its own and pull it all together.

Other teachers thought that the introduction clarifies how to use it. This group was more comfortable accepting the premise of the standards as a roadmap or guide-- telling teachers where to go, not how to get there.

Appropriateness of the Standards

Math Standards

APS participants thought that the math standards gave a good foundation first, then built more complex skills. Most felt that the standards hit the mark as mid-range, and that they were realistic, giving teachers a good K-12 picture sequentially. They viewed them as exit criteria rather than entrance criteria. “They give a better measuring stick.” They would not hold kids down because each standard has open-ended potential.

APS participants felt that the current APS expectations for math were too low. The growth of alternative schools shows a need for higher expectations in math. Statistics and geometry are long overdue. They were positive that the new standards are aligned nationally with the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) standards and enable students to compete nationally and internationally. The binary numbers system relates to technology.

Most parent and public groups also thought that the current math standards needed to be raised in order to stay on a par with national levels and to prepare students adequately for college and careers. “We need to be competitive.” These participants were concerned with their practical application. Several groups stressed the importance of relating the math standards to career paths and of explaining to both parents and students how these skills can be used in real life situations. Two groups observed that math skills help to teach reasoning, logic, computation and critical thinking skills that are important to later success in life.

There was general agreement among all groups that the K-8 math standards were appropriate, but less agreement about their appropriateness at the high school level. One public group thought that there was a “disconnect” between middle school and high school math standards.

One group of APS participants questioned the requirement for Algebra II in high school, saying that teenagers vary in their ability to learn it and this requirement may represent a tendency to standardize. An alternative approach to Algebra II is needed. The schools need to play to students’ strengths; there needs to be more flexibility to treat kids on an individual basis, meet them where they are, and not just “toss them out” because they can’t do this level of math.

The public groups agreed that the high school math standards were demanding and challenging but varied in their assessment of their appropriateness for all students. A majority (four out of six) of the parent and public groups questioned whether it was reasonable to require all students to abide by these high standards. Some questioned the appropriateness for those who weren’t going to college. “It’s a great goal, but are they realistic for each student?” “The standards don’t reflect what high school seniors can do.” “If they can do these I’d be shocked.” “These standards are very ambitious—are they realistic?” “The high school standards are very high—too high?” “What happens in late high school? It’s virtually impossible for those students to meet these standards.” One group pointed out that to what degree a student should know or do these things is still to be determined.

One public group thought that algebra and calculus were important, but that statistics was not as useful and that the math requirements tried to cover too much. Other comments were to encourage math for girls and to “reduce the risk” for enriched math classes to not make them so punitive.

Some of this skepticism on the part of parents and the public may be due to difficulty in understanding the terminology used. Many parents found the math standards to be clearer at the lower levels and less clear at high school level. One parent and public group wanted a “translation” of the high school math standards. Teacher groups tended to accept that this is the nature of the language and to question whether they were translatable.

There was concern over the timeframe for high school students to meet the new standards. Students may drop out if there is an attempt to implement these standards across the board now. “Standards may push out some students if they don’t have the desire to take this math.” It is important to phase standards in and provide adequate support and tutoring, while demonstrating the importance of the standards to career and life goals. “We need to help students excel.” Students must demonstrate competence at each stage so they are ready for the next level.

Language Arts Standards

APS participants thought that the Language Arts standards clearly set out what students should know and learn and raise the bar from before. They are comprehensive and give a sense of progression. “The Language Arts wording is explicit and wonderful.” Examples and the glossary help to make them clear; more examples can be given. These standards have value in encouraging reflective thinking and active analysis that engages students. One group thought that formal grammar should be included for upper grade levels.

The parents and public participants also commented that a great deal of thought had been given the Language Arts standards. They valued the importance of these skills. They are the “core of every subject” and encompass everything. “Language Arts is a more general tool that gives access to other knowledge and is used lifelong.” “An informed citizenry is one that reads and understands.”

Parents thought that “note taking” and “study habits” needed to be addressed earlier than the 10th grade and then emphasized.

References to state standards (asterisks, parentheses) are sometimes confusing. Some APS participants thought that Language Arts has a formatting problem in that it contains letters and codes that correlate to the State standards, but it’s not clear why the information is there, and Math doesn’t correlate in the same way to the State Standards. Perhaps there should be consistency in format between the two documents. Another suggestion was to add Vocabulary Development contained in Language Arts to Math as well.

The main concern with Language Arts—raised by both APS and public participants--was how the standards apply to non-English speaking second language students. Teachers with concerns about language barriers feared that standards would hinder those who were learning the English language, special education or Native American students. Some thought that evaluations needed to be conducted in a different way for ESL children.

APS participants said that the standards are not explicit enough in valuing diverse languages. This is said but not focused. “The document will go out in English. It needs translation.” The parent and public groups also thought that the standards needed to honor the cultural background of children. Language Arts is culturally tied, and the needs of multicultural children must be addressed. One of the public groups suggested that fluency in a second language should itself be a standard.

Language Arts standards will be difficult also for those without a strong language base at home, e.g. homes without books or other situations that cause a child to lack past literacy experience. “Standards are good but past experience can be limiting.” Teachers will need to help these students along.

MEETING THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS

APS participants were asked whether “*teachers would be able to meet the individual students using the new standards.*”

Most teachers thought it was desirable to set consistently high expectations that are the same from class to class, use a common language and help teachers focus. The APS participants understood that the standards themselves only define *what*; they don’t tell teachers *how* to meet them.

Although a few teachers “feel like they can’t teach things that they want to teach,” most were excited at the prospect of increased autonomy in individualizing instruction for each student. They understood that the new approach is to move away from an assembly line model and saw new opportunities in the flexibility given to teachers to create effective methods of learning. Most did not see the standards document as limiting. They understood that it is intended to be a fluid document leaving it up to teachers to devise ways for each student to meet the new challenges. They described the change: “The bar is up for students and also for teachers.”

Many APS participants were enthusiastic about the possibility that this new approach could have major impacts on “curriculum reform, teacher training, and classroom setup.” “Standards will make the school day look different.”

The art of teaching

Teachers recognized that they needed to “think outside the box” in reaching each student. For example regarding math, “We need to be creative, come up with ways to get kids to group numbers.” “It’s a question of the art of teaching.” “Let’s look at the kids, not the curriculum.”

A few teachers were apprehensive that the standards would require them to teach totally differently and wanted clarification – is this replacing the DCCSS? Perhaps integration with the DCCSS should come later. Some wanted a guide, a separate written document explaining with examples how to implement the curriculum to meet the standards.

Some wondered whether they can meet the new standards and thought it was unrealistic to expect all students to reach them. What happens if students aren’t prepared? Many teachers want specific strategies of how to bring a student up to the reading or math level needed if they do not have these competencies when they come into the classroom.

Standards vs. Standardization

The outside participants consisting of parents and members of the public did not always understand the distinction between the standards themselves and the individualized instruction needed to meet them. Parents feared that the standards would “make sheep of all our children” by making them all meet the same standards. “These standards are so cramped that there is no room for flexibility.” “It’s very dreary. It reminds us of why we hated school.” Some of the parent and public participants expressed concerns about negative impacts the standards might have on education in the broader sense of critical thinking and inspiring and motivating students to love learning. “If you just focus on standards – the teacher fulfilled the standards and the children hate school.”

Other public participants understood the concept of teachers individualizing the approach for each child, but wondered how this could be accomplished within a 5 _ hr school day. “How are people going to teach this to attain the standards?” “Kids need to have time in school and teachers have to be able to spend more time with the students.” Smaller classes will be needed. Teachers need to have different creative ways of helping the student to understand, develop and think, to “make it come alive for the child.”

To address these concerns, the public needs to have a clearer understanding of what individualized instruction means and needs reassurance that the system will support these changes. Whether the standards result in individual growth or “standardization” depends on the way the standards are taught and the support system that is provided for teachers to be effective.

Teaching involves a continuous improvement cycle—teach, then reassess, drive instruction, re-teach. “A good teacher has been doing standards all along.” Standards should be used to describe rather than to judge, to inform students about their progress and to measure continuous improvement.

APS participants had the following suggestions for individualizing instruction.

Revising Assessments

Teachers asked, “How do you know what children know? Implementation (of the standards) depends on knowing.” Many teachers thought that current assessments are

“antiquated” and that there will need to be different ways of assessing children on a continuing basis and determining gradations of how they are moving forward in the class—not just whether they know or don’t know a skill. The language has to be upgraded.

Teachers wanted to know how to pre-assess so as not to cover things students have mastered already. Teachers need training on conducting assessments in a way that provides information as to where a child stands on a continuum and thought that a support group would be helpful. New measurement tools that are appropriate to each child individually will make it possible to individualize learning. Standards should drive assessments and assessments should drive instruction.

Continuum of progress

Some teachers thought that the new system “Doesn’t address early bloomers as well as late bloomers. It’s trying to homogenize everything.” Some kids will exceed them, some meet them, and some fall short. What do we do? Allowances should be made for different rates at which children learn. Teachers interpreted the needs of individual students to mean that teachers help students progress along a continuum. Many teachers did not want children to be held too rigidly to the standards and thought they should be used only as a general measure, an indicator.

Some teachers thought that there should be a disclaimer on the assumption that “all” students will reach the standards. “They reflect what students should know in an ideal world, but there are a wide range of abilities.” Students with disabilities and special needs need to be considered. There was general consensus that while it’s legitimate to expect progress, it’s not legitimate to say that every student will reach the standards.

“You can’t expect all students to attain the standards.”

“We shepherd students to progressing.”

“It’s not a dictate but a continuum.”

“You have to honor the 10th grade kid who learned to read.”

Instead, some teachers suggested that the statement should be: “Every student has the *opportunity* to reach the new standards.” Then meeting the needs of individual students doesn’t mean that everyone meets the standards, but rather that we meet the needs by helping them progress along the continuum.

Some suggested that the standards should use different levels rather than grades. Distinct grade levels are arbitrary and can impact students negatively; i.e. they may lack challenge or be labeled substandard. One group observed that benchmarks allow for a continuum between grades. However, parents and the public tended to want the standards presented strictly by grade.

A related question is whether the standards are “exit criteria” for each grade. For example, many kids fail to meet the Language Arts standards in middle school. Teachers asked, “Do we say they can’t go on?” These are practical questions that must be resolved for teachers.

Resources

School needs to provide a safety net of resources that are aligned to help: reading recovery, math recovery, booster groups. “You have students at all different levels and need support to meet their individual needs.” It will be necessary to use people differently and to provide assistance and adequate staffing for recovery programs.

Teachers thought that every child will need an individual education plan (IEP), but they were unclear how they would work. There was a concern that this would be impossible with thirty children in a classroom and that this would be a major “number crunching” expense.

Threats to motivation

The word “standards” itself was a problem for some teachers if it implies that if a student doesn’t reach them, they would be labeled “substandard.” Standards could be mis-used and used to judge and label children negatively. The schools need to have respect for students for where they are. They need to teach children teamwork and instill a greater sense of tolerance.

If used in ways that intimidate students or fail to challenge them, the new standards could have a negative impact on student motivation. There is a danger that students who aren’t meeting them could give up or shut down; others could become lazy due to lack of challenge. Teachers must be aware of these individual impacts and develop strategies to deal with them. This is why the need to assess and individualize instruction for each child is so important.

Teacher Collaboration

Teachers thought that they would be better able to individualize instruction if they are given the opportunity to work together frequently, to plan, support, and polish lessons, sharing suggestions and giving mutual support. By providing a common language and reference, standards can facilitate discussions among teachers that will be needed to develop strategies for meeting them. Leadership should allow that to happen.

COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

Parents and members of the public were asked whether “*standards could be used to communicate effectively to parents about their student’s achievement.*”

Parents and the public thought that the standards are a comprehensive way to show what a child is doing and what the expectations are. Standards can create an opportunity for dialogue regarding progress during a year.

Parents want to be effective partners. They would like an overall picture of what is expected. It needs to be shown. They suggested giving a syllabus to kids and parents, a roadmap of what will happen to the child over the course of a year using benchmarks. If parents know what is going to be taught, they can help their student achieve the goals.

They would like to see the standards translated from technical vocabulary to everyday speech using “parent-speak rather than teacher-speak.” “If a teacher understands the standards and there’s appropriate translation, it will be a wonderful tool to communicate.”

Parents and the public wanted teachers to make presentations inviting and enjoyable. They thought that in the urgency to get the standards out, the format was overlooked. Perhaps a flow chart could show parents the sequence of subjects. Participants suggested using colorful examples and short graphics. “The open house was very uninspiring as to what was going to be taught.” They also thought that the standards need to be available in more than one language and to use bilingual/ multilingual approaches when needed.

Having all grade standards in one document is “overwhelming”; parents wanted the standards presented to them one grade at a time. “If I have a child in the 1st or 2nd grade, that’s all I want to know right now.” The public and parents wanted concrete and definite statements of results desired at each grade level.

“How will I know if my student is achieving them?” Both parent and teacher groups wanted more explanation about the assessment instruments that would be used. Both groups also wanted to know *how* educators will teach the standards.

Parents wondered what to tell their students about the standards and when the students would be brought into the process. They wanted the schools to put more emphasis on *why* standards are needed, how they will benefit students, and how students will apply what they have learned in the real world. If parents understand the purpose, they can help to inspire their child to read and learn what is needed.

“When everyone gets involved we turn out a good product.”

TRANSITION

People recognized that the entire District is making an evolution, not just individual teachers. One person characterized this year as an “awareness” time to prepare for the introduction of standards for use in classrooms at the beginning of the next school year. The administration could use this period to address issues that participants raised and gain support for change.

“We’re looking at revamping the 27th largest school district in the nation. All of this is evolving at one time. No one is telling us what we need to know. There’s a need to bring in experts; teachers need reassurance.”

Participants wanted to know more about the total picture. There needs to be an acknowledgement that the standards do not stand alone but are meant to fit into a bigger scheme. Some thought that the standards had been given to them “in a vacuum” without sufficient explanation of how they relate to other parts of the system, such as assessments and curriculum. “How does it fit in the continuum of what we’re already doing? If you’re proposing a change, you have to acknowledge what is being done now.”

There is some skepticism on the part of teachers that the standards will be like other changes that have been proposed over the years and then abandoned, typically “one document per year.”

Resistance comes from fear by teachers of how the standards will be used and what the expectations are. “Will this be used to assess teachers or kids?” The intent is not clear. Without this explanation, the standards can be intimidating.

Teachers are also concerned about the impact on children, about fairness and recognition of differences—among children and in different parts of the city.

They wanted to know the timeframe in which children were expected to reach the standards and whether there would be allowances for a transitional period. Change will not happen immediately and many felt that “We need to give ourselves time.” Otherwise, teachers may attempt to rush students. One person commented that once standards have been applied “first grade through high school” then it will be easier.

APS teachers and administrators wanted to take a longer range view and allow sufficient time to see results and long term validation. This will require the entire system staying committed to the process over a period of years. Parents and the public also emphasized the need to set up a *realistic timetable* that everyone is aware of (via web/ media) for implementation of the standards. According to a public participant: “Commit to give it time. This is a journey. It will take 5- 7 years to see results.”

Many participants thought that they had not been given the standards in enough time to have an opportunity to study the documents before the workshops, and this made it difficult to participate knowledgeably in the discussions. Both groups thought that an orientation would be helpful.

SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

Participants were asked, “*What will be necessary to ensure that students reach the new standards?*”

The biggest concern for all participants in all groups had to do not with the standards themselves but with their implementation. As one internal group put it, “Standards are the target; the District’s job is coaching.”

Teachers care about children’s progress and want to be effective partners in the task of educational reform. But teachers know they cannot do it alone. “I’m only one person.” “I’m not a miracle worker.” “What we expect teachers to do is very difficult.” In order to deliver results, they will need a support system within the school and within the larger community of parents and business. To gain the support of teachers, it will be necessary to provide ways for them to gain the knowledge and skills needed to individualize instruction. They need teaching and measuring tools that align with the new high expectations. An effective support system will require alignment of resources, staffing, professional development, training, policies, community involvement, and budget. They look to the administration to provide leadership in creating the needed support system.

Public participants wanted as much energy put into creating a parallel support system as went into the writing of the standards. Support needs to be provided for teachers, students, and parents.

Commitment

Parents and public participants called for, “Commitment to the individual student and teacher by the central leadership.” APS participants thought that the administration needs to establish that learning is the *first priority*--above buses, sports, and after school jobs. Standards need to be posted in each classroom to remind parents, students and teachers of their importance. “The administration needs to walk the talk.”

Involving Community

Both groups thought that there needs to be a common vision of the value of education throughout the community and a belief that standards will help children reach their potential. “Recognize students as our future.”

The public groups thought it was essential to set and communicate clear goals for the standards as a whole. “There is not a shared understanding of what the goal of this process is.” Are they for the corporate world or for student self actualization? This needs to be communicated. Support levels increase when people understand the relationship between the standards and students’ success in life. Public groups were anxious for everyone to see the *relevance* of these requirements for life after school has been completed. Typically they thought that “The ultimate goal is to function in society.”

Parents were particularly concerned about students receiving adequate information about expectations and how the standards are relevant to their lives.

Parent and public groups had ideas for how to gain support through communication:

- Market the value of education consistently on a continuing basis, repeating key words.
- Develop a video for each child that outlines standards and is entertaining.

- Use publicity and “media blitz” to get the word out in an understandable way.
- Make standards information part of everyday language used in school.

Public participants wanted to see a higher level of community expectations of school results, and to strengthen the network/ collaboration with the community to support standards – business, legislature, and higher educational institutions (e.g. UNM). The community should set a standard or expectation for itself that “citizens can be competent, responsible, involved and committed.” “We need to do more to build trust and honesty between the school system and the community.”

Both groups valued societal support as critically needed in grades 1-5 if a child’s basic needs for food and shelter aren’t being met. Mentorship across levels and outside mentorship was listed by both groups as an important need.

Teachers thought that there should be more emphasis on special efforts to reach out and create partnerships with parents through workshops, public forums, and other means of interaction and education, showing them how their children can be successful. Children will do better if parents understand and value education. The outside participants were afraid of “scaring parents off.” Parents need to be given a simple way to understand what is expected from their student and them for the school year: a list of standards, progress charts, syllabus, and immediate feedback mechanisms.

On-going Dialogue and Communication

APS participants thought that standards could improve the way teachers and administrators communicate with parents, business partners and the larger community by giving guideposts that put everyone on the same page with less room for subjectivity and interpretation.

APS participants also wanted more positive PR in the media for schools and teachers. The public needs to be more aware of the necessary and positive role of assessments as a teaching tool rather than the media focusing so much on test scores.

All participant groups mentioned the need for continuous district-wide feedback about the standards and their implementation. Many groups also thought it was important to continually evaluate and update the standards themselves and how they are working. Good on-going communication and dialogue (e.g. parental workshops) among all stakeholders is needed long term for results. The parent and public groups thought that the “administration and faculty should work in concert throughout this journey.”

APS participants appreciated the discussions at the workshop and want more opportunities for interaction. They value having professional conversations with other teachers and envision working together and brainstorming, giving each other suggestions, sharing problems and successes. These collaborative sessions should be open and inclusionary. They should provide opportunities for cross-level feedback among different schools and grade levels. Some public participants also wanted to “empower teacher groups to brainstorm” strategies. Time to examine student work together will pay off in generating creative teaching approaches.

APS participants suggested restructuring the school year and school day to allow for greater levels of communication—among teachers, specialists, between teachers and parents and between teachers and children. Public participants called for “respect by all parties. We’ve all got to listen: students, parents, administration and teachers.”

Teachers and Teaching

It's "not just by the book anymore." Parent and public participants wanted teacher flexibility in being able to address the individual needs of children. They called for different techniques and creative classroom strategies to develop the "ability to help each child advance as much as they can to develop a lifetime love of learning."

Teacher roles

Parents and public participants saw the need for "total teacher buy-in" involving their attitudes, abilities, behavior and willingness to take on these challenges.

Teachers wanted full participation as part of a collaborative team and valued the prospect of more authority given to teachers as to what they can do with children to meet the goals. They saw themselves taking a more *proactive* role in being reflective about practices and instruction and how they are affecting students.

High quality professional development

All groups—internal and public--agreed that professional training for teachers will be needed on basic tools: instructional materials, assessments and strategies. "Increasing resources and training for teachers" consistently received high votes in both groups. "Teachers must continue to learn the latest things." "If I were a teacher, reading these standards, I'd say I need a year's sabbatical to regroup and rethink how to teach these standards."

Participants were specific as to the type and quality of training:

- It needs to be relevant to the standards and useful in the classroom. "Give teachers the tools of support to accomplish the standards and benchmarks." Teachers need to be trained in both educational methods and subject matter related to the standards.
- It should be done by specialized experts on-site.
- It should be participatory rather than "sit and get".
- It should be on-going.
- It should include the ability to assess when students aren't meeting expectations.

Teachers thought it essential that professional development days be added to the current contract and teachers compensated for extra time. New hires should receive paid training time. Members of the public also said that incentives including salaries and merit pay should be provided for professional development.

Adequate teaching time.

The development of individualized approaches will take extra class preparation time according to the teacher groups. Parent and public groups were concerned about students having adequate teaching exposure versus time grading papers: "How much time are our kids really getting taught?"

Assessments

Both APS and parent and public groups emphasized the need to align assessments with the standards and individualize them to measure the progress of each student. For teachers, assessments are a critical teaching tool to help students meet or exceed the standards. "Assessment needs to be able to tell us what we need to know. How do standards relate to test scores?" Multiple tools of assessment are needed to accurately

track progress. Assessment should be ongoing and user friendly for teachers, kids, parents – not standardized.

Participants thought that assessments needed to be continuous in order to tell whether a child is moving toward a standard, with results returned in a timely way as part of a standards based system. One parent group mentioned having frequent assessments weekly or biweekly; others suggested at the beginning and end of each school year. The parent and public groups thought that a chart or student data folders showing the student's progress would be helpful in providing constant feedback, reinforcement and accountability.

Curriculum

Both sets of participants wanted the curriculum to support standards, but not a standardized curriculum. Instead of “teaching the curriculum”, teachers will need to use creative classroom strategies, different techniques, and a variety of appropriate curriculum approaches. No two students will do standards the same way, and it will be the teacher's responsibility to accommodate them. APS participants mentioned using examples and authentic problems, not book problems, that are relevant to real life situations. Some thought that the only way to ensure consistency is to re-write the DCCSS.

Prevention / intervention strategies

There needs to be a system in place to help children with difficulties. Parents and the public groups were interested also in providing support for gifted students who are performing beyond the standards.

Teachers wanted time to take a *proactive* rather than reactive approach to *prevent* kids from falling behind. This will require developing an education plan for all students. It will require one-on-one remediation, individual mentoring, tutors, and reading programs immediately when students plateau. There should be “No pull outs, only pull-ins and push-ins.” According to one group of parents and public participants, “Remediation is not just saying the same thing slower.” Teachers need to use visual, listening, and left and right brain techniques to reach children.

An intervention task force was suggested for trouble shooting and follow up.

Involving students

Both sets of participants suggested that students need to buy in too, especially at the high school level. Students as well as teachers are responsible and should be actively engaged in attaining the standards. Measurement and assessment by teachers should be shared with students and not be kept a secret; students need to understand and get feedback. They need to know what the expectations are and what they need to do to become better. They should be aware of what the standards are and should be involved in meeting them.

“Students are not apathetic. They want to be smart.”

“They will measure themselves.”

“Acknowledge the children.”

Student feedback will be helpful to teachers in devising different techniques to help students reach the standards.

Diversity

There is a need to address students' different cultural learning styles, providing language and literacy development for culturally or linguistically diverse students; more specialized ESL teachers; and a multi-ethnic curriculum.

Structure

Public participants suggested putting students in achievement level groups by subject, incremental courses, continuity between grades, and dialogue between school levels.

Public participants saw the need for a governance structure that supports the reform effort, including “schools within schools” to meet the needs. Many teachers referred to a need for more “site-based management” and “full service” schools with better access to resources closer to children. There was support for the role of the principal as an “instructional leader”; teachers look to the principal to help them understand and provide needed support in creating alternative structures for organizing classrooms, students, schedules and schools.

Resources

Staff roles

Teachers need support people in the classroom right there working with them. This means hiring more people and using people differently e.g. an educational assistant at the first grade level was mentioned. Having a support person in the classroom can lower pupil-teacher ratios by half. A few envisioned more flexibility for other school personnel to enable them to help with students and hoped for a shift in roles to allow other staff to assist teachers when needed, especially at the elementary school level. “The school is a community and everyone is responsible for the education of students.”

Teacher supply

Both sets of participants said that an increased supply of high quality teachers is needed through recruitment and better pay. Incentives are needed (e.g. merit pay, career ladder, making it an attractive profession) to retain good teachers, develop more depth and expertise, and encourage young energetic candidates to go into the teaching profession.

Time

Ideas for increasing the amount of time available for reflection and collaboration without detracting from classroom teaching time were: reconfiguring the school year (e.g. year round schedule or extended school year), off days for students needing help, longer school days, Saturday school, two shifts, shorter breaks. One person suggested that school schedules should be based on student needs and not dictated by bus schedules.

Smaller classes

The need for smaller classes with smaller pupil-teacher ratios would help provide for the needed individualized instruction. Teachers felt that it was impossible at a ratio of 25-1. Smaller elementary school size was also suggested (700 is too big). This was a major point for the parent and public groups, with four of six giving a high priority for smaller class sizes.

Technological support

Teachers wanted to integrate technological support into standards-- computers, calculators, computer labs, etc. --and wanted students to have equal access to resources. They also called for “more books—schools full of books.”

Funding

One group of APS participants mentioned the need for increased funding to support standards – and identified property taxes as a source (not medical, food, dental). This issue came up for the outside groups even more, who saw increased funding needed for

all facets of implementation. One group wanted policies for the “highest expenditures at the lowest levels” and more efficient use of the budget. “To obtain this, we need to invest in our children’s future.”

Accountability

Parent and public groups suggested displaying results in each classroom that show progress as a group. Public participants suggested establishing an accountability system including assessments, incentives and consequences (for teachers, students and administration), progress reports, and tools to help the student. They suggested consequences for students who fail to meet the standards (i.e. summer school, retention, tutoring).

Some wanted to see the whole community also accountable in supporting the standards—parents, business and legislature.

Other suggestions:

Menu of support services and resources
Flexibility to use in-house experts
Fully funded head start program (Pre-K)
Incorporation of standards into higher education teaching curriculum (UNM faculty)
First class facilities available to the community during off-hours; more emphasis on the school as the heart of the community.

PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT

When asked, *What could you do to ensure standards are implemented successfully?*

APS participants responded:

Attitude

Be an advocate
Be enthusiastic about learning
Don’t try too hard
Be positive, believe it can be done
Make sure people know that standards are for all children, good for all children
Be the best teacher possible
Promote high standards for all students but not exclusion of kids who don’t meet them
Fully understand the standards; be well informed to pass the information to others
Stay focused on equitable access to opportunity
Understand the “whole cloth” – Don’t look on standards as an “add on”, but interwoven
Assess, evaluate, reflect on teaching and progress
Be proactive
Continue conversation with colleagues outside classroom; discuss with others
Offer assistance to schools and other programs that are not as far along in the process
Share knowledge with others
Be a lifelong learner (as model)
Be willing to change and try new ideas
Be a cheerleader
Support and encourage
Hold high expectations for students and teachers
Center the talk at schools around standards to all stakeholders, practice inclusiveness

Be truthful – level with parents and students
Develop a support group on how to help students who don't meet the standards
Keep thinking about the standards
Know standards for my area
Be more of a mentor or a coach

Actions

Standards is not a noun, it's an action
Take action, make it practical, not just talk

External

Develop a document to communicate standards to parents and families
Lobby stakeholders, advocate for areas of concern
Develop or find resources to help the implementation process
Work with parents and teachers to understand and implement standards

Internal

Post the standards
Include standards in assessments
Get to know backgrounds of students and continue to look for individualized instruction
Collect and use data to track progress
Choose meaningful instructional materials; reflect on correlation of standards with materials, especially in selection and adoption of new materials
Continually reinforce student ability
Become a stronger instructional leader in my school
Live standards in the classroom
Use of technology
Focus on standards
Knowledge before developing policy

Professional development

Help or develop instructional professional development for leaders and teachers
Study them and become familiar with their content
Stay educated on strategies, standards, methods, new developments
Make sure all professional development is aligned with standards based curriculum
Make sure school and professional development includes standards
Connect standards to education of teachers at university level
Embed standards in professional development workshops
Give workshops on standards, increase awareness of teachers
Continue to seek ways to give teachers time for dialogue and planning
Help teachers understand that many strategies they now incorporate are already standards-based
Ensure that standards are integrated into curriculum in way that is equitable regardless of culture or class
Push for professional development
Provide weekly collaboration time for teachers to talk about instruction
Focus collaboration on what teachers are already doing within their curriculum

Public participants responded:

Community Involvement

Contact parents and students. Use the website for information on standards and benchmarks.
Get involved with citizen advisory groups, ABEC, etc.

Be an involved parent; attend meetings wherever involvement is needed
 Recruit other parents through newsletters and existing organizations
 Help put the Chamber of Commerce and APS on the same playing field
 Let the administration and faculty know that we value them
 Participate actively with kids schools—volunteering, tutoring, PTA
 Voting, lobbying government for funding
 Marketing, i.e. character counts
 Keep attending meetings
 Hold the school district accountable through public reporting
 Be on the School Restructuring Council (SRC) at schools
 Run for school board
 Go back to the classroom – be a teacher
 Get involved with the political process – school board and legislature
 Communicate – provide awareness about needs for standards and what the payoff might be
 Work with College of Education and APS to develop high quality professional development and pre-service
 Inform my legislators that I expect more funding to help reach these standards
 Use Chamber of Commerce and businesses to advocate to the legislature for funding for education and importance of standards
 Advocate in a positive way to counter the cynicism in PTA meetings
 Volunteer to be part of the standards process; help with math standards
 Vote for people that are willing to give more money to teachers and schools
 Set up school councils that will have equal say, e.g. pilot project in North Valley to replace CAC
 Help to work on parental standards guide (when will they meet?)
 Volunteer for after school programs to teach power point, animation, and mentor children

Parent

Make sure as a parent that the child is ready to go to school
 Commit to work with my student and communicate with my child's teacher
 Educate our families on importance of standards
 Communicate standards to students and families
 Be positive
 Clarify own understanding of standards
 Communicate what I have learned to others (parents)
 Be well informed and informative
 Be familiar with standards, evaluate own child's performance and educate other parents to do the same
 Talk to your kids. Be available. Don't talk at them but with them.

APS

Walk the talk. Expect standards. As an employer, personally know them.
 Keep standards “on the front burner”—discuss them frequently with schools and community
 Provide information to groups to take the mystery out of standards
 Involve churches
 Understand the bigger picture of the Chamber plan – higher pay, better training, more support and communication, more funding
 Do a school newsletter to get the word out
 Communication between everybody (newspaper, conferences)
 Parent – communicate the standards within the community

General

The use of the word “all” students is uncomfortable for some participants
Need support from many people to meet the goals
Group’s ideas are representative of community needs
Continue fostering linkages between educational institutions and the community- it seems like a natural but it isn’t

Appendix 1

Discussion Outlines

Albuquerque Public Schools
Review & Comment
On
Draft Language Arts and Math Standards

DISCUSSION OUTLINE FOR FACILITATORS AND RECORDERS

For use on Saturday October 30, November 4, 11 and 18, 2000
Smith Brasher Hall, TVI
717 University Blvd. SE

Context for Participants: For the past year, a group of teachers, administrators, parents and union representatives have worked hard to develop the first draft of Content and Performance Standards in Math and Language Arts. Standards are clear, written expectations of what a student should learn; however, they do not limit or control how educators instruct their students. Standards allow teachers to use their knowledge, experience, and creativity to develop lessons that help students reach the standards.

Your input is necessary as APS moves towards finalizing and using these standards beginning in the fall of 2001. In your packets you have received the draft set of Content and Performance Standards for review. Your input today will be compiled and reported back to the schools and to participants by Shared Vision, a non-profit organization that specializes in engagement facilitation and reporting. Thank you for participating in this discussion.

9:40-10:00 a.m.

- Do a round of introductions (model it by introducing yourself).
- Establish Ground Rules.
 - Tell them that at the end of the morning, the group will select one participant to represent them on a review panel to review a draft of the report. (Scheduled for January 9, 2001 4:00-6:00 p.m.)
- Detailed comments.
 - Tell the group that specific performance standards can be used as examples by participants during the discussion, but that if they want to make detailed comments on specific standards, they should do so either on the written Survey forms, which are being mailed to all teachers and administrators, or on the Web site (www.aps.edu), and these detailed comments will be given to the writers' group that drafted the standards.
- Prior to discussion, ask participants to fill out two questionnaires, one for Math Standards and one for Language Arts Standards. Tell them that you will collect the forms at the end of the session and that they don't need to sign them.

10:00-12:30 a.m. Discussion Outline

1. When you filled out the two Questionnaires, did you agree or disagree that, as a whole, the Standards are clearly written? Why? Give examples, etc.

After discussion, what is the view now as to how clearly the Standards are written? Summarize why using the Template:

Question # _____

Why Agree?	Why Disagree?

What is needed for the standards to be clearly written?

2. When you filled out the Math Questionnaire, did you agree or disagree that the Math Standards reflect what all students should know and be able to do? Why? (Do they challenge students to work hard? / Are they realistic expectations for all students?)

After discussion, what is the group view now regarding whether the Math Standards reflect what all students should know and be able to do? Summarize why using the Template:

Question # _____

Why Agree?

Why Disagree?

What is needed for the Math Standards to reflect what students should know and do?

3. When you filled out the Language Arts Questionnaire, did you agree or disagree that the Language Arts Standards reflect what all students should know and be able to do? Why? (Do they challenge students to work hard? / Are they realistic expectations for all students?)

After discussion, what is the group view now regarding whether the Language Arts Standards reflect what all students should know and be able to do? Summarize why using the Template:

Question # _____

Why Agree?

Why Disagree?

What is needed for the Language Arts to reflect what students should know and do?

4. When you filled out the Questionnaires, did you agree or disagree that teachers would be able to meet the needs of individual students using the new Standards? Why?

After discussion, what is the group view now regarding whether the new Standards can be used to meet the needs of individual students? Summarize using the Template:

Question # _____

Why Agree?	Why Disagree?

What is needed for the Standards to meet the needs of individual students?

4. (Alternate #4 used for community and parent groups on November 11 and 18)
When you filled out the Questionnaires, did you agree or disagree that the Standards could be used to communicate effectively to parents about their student's achievement?

After discussion, what is the group view now regarding whether the new Standards can be used to communicate effectively to parents about their student's achievement?
Summarize using the Template:

Question # _____

Why Agree?	Why Disagree?

What is needed for the Standards to communicate effectively to parents?

5. What will be necessary to ensure that students reach the new Standards? (e.g. resources, materials, etc.) Use your favorite form of systematic brainstorming. Develop a list, grouping like items. Then prioritize the needs.

6. What could you do to ensure that the standards are implemented successfully? Give people time to think about this first before going round robin around the group.

Review Panel

- Have the group select a participant to serve on a review panel for the report summarizing this work session. Give this person a card to fill out with name, phone number, e-mail etc. The review by Internal participants today (teachers and administrators) is scheduled for January 9, 2001 at 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Reporting Out

- Ask the group to decide on an interesting thing or high point of the discussion that will take approximately 1 minute to report out back in the general session beginning at 12:30 and select someone to do the reporting.
- Ask everyone to fill out the two Questionnaires again and turn them in, making changes if their opinions have changed as a result of the discussion.
- Give the following to the Recorder:

Completed Questionnaires

Card from the person chosen to be on the Review Panel.

Flip Chart sheets (stapled, labeled with your name and group, and numbered in sequence). Flip charts should be cross-referenced with the Recorder's notes.

Convene back in the general session at 12:30 p.m.

Appendix 2

Summary of Teachers' Survey Responses

Summary of teacher comments from the APS Language Arts Standards Survey

During October-November 2000 when APS sponsored four public conversations to solicit feedback on the Math and Language Arts standards, the system also provided teachers with the option of giving feedback on a two-page survey. This survey was also made available on the APS web site. The following comments paraphrase and summarize the chief concerns and statements of teachers who submitted feedback either in writing or through the APS web site.

SAMPLE

Total	269 respondents		
Position	94%	Teachers	
	5%	Support Administrators	
	0%	Educational Assistants	
Years of Experience	26%	1- 5 years	
	21%	6-10 years	
	13%	11-15 years	
	40%	15+ years	
Grade Level	6%	Kindergarten	11% Fifth
	8%	First	5% Sixth
	11%	Second	5% Seventh
	8%	Third	5% Eighth
	7%	Fourth	34% Ninth – Twelfth

Mark the one statement that best describes your opinion about how clearly the LANGUAGE ARTS standards are written.

- 84% The LANGUAGE ARTS standards are written clearly.
- 14% Most of the LANGUAGE ARTS standards are written clearly.
- 1% Some of the LANGUAGE ARTS standards are written clearly.
- 0% No, the LANGUAGE ARTS standards are not written clearly.

The LANGUAGE ARTS Content Standards reflect what I believe all students should know and be able to do.

- 26% Strongly Agree
- 65% Agree
- 6% Disagree
- 1% Strongly Disagree
- 2% Don't Know

The LANGUAGE ARTS Benchmarks define what students at each level (elementary, middle, high school) should know and be able to do.

- 27% Strongly Agree
- 64% Agree
- 5% Disagree
- 1% Strongly Disagree
- 3% Don't Know

The LANGUAGE ARTS Performance Standards clearly define what students at each grade level should be able to demonstrate.

- 27% Strongly Agree

67%	Agree
3%	Disagree
2%	Strongly Disagree
2%	Don't Know

I would be able to develop an instructional program for a new student if his/her previous teacher provided me achievement information relative to the LANGUAGE ARTS Standards, Benchmarks, and Performance Standards.

21%	Strongly Agree
63%	Agree
8%	Disagree
2%	Strongly Disagree
6%	Don't Know

I would feel comfortable using the LANGUAGE ARTS Benchmarks and Performance Standards to communicate to parents about their students' achievement.

22%	Strongly Agree
66%	Agree
7%	Disagree
2%	Strongly Disagree
3%	Don't Know

The LANGUAGE ARTS Performance Standards written for your grade level are appropriate expectation for that grade.

20%	Strongly Agree
67%	Agree
5%	Disagree
5%	Strongly Disagree
2%	Don't Know

The LANGUAGE ARTS Standards document is easy to use (is user friendly).

24%	Strongly Agree
59%	Agree
11%	Disagree
3%	Strongly Disagree
4%	Don't Know

Major themes

1. Specific standards concerns

- P.4, Grade 1, #2 Top: punctuation: delete semi-colon
- P.11, Grade 3, #1, define synthesis; #6 not specific enough
- P.20, Grade 3, #3, overhead projectors?
- Strand II, 1st, Nos. 6 and 7 need further explanation; #9 unclear
- Strand III, 1st, Nos. 2 and 3 unclear; No. 4, too advanced for all 1st graders to master (basic capitalization); No. 5 needs further explanation
- P.21, Grade 4, Writing Strategies, No. 4, (grammar, spelling, mechanics, capitalization) delete capitalization, as mechanics includes punctuation and capitalization; edit "writes cursively" to writes in cursive handwriting
- All of the following are unclear: Composes a variety of written work that develops sentence fluency using a variety of multimedia strategies; Interprets universal values and conflicts in auditory / visual presentations; Analyses the effect on the viewer of images, text and sound in electronic journalism; Evaluates information for extraneous details, inconsistencies, relevant facts and organization

- On Strand I (K), vocabulary development, identifies and sorts common words, is perhaps too aggressive for all children.
- All of the following standards under Grade 8 are unclear: P.7, Reading Strategies, No. 3; P.14, Literary Analysis, No. 3; P.14, Literary Elements, No. 7; P.25, Writing Strategies, No. 1, bullet 2) “writes using specific rhetorical strategies (e.g. appeals to logic, emotion, ethics)”); P.25, Writing Applications, No. 5, bullet 1) “describes significance of the subject to the authors,” bullet 2) “... describes remembered responses ...”; P.47, Research Strategies, No. 1, bullet 1) “cross-references related topics ...” [Do you really expect this to be taught at Grade 8?]
- “Antecedent” in the glossary has an example that illustrates “appositive”
- Strand I, Reading Strategies, “common words” is unclear: How many? Which ones?
- GI, Reading Strategies 1 – “distinguishes between long and short vowel sounds.” How?
- “Blends the phonemes ...” C-at, should be cat, not the other way around
- GI, Writing Strategies 2, “Uses the elements of effective writing,” too vague as a performance standard. Do you mean “e.g.” for example, or “i.e.” that is?
- Speaking Applications 3, Why only discussion resulting in written products?
- Some of the Reading Strategies standards (1 and 2) will be quite difficult for some students. Speaking Strategies 1, 2 and 3 are very difficult for some students
- Most of these descriptions leave measurement to teacher discretion: What does “effective” mean? Or “identifies,” “analysis,” “evaluates,” or “demonstrates”?
- “Developing awareness” is too vague
- The major problem is that most of the students who arrive in the 9th grade cannot perform anywhere close to these tasks.

2. Professional development needs

- Principal training to help administrators familiarize themselves with current classroom activities
- In general, provide staff development on the standards and how their use should be evolving
- Systemwide focus on literacy professional development. Specific areas mentioned included phonics, 4-Blocks, and 6 Trait Writing
- Systemwide workshops to show how achievement information can be used for those students who move from school to school
- Provide time for teachers to collaborate with each other

3. Assessments

- Need assessments aligned with the standards, a consistent set from the earliest grades all the way through high school
- Need an easy assessment for students that transfers into classes during the year and to gauge where students are in general (students skills vary greatly in the same grade level)
- Checklists, portfolio information, evaluation forms and rubrics for students and teachers
- New, correlated assessment tools so we’re not working off general different assessments (K-2 Reading Inventory, for example, is similar but not close enough. It would be potentially confusing and highly time consuming to use both.)

4. Children with special needs

- Specifically, address ESL and Special Education students
- Development of remedial programs to help lower achieving students reach grade level standards
- Students learning English as a second language should be given more time to get to the standards described herein, most especially for speaking. Many are in their silent period (see S. Krashen’s and J. Cummins’ research) or by their nature prefer to write than speak. They need time.
- Money to hire extra teachers, teaching assistants and tutors to work with special needs children; money for books to send home with children
- Computerized reading programs for the lower performing students
- More current literary works, especially by minority authors

- Storytellers, preferably Hispanic or Native American, would be a valuable resource for APS
- How do these standards relate to special education students and their actual functioning levels?
- I need to be able to modify any and all of these to fit the needs of my special education students
- More translated materials and translation services for students learning English as a second language
- I wish more special education considerations could be present in the standards, strategies, for example, like singing the words, or a benchmark of reading 20 words perfectly, even backward decipherment of individual letters. You have to use what seem to be weird strategies to help special education children
- What services will be available for the students who excel and can meet standards above grade level?

5. Classroom materials

- Student reading material, especially for material specifically cited in the standards
- Need more textbooks aligned with the standards
- Please develop a checklist of the benchmarks and performance standards that can be used to communicate expectations to parents. These could be used in parent-teacher conferences as well as kept in the student's permanent file
- Stock the school libraries with materials referenced in the Language Arts texts
- A dictionary for each child
- Multiple copies of rich literature available to the classroom without the teacher having to scour the public libraries or pay for copies herself
- Teaching aids, lesson plans, manipulatives, assessments, examples of student work, flashcards, stories, etc.--- aligned with the standards
- Computers: hardware, software and access to the Internet in all classrooms; increased funding for fully equipped media centers in all schools
- It would be nice to have a list of words that all kindergarten teachers should use (to ensure that children are reaching the benchmarks)
- Internet access and email for all teachers

6. Strategies to support students not meeting standards or those falling behind

- How will teachers mediate students falling behind the rest of the class or simply way off track (achievement and social promotion issues)
- Many 9th graders and to a lesser extent 6th graders are performing far below the LA standards. One teacher said, "By 9th grade, I have students who have had no instruction whatsoever in grammar and little punctuation, while (a very few) others have had extensive work."
- More support for amended standards for children performing below grade level. If I teach students at "grade level," but they are not prepared, then the gap in their learning just grows much larger
- What other programs may be put into place for children who need more time to reach the performance standards, reading recovery say?.

7. Scope and sequence (Document organization)

- Organize the documents by grade-level and by logical groups of grades (i.e., 6-8), as well as across all grades. The different organizations would let me look at the next grade level and begin to introduce those standards and benchmarks for students who are ready to move on
- I like how the old DCCS was set up with examples on how to achieve to the goals
- These documents should be available on CD or diskette to enable teachers' cutting, pasting and juxtaposing standards / benchmarks above and below grade level, as necessary to meet the needs of students in the class
- How are the APS standards aligned to any national standards, such as the math standards, NCTM?
- Provide a general timeline for each grade-level to help teachers know, in general, what should be taught, by when
- There is too much material to be covered and not enough depth and attention paid to critical areas
- I believe in teaching depth so I feel there is too much breadth in this curriculum. The teacher feels pressured to dilute efforts.

- The benchmarks are impossible to meet for all students. The children are at different developmental stages and have had different early childhood stimulations. We cannot make up for these differences
- Use of benchmarks should be a framework around which teacher expertise, creativity, and passion should play a vital role
- Students come to 6th grade often unable to write complete sentences or organize information by paragraph and unable to relate much of the reading material to their own lives. ... Too much time is spent “cramming” grade 3-5 skills ... Respect for the benchmarks (in the lower grades) needs to improve as does curriculum planning and lesson planning relative to the standards

8. Smaller class sizes / Time concerns and suggestions

- Fewer students per class would facilitate the teaching, evaluation and individual conferencing that is vital to student success
- More time to devote to helping children meet the standards. Reducing class size is critical to success
- Pre-school for all 4 year olds, extended or full-day kindergarten, and a home-school liaison to teach parents what they should be doing the first five years to help their children succeed
- Class size reduction should occur only if system hires qualified teachers; avoid weakening teacher quality
- More time to collaborate with other teachers about how to improve use of class time helping children achieve to the standards
- To be able to cover all of the material definitely will require that Language Arts have two class periods daily
- More preparation and planning time
- Full day kindergarten and more planning time
- More school days and fewer hours a day; after school learning activities

9. Hire staff

- New teacher training programs to acquaint beginning teachers with how to plan, assess and reteach students slower to learn
- Full-time librarians at all schools regardless of size
- On-site standards experts to answer teacher questions
- More bilingual teachers
- Technology trainers (for teachers) and technology teachers (for students) at all schools
- Writing / literacy specialists at all schools

10. Other

- Many of these standards simply are not age appropriate. This document is tedious
- “Meta-cognitive” should be in the glossary
- Faster connections to the Internet at schools
- Much of the wording is too vague (e.g., what does “appropriate” mean? Recognize? Understand? We cannot chart growth with those words.)
- Make the document easier for parents to understand – make it easier to read, using simple language
- Question: How will we track student progress on the standards? Will we change our report cards?
- I feel these standards were written for students who are college bound. What will happen to students who do not plan intend to attend college?
- I would like to see the benchmarks referred to as achievement levels rather than grade level standards. Not every child entering a given grade will be ready or able to meet standards for that grade, but if we know a child’s exit level from the previous grade, then we at least can look at continuous growth rather than success / failure.
- What happens to my ESL students who don’t reach these goals? What happens to me if my students don’t reach these goals?

Summary of teacher comments from the APS Math Standards Survey

During October-November 2000 when APS sponsored four public conversations to solicit feedback on the Math and Language Arts standards, the system also provided teachers with the option of giving feedback on a two-page written survey. This survey was also available to educators on the APS web site. The following comments paraphrase and summarize the chief concerns and statements of teachers who submitted feedback in writing or through the APS web site.

SAMPLE

Total	264 respondents		
Position	94%	Teachers	
	5%	Support Administrators	
	1%	Educational Assistants	
Years of Experience	24%	1- 5 years	
	22%	6-10 years	
	15%	11-15 years	
	39%	15+ years	
Grade Level	10%	Kindergarten	12%
	8%	First	10%
	13%	Second	5%
	7%	Third	2%
	11%	Fourth	22%
			Fifth
			Sixth
			Seventh
			Eighth
			Ninth – Twelfth

Mark the one statement that best describes your opinion about how clearly the MATH standards are written.

- 82% The MATH standards are written clearly.
- 17% Most of the MATH standards are written clearly.
- 0% Some of the MATH standards are written clearly.
- 1% No, the MATH standards are not written clearly.

The MATH Content Standards reflect what I believe all students should know and be able to do.

- 29% Strongly Agree
- 62% Agree
- 4% Disagree
- 2% Strongly Disagree
- 3% Don't Know

The MATH Benchmarks define what students at each level (elementary, middle, high school) should know and be able to do.

- 29% Strongly Agree
- 64% Agree
- 3% Disagree
- 0% Strongly Disagree
- 3% Don't Know

The MATH Performance Standards clearly define what students at each grade level should be able to demonstrate.

29% Strongly Agree
 67% Agree
 3% Disagree
 0% Strongly Disagree
 1% Don't Know

I would be able to develop an instructional program for a new student if his/her previous teacher provided me achievement information relative to the MATH Standards, Benchmarks, and Performance Standards.

24% Strongly Agree
 58% Agree
 8% Disagree
 2% Strongly Disagree
 8% Don't Know

I would feel comfortable using the MATH Benchmarks and Performance Standards to communicate to parents about their students' achievement.

26% Strongly Agree
 59% Agree
 8% Disagree
 1% Strongly Disagree
 6% Don't Know

The MATH Performance Standards written for your grade level are appropriate expectation for that grade.

26% Strongly Agree
 56% Agree
 9% Disagree
 4% Strongly Disagree
 5% Don't Know

The APS MATH Standards document is easy to use (is user friendly).

23% Strongly Agree
 58% Agree
 12% Disagree
 2% Strongly Disagree
 5% Don't Know

Major themes

11. Specific standards concerns

- Better define terms. What, for example, constitutes proficiency, or resourcefulness? Standards written in specific behavioral terms (student counts orally to 100) are clearer (than others)
- P.6, No. 8: if $\frac{1}{8} = .125$ (???)
- P. 12, Grade 6, No. 11: $36'' = 2 \text{ ft.}$ (???) ... (The standards need a thorough proofing.)
- P.6, Strand II, Grade 6, No. 4: vague, confusing and unnecessary
- P. 18, Strand IV, Grades 6 and 8: "Probability" is not probability; it should be labeled "statistics" or "data analysis"
- P. 21, Strand V, Grade 6, No. 2: omit "discrete functions" and its example (check the definition of discrete functions in the glossary.)
- Strand II, Grade 6, No. 14: eliminate
- These strands are more in line with the KDPR except for more abstract concepts of conservation of numbers and telling time on an analog clock
- Strand III, Grade 1, Geometry No. 4 uses rotation and reflection to arrange shapes
- P. 7, Grade 8, Rational and irrational numbers: the use of the sign $<$ may not be clearly understood, especially when this sign is used to indicate a "less than" amount

- Grade 6, under variables expressions and equations, functions do not seem age appropriate
- We need to have our standards equivalent to other states' (standards). Arizona's and Colorado's are much higher
- Grade 3, 2D Geometry, Nos. 6, 8, 9 and 11 are unclear to me
- The statistics standard goes too deeply; regression and coefficients require software not yet in schools
- Three dimensional coordinates missing a lot; no "central ...theorem" in statistics

12. Professional development needs

- In general, provide staff development on the standards
- Provide time for teachers to collaborate with each other
- On-site standards expert to aid in answering questions
- Training and workshops for specific needs, i.e. problem solving skills, basic computation, etc.
- Teachers need to have a good grasp of technology and math and how they relate to each other so students will be able to make the connection, too
- Most of these standards seem to follow the TERK (or TERC) way of doing math. I would like to have the time to make materials needed and to have some of the TERK workshops
- Money to communicate the standards to the community
- Sample lesson plans based on the performance standards would be helpful
- Support from central administration to foster commitment to standards on a systemwide basis (teachers, custodians, secretaries, etc.)

13. Assessments

- We need assessments aligned with the standards
- Need an easy assessment for students that transfer into classes during the year to gauge where students are in general (students skills' vary greatly in the same grade level)
- Mandated standardized test should be directly correlated to the math content and performance standards. If we decide this is the content worth teaching / learning, then it is reasonable and ethical to test students on these items

14. Children with special needs

- Specifically, address needs of ESL and special education students. What modifications / assessments, for example, will be available for special education students?
- Special education math classes will need a teaching assistant in the classroom at all times to ensure that all students are able to reach the goals in their IEPs
- Some benchmarks seem quite difficult for special needs students (geometry and spatial sense)
- APS should draft math standards for special education students, or incorporate them within the general education standards

15. Classroom materials

- More textbooks aligned with the standards
- Standards booklet per grade level in Spanish to send home to parents
- Student reading material, especially for information specifically cited in the standards
- Money for replacement of worn and outdated tools (compasses, rulers, protractors)
- Rubrics aligned to the standards and grade level benchmarks
- Teaching aids, lesson plans, manipulatives and containers (such as base 10 cubes, tiles for learning shapes and sizes, and connecting cubes), assessments, examples of student work, flashcards, stories, etc. – all aligned with the standards
- Computers and laptops with CD Rom drives, hardware, software, and access to the Internet in each classroom
- We need appropriate textbooks, classroom sets of graphing calculators, professional development on use of standards, technology, etc.

- Each student needs a computer, calculator and one-on-one teacher support when behind; each classroom needs smaller class sizes, computer decent math books
- Update and current curriculum materials

16. Strategies to support students not meeting standards or falling behind

- Remediation will be necessary for students who are falling behind the rest of the class or simply way off track (achievement and social promotion issues), who will work with these students?
- Have all day kindergarten at each APS elementary school
- Will all students have to meet the Algebra II standards, even those not college-bound?
- Who is responsible for remediation when students have failed to learn concepts from previous years?
- More support is going to be key at home for most students
- I can present an instructional program to teach the math standards to students. I cannot assure that a particular student will even try to achieve that standard regardless of ability
- Tutors for special needs children, i.e. second-language learners and developmentally slower students
- What alternatives are available for students who excel?

17. Scope and sequence (Document organization)

- Organize the document by grade-level and by logical groups of grades (i.e., 6-8) as well as across all grades to illustrate the big picture
- Math clusters need to be consistent in their math adoption. Elementary, middle and high schools in the same cluster must adopt the same program to ensure there is a building of knowledge
- Provide a general timeline for each grade-level to help teachers know, in general, what should be taught, by when. ... Set up all standards / benchmarks under each individual grade level: All 1st grade standards / benchmarks grouped together, for example
- There is too much material to be covered and not enough depth and attention paid to critical areas
- At this point, most of the performance levels are a grade level behind the benchmarks

18. Smaller class size / Time concerns and suggestions

- More time to devote to helping the children in their classrooms meet the standards, and smaller classes will be critical to succeeding
- Class size reductions should be attained by hiring qualified teachers. Do not reduce class sizes if this will weaken teacher quality
- Lower student-teacher ratios: More teachers are necessary to ensure that all children receive the maximum amount of attention they need to succeed in standards-based classrooms
- In general, more time to help students reach the standards; more time to collaborate with other teachers
- Our 83-minute block is going a long way toward reaching these goals. A teacher can introduce, connect to prior knowledge, extend, review and debrief new concepts every day
- Time after school to teach or review basic facts for students who don't know them
- Assurance that each entering 9th grader has met K-8 standards and is proficient in the same

19. Hire staff

- Technology trainers (for teachers) and technology teachers (for students)
- Retain quality math teachers
- More bilingual teachers

20. Other

- Wording too vague and not helpful (i.e., what does "appropriate" mean)
- Make the document easier for parents to understand – make it easier to read, using simple language
- How will we track student progress on the standards? Will we change our report cards?

- I would like to see more “goal oriented standards,” based on what students in high school intend to do with their lives. I feel as if a generalized standard is now outdated and unrealistic
- Revise the report card to reflect performance with standards
- Hard to buy into top-down regulation, if we’re actually going to be monitored and censured for lapses
- Need to know how IMP math covers these standards
- We need a document for parents to know what is expected of their child at each grade level
- Who will determine if the standards have been met?
- We are doing a disservice to our students when we move to eliminate courses such as Business Math, Consumer Math, Basic Math and Pre-Algebra. Perhaps these courses need to be redesigned to raise the bar. However, not every student can and / or wants to take college prep math classes. Some students need to remediate and eliminating these chances disables our students