Pre-Session Assignment #2

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Douglas Archibald's paper, *Information Technology and the Goals of Standards-Based Instruction: Advances and Continuing Challenges*, examines goals of standards-based reforms in education and developments in information technology. Effective education requires monitoring, collection of data, and instructional design. SBIA reform creates this type of environment for student success.

Student based instruction and assessment (SBIA) as it is called "moves teaching towards clear and consistent standards, assessment of student performance to monitor progress, and utilizes assessment information for instructional planning." However, there exists a gap between the SBIA model and practice. Disparity between achievement and academic standards between schools especially schools of different demographics is rampant. There is also variation between the expectations of teachers and instructional practice among schools and classrooms. As a result, teachers who have high expectations are more effective in creating high achievers. The classroom teacher is not the only stakeholder in this model. Administrative leadership is essential in developing this model. However, leadership in standards based education has been deficient at the school and district level. Research has shown that successful "leaders of reform had access to a wide variety of information on student, staff, and school performance and used the information to guide decision-making, provide feedback to school constituents, and enhance organizational management." As the author notes, standards based reform is more assumed than documented; however, it is clear that the gap has lessened due to clearer standards, improved assessment, and stronger accountability of all stakeholders involved.

The development of the computer, local computer networking, and the Internet

has made information more accessible. Prior to this most educational standards and

results were distributed in paper reports. This posed a great challenge to classroom

teachers and administrators who needed quick access to this information for instruction

and instructional management purposes. The advance of technology has also made

distributing, revising, and accessing the information easier. In addition, clearer

educational goals and improved performance results has given greater support to SBIA.

Educational policy change has come from standards-based reform and

developments in information technology. Though not perfect, standards based

performance and assessment requires consistency in how it is implemented and

supported. Information technology plays an important part in facilitating standards-based

reform. Instructional management and information technology systems have improved

the development and management of lesson plans, student academic records, information

about students' instructional experiences. When used effectively, all parts of the SBIA

work together to create a model that is efficient, effective, and performs.

Information technology is only one part of the SBIA model. Although, the

information technology systems can place the information necessary to implement the

SBIA at the teacher's fingertips thus bringing this reform more in the open. The question

remains if this current approach to assessment is broad enough to address the basic skills

students need to succeed and if the education system on the whole is preparing students

for future education, training, or employment. This is the dilemma the education system

is currently in. In BC, there is now recommendation for a new graduation program,

which would start in grade 10 and increase the number of mandatory exams in all key

academic areas. In contrast, there would also be fewer grade 12 exams thus students will

benefit more from the learning. As well, grade 12 exams can be deferred for a year to

allow a student to write them at a later date if he/she wishes to attend university. A

graduation portfolio has also been introduced to broaden the scope of the assessment.

This article has good intentions, but how applicable it is to the current educational

climate can be questioned. Nevertheless, it stands upon solid research foundation and

opens an area for debate.

Archibald, D. (2001). *Information Technology and the Goals of Standards-Based
        Instruction: Advances and Continuing Challenges.* Retrieved April 17, 2003 from
        http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v9n48