

## What Makes a Leader?

by [Daniel Goleman](#)

*It was Daniel Goleman who first brought the term “emotional intelligence” to a wide audience with his 1995 book of that name, and it was Goleman who first applied the concept to business with his 1998 HBR article, reprinted here. In his research at nearly 200 large, global companies, Goleman found that while the qualities traditionally associated with leadership—such as intelligence, toughness, determination, and vision—are required for success, they are insufficient. Truly effective leaders are also distinguished by a high degree of emotional intelligence, which includes self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill.*

*These qualities may sound “soft” and unbusinesslike, but Goleman found direct ties between emotional intelligence and measurable business results. While emotional intelligence’s relevance to business has continued to spark debate over the past six years, Goleman’s article remains the definitive reference on the subject, with a description of each component of emotional intelligence and a detailed discussion of how to recognize it in potential leaders, how and why it connects to performance, and how it can be learned.*

Every businessperson knows a story about a highly intelligent, highly skilled executive who was promoted into a leadership position only to fail at the job. And they also know a story about someone with solid—but not extraordinary—intellectual abilities and technical skills who was promoted into a similar position and then soared.

Such anecdotes support the widespread belief that identifying individuals with the “right stuff” to be leaders is more art than science. After all, the personal styles of superb leaders vary: Some leaders are subdued and analytical; others shout their manifestos from the mountaintops. And just as important, different situations call for different types of leadership. Most mergers need a sensitive negotiator at the helm, whereas many turnarounds require a more forceful authority.

I have found, however, that the most effective leaders are alike in one crucial way: They all have a high degree of what has come to be known as *emotional intelligence*. It’s not that IQ and technical skills are irrelevant. They do matter, but mainly as “threshold capabilities”; that is, they are the entry-level requirements for executive positions. But my research, along with other recent studies, clearly shows that emotional intelligence is the sine qua non of leadership. Without it, a person can have the best training in the world, an incisive, analytical mind, and an endless supply of smart ideas, but he still won’t make a great leader.

In the course of the past year, my colleagues and I have focused on how emotional intelligence operates at work. We have examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and effective performance, especially in leaders. And we have observed how emotional intelligence shows itself on the job. How can you tell if someone has high emotional intelligence, for example, and how can you recognize it in yourself? In the following pages, we’ll explore these questions, taking each of the components of emotional intelligence—self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill—in turn.

## The Five Components of Emotional Intelligence at Work

	Definition	Hallmarks
Self-Awareness	the ability to recognize and understand your moods, emotions, and drives, as well as their effect on others	self-confidence realistic self-assessment self-deprecating sense of humor
Self-Regulation	the ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods the propensity to suspend judgment – to think before acting	trustworthiness and integrity comfort with ambiguity openness to change
Motivation	a passion to work for reasons that go beyond money or status a propensity to pursue goals with energy and persistence	strong drive to achieve optimism, even in the face of failure organizational commitment
Empathy	the ability to understand the emotional makeup of other people skill in treating people according to their emotional reactions	expertise in building and retaining talent cross-cultural sensitivity service to clients and customers
Social Skill	proficiency in managing relationships and building networks an ability to find common ground and build rapport	effectiveness in leading change persuasiveness expertise in building and leading teams

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### Evaluating Emotional Intelligence

Most large companies today have employed trained psychologists to develop what are known as “competency models” to aid them in identifying, training, and promoting likely stars in the leadership firmament. The psychologists have also developed such models for lower-level positions. And in recent years, I have analyzed competency models from 188 companies, most of which were large and global and included the likes of Lucent Technologies, British Airways, and Credit Suisse.

In carrying out this work, my objective was to determine which personal capabilities drove outstanding performance within these organizations, and to what degree they did so. I grouped capabilities into three categories: purely technical skills like accounting and business planning; cognitive abilities like analytical reasoning; and competencies demonstrating emotional intelligence, such as the ability to work with others and effectiveness in leading change.

To create some of the competency models, psychologists asked senior managers at the companies to identify the capabilities that typified the organization’s most outstanding leaders. To create other models, the psychologists used objective criteria, such as a division’s profitability, to differentiate the star performers at senior levels within their organizations from the average ones. Those individuals were then extensively interviewed and tested, and their capabilities were compared. This process resulted in the creation of lists of ingredients for highly effective leaders. The lists ranged in length from seven to 15 items and included such ingredients as initiative and strategic vision.

When I analyzed all this data, I found dramatic results. To be sure, intellect was a driver of outstanding performance. Cognitive skills such as big-picture thinking and long-term vision were particularly important. But when I calculated the ratio of technical skills, IQ, and emotional intelligence as ingredients of excellent

**Daniel Goleman** is the author of *Emotional Intelligence* (Bantam, 1995) and a coauthor of *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence* (Harvard Business School, 2002). He is the cochairman of the Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations, which is based at Rutgers University’s Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology in Piscataway, New Jersey. He can be reached at [Daniel.Goleman@verizon.net](mailto:Daniel.Goleman@verizon.net).

<http://hbr.org/2004/01/what-makes-a-leader/ar/1>



## **ASCD EXPRESS**

Building School Morale

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# **A Multiplier Environment**

## **Are Your Teachers Being Stressed or Stretched?**

*Elise Foster and Liz Wiseman*

It's no secret that teacher and school morale is at an all-time low. The 29th annual MetLife survey of the American teacher reported that only 39 percent of teachers said they were very satisfied and more than 50 percent said they felt under "great stress" several days a week. Other surveys show high morale dropping from 27 percent to 15 percent while low morale rose from 42 percent to more than 55 percent (National Union of Teachers, 2013). It might be easy to conclude that this loss of morale is because our schools are burdened with doing more with less, but with the right type of leadership, teachers and staff can feel a powerful pressure to perform at their best rather than experience a debilitating stress. As a leader, are you creating an environment where people feel stressed from an overwhelming workload and a loss of control or one where they feel stretched, using their full capability to solve hard, important problems?

### **Draining the Rainy Day Fund**

You've seen this principal, maybe not at your school, but certainly in others. She is the leader who dashes briskly down the hall, notorious for poking her head in and out of classrooms as if to catch teachers in a mistake. The click-clack of her high heels is an early storm warning that sends shivers down teachers' spines. She instills profound fear such that her teachers are constantly on high alert. Well that was Georgia Rudman, an urban elementary school principal.\*

The stress Rudman layered onto her staff was so palpable that even the students felt it, which is why the social committee played such a crucial role in this high-poverty school. In their planning meetings for Field Day, the school's most treasured event, you could sense the excitement and the ownership the committee took for delivering a day all students would remember fondly. They masterminded a schedule that would make most air traffic controllers envious, with each class's movement from activity to activity clearly charted like a flight plan. The day, including a rainy-day back up Plan B, was carefully designed and outlined in detail for Rudman's review.



When the day finally arrived, it came with torrential rains, literally and figuratively. The team was disappointed but fully ready to implement Plan B, watching a movie in true "movie theater" style, one that most of these kids would never get at home. But Rudman intervened, vetoed the plan and rejiggered the schedule to deliver an indoor field day: No time for discussion; just do it. The team's ownership washed away as Rudman took over. They were now left to deal with the bloody reality of burlap sack races in the concrete hallways. Several skinned knees, and many complaints later, the day finally ended. The injuries healed, but the team was permanently damaged.

Their "can-do" attitude became one of "why bother?" Instead of empowering her team, this leader pushed her own ideas, smothering the energy and creativity of others.

### **Diminisher or Multiplier?**

When leaders force their ideas, they drain intelligence, energy, and capability from the people around them. These are the idea killers, the energy sappers, the Diminishers of talent and commitment. People learn it's easier and safer to let the boss do the thinking, and then they disengage.

On the other side of the spectrum are leaders who use their intelligence to amplify the smarts and capabilities of the people around them. When these leaders walk into a room, light bulbs go on over people's heads, ideas flow, and problems get solved. These are the leaders who inspire employees to stretch themselves to deliver results that surpass expectations. These leaders are Multipliers, and our schools need more of them—especially now, when leaders are expected to do more with less.

As we conducted research for *The Multiplier Effect: Tapping the Genius Inside Our Schools*, we found that across education institutions, Multipliers are able to get more than twice the output from their teams than Diminishers. We asked successful professionals (nominators) to identify two leaders: one around whom hard, complex problems got solved and another who had the opposite effect. Nominators rated the leadership practices of each leader on a five-point scale and then estimated the percentage of their own intelligence and capability that each leader would use.

We studied more than 400 leaders throughout the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom and aggregated this data to determine the levels of intelligence each type of leader used and the behaviors that distinguished the Diminisher from Multiplier leaders. We found that



Diminishers get less than half of people's intelligence and capability (40 percent) while Multipliers received an average of 88 percent, or 2.3 times what the Diminishers got (Wiseman, Allen, and Foster, 2013). In effect, they double the available intelligence on their team. We refer to this as the Multiplier Effect.

So why do Multipliers get so much more? It begins with their outlook on the people with whom they interact. They look around them and see a diverse set of smart, capable people who can be successful. This mindset causes Multipliers to approach leadership differently, allowing them to get dramatically enhanced results and build unity and trust within a school or district. While Multipliers and Diminishers do many things alike, we found five fundamental differences (See the "five disciplines" in the figure below) that set Multipliers apart from their counterparts.

DIMINISHERS		MULTIPLIERS																									
These leaders are absorbed in their own intelligence, stifle others, and deplete the organization of crucial intelligence and capability.		These leaders are genius makers and bring out the intelligence in others. They build collective, viral intelligence in organizations.																									
SEE	<b>The Assumption</b> "People won't figure it out without me"	<b>The Assumption</b> "People are smart and will figure it out"	SEE																								
DO	<b>The Five Disciplines of the Diminisher</b> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">DIMINISHER</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>The Gate Keeper</td> <td>Hoards resources and underutilizes talent</td> </tr> <tr> <td>The Tyrant</td> <td>Creates a tense environment that suppresses people's thinking and capability</td> </tr> <tr> <td>The Know-It-All</td> <td>Gives directives that showcase how much they know</td> </tr> <tr> <td>The Decision Maker</td> <td>Makes centralized, abrupt decisions that confuse the organization</td> </tr> <tr> <td>The Micromanager</td> <td>Drives results through their personal involvement</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	DIMINISHER		The Gate Keeper	Hoards resources and underutilizes talent	The Tyrant	Creates a tense environment that suppresses people's thinking and capability	The Know-It-All	Gives directives that showcase how much they know	The Decision Maker	Makes centralized, abrupt decisions that confuse the organization	The Micromanager	Drives results through their personal involvement	<b>The Five Disciplines of the Multiplier</b> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">MULTIPLIER</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>The Talent Finder</td> <td>Attracts talented people &amp; uses them at their highest point of contribution</td> </tr> <tr> <td>The Liberator</td> <td>Creates an intense environment that requires people's best thinking and work</td> </tr> <tr> <td>The Challenger</td> <td>Defines an opportunity that causes people to stretch</td> </tr> <tr> <td>The Community Builder</td> <td>Drives sound decisions by constructing decision-making forums</td> </tr> <tr> <td>The Investor</td> <td>Gives other people ownership for results and invests in their success</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	MULTIPLIER		The Talent Finder	Attracts talented people & uses them at their highest point of contribution	The Liberator	Creates an intense environment that requires people's best thinking and work	The Challenger	Defines an opportunity that causes people to stretch	The Community Builder	Drives sound decisions by constructing decision-making forums	The Investor	Gives other people ownership for results and invests in their success	DO
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To see this Multiplier Effect in practice, let's consider another school leader, Alyssa Gallagher, an assistant superintendent who has sparked a learning revolution across her district by promoting trust and mutual respect.

### Leading the Charge

In 2010, Los Altos School District in California formulated a bold new vision: Revolutionize learning for all students by 2015. Gallagher, a former principal, was passionate about improving



the student experience. Chairing this initiative was a natural role for her, and, given the high visibility, it would have been tempting for her to drive the initiative herself. But Gallagher cares less about being *in charge* and more about leading *a charge*. Instead of seeing the teachers as the resistance, she saw them as leaders in the movement. Rather than asking, "How do I get this done?" Gallagher asked, "How do we empower and excite our teachers to lead this revolution?"

Gallagher began by assembling a pilot team, carefully selecting four teachers passionate about rethinking math instruction. These teachers leaned into the challenge, not just by successfully implementing the [Khan Academy](#) in their classrooms, but also by sharing it broadly within their schools. Intent on revolutionizing learning across the district, Gallagher gave the pilot team further ownership, inviting them to serve as coaches to other teachers. Teachers were experiencing success, and momentum was building, but they also needed further training on how to truly integrate technology into the overall instructional program.

Capitalizing on the momentum and energy, Gallagher made an attractive offer to other teachers: We'll invest in you to grow *your* ideas. You'll have access to these coaches and additional technology tools, and you'll receive extra professional development, but we'll expect you to be [lead learners](#) and teach others at your site. Teachers came up with creative solutions such as a "Genius Bar" every morning in the staff room, where teachers can get one-on-one technology help and "Appy Hour" once a month to discuss new applications in the classroom (Gallagher, 2013). When school leaders fully utilize the talent and capability of staff, teachers operate at their best and experience a challenging but exhilarating workplace. These teacher leaders then create an environment where students perform at their best.

### **Multipliers Across Education**

Schools with a single-brain leadership model will likely suffer perennial morale troubles. It is the organization led not by the genius, but by the genius maker that taps and unleashes brilliance across an entire school or district. What could your school accomplish if you could mobilize all the energy and intelligence around you? What is possible if we could do this across *all* our schools? We can't afford schools that operate on a fraction of the intelligence inside them. We need schools that practice the multiplication of intelligence and tap into our hidden reserves of intelligence to unleash it against our biggest challenges.

\* Georgia Rudman is a pseudonym.



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[Elise Foster](#) and [Liz Wiseman](#) are the authors of the *The Multiplier Effect* (Sage, 2013).

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# IMPLEMENTATION!!

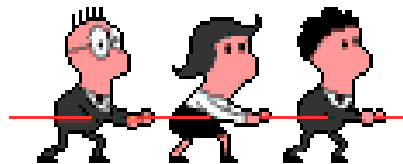


**MAKE IT SO!**

**NIKE: JUST DO IT!**

**NO EXCUSES!**

**GIT 'ER DONE!**



**DO OR DO NOT. THERE IS NO TRY!**

## KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION:

### The magnificent 7



- ✚ Start by analyzing data or student work (collected and presented by principal, leadership team, department, or cadre)
- ✚ Publicly identify a problem (led by principal and leadership team or cadre)
- ✚ Publicly agree on a solution based on some new information (led by principal and leadership team, department, or cadre)
- ✚ Publicly agree on when to start (led by principal and leadership team, department, or cadre)
- ✚ Monitor implementation & report back to the faculty (principal, leadership team, and teachers – post bar graphs)
- ✚ Publicly review short-term results (weekly/monthly with the faculty)
- ✚ Publicly recognize success (weekly/monthly with the faculty)

# HOW TO IMPLEMENT AN INNOVATION



**STEP #1** – Provide **professional development** on the innovation

**STEP #2** – **Calendar the innovation** for implementation, e.g., first two weeks of October, during the month of February, beginning next Wednesday, etc.

**STEP #3** – **Post the strategy** and dates of implementation in each classroom. Post the strategy on a **Strategy Wall** in the front office. **Collect photos and testimonials** and post them during the implementation period.

**STEP #4** – **Administrators and teachers walk classes** each week and **tally the number of times they see the innovation**; provide this weekly feedback to the faculty during the implementation period. The number of tallies should increase each week.

**STEP #5** – **Teachers discuss the innovation in team meetings** and turn in minutes to the principal; the principal comments on the minutes and returns them to each team.

**STEP #6** – **The principal features several teachers at each faculty meeting** to demonstrate or share how they have put into practice the selected innovation.

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# CLOSING THE LOOP

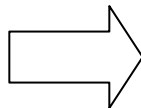


- ✓ **IN BUSINESS = "EXECUTION"**
- ✓ **IN EDUCATION = "IMPLEMENTATION"**



**AND SEEING IS BELIEVING ...**

OBSERVATIONS: <u>SEPTEMBER</u>			
INNOVATION	OBS	NOT OBS	NA
#1			
#2			
#3			
<b>TOTAL PERCENTAGE</b>	___%	___%	___%



OBSERVATIONS: <u>OCTOBER</u>			
INNOVATION	OBS	NOT OBS	NA
#1			
#2			
#3			
<b>TOTAL PERCENTAGE</b>	___%	___%	___%

# IMPLEMENTATION MONITORING

MONTH: \_\_\_\_\_

OBSERVATIONS BY: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE OF OBSERVATIONS: \_\_\_\_\_

INNOVATION	OBSERVED	NOT OBSERVED (Should have been)	NOT APPLICABLE
#1			
#2			
#3			
#4			
#5			
#6			
<b>TOTAL PERCENTAGE</b>	___%	___%	___%

# KEY INNOVATIONS IMPLEMENTATION CALENDAR

SCHOOL: \_\_\_\_\_ SCHOOL YEAR: \_\_\_\_\_

MONTH	STRATEGIES, INNOVATIONS, CAMPAIGNS
SEPTEMBER	
OCTOBER	
NOVEMBER	
DECEMBER	
JANUARY	
FEBRUARY	
MARCH	
APRIL	
MAY	

# Common Core Big Idea Series 1: A New Blueprint

DECEMBER 4, 2012



Image credit: iStockphoto

**Editor's note:** This is the first post in a five-part series which takes a look at five big ideas for implementation of the Common Core State Standards, authored by Jay McTighe and [Grant Wiggins](#)

In our travels around the country since the Common Core Standards were released, we sometimes hear comments such as, “Oh, here we go again;” “Same old wine in a new bottle;” or “We already do all of this.” Such reactions are not surprising given the fact that we *have* been here before. A focus on standards is not new. However, it a misconception to assume that these standards merely require minor tweaks to our curriculum and instructional practices. In fact, the authors of the Mathematics Standards anticipated this reaction and caution against it: “These Standards are not intended to be new names for old ways of doing business.” (p 5) Merely trying to retrofit the standards to typical teaching and testing practices will undermine the effort.

A related misconception in working with the Common Core is evident when teachers turn immediately to the grade-level standards listed for their grade or course to plan their teaching. Such an action is reasonable; after all, isn't that what they are supposed to teach? While understandable, we advise against zeroing in on the grade-level standards *before* a careful examination of the goals and structure of the overall documents.

To invoke a construction analogy: Think of the grade-level standards as building materials. As a construction supervisor, we wouldn't simply drop off materials and tools at a worksite and have the workers “go at it.” Instead, we would begin with a blueprint -- an overall vision of the desired building to guide its construction. Without an overall end in mind, teachers can create wonderful individual rooms that won't necessarily fit together within and across floors or achieve the intended results.

The Common Core Standards have been developed with **long-term** outcomes in mind (e.g., College and Career Anchor Standards in English Language Arts), and their components are intended to work together (e.g., Content and Practice Standards in mathematics). This point is highlighted in a recently released publication, *Publishers' Criteria for the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics* (July 2012):

*“The Standards’ refers to all elements of the design -- the wording of domain headings, cluster headings, and individual statements; the text of the grade level introductions and high school category descriptions; the placement of the standards for mathematical practice at each grade level. The pieces are designed to fit together, and the standards document fits them together, presenting a coherent whole where the connections within grades and the flows of ideas across grades ....”*

*From "K–8 Publishers' Criteria for the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics" 7/20/2012*

It is imperative that educators understand the intent and structure of the Standards in order to work with them most effectively. Accordingly, we recommend that schools set the expectation and schedule the time for staff to read and discuss the standards, beginning with the "front matter," *not* the grade-level standards. We also recommend that staff reading and discussion be guided by an essential question: *What are the new distinctions in these Standards and what do they mean for our practice?* Since the standards are complex texts and demand a "close" reading, we recommend that staff carefully examine the table of contents and the organizational structure; the headers (e.g., Design Considerations; What is Not Covered, etc.), the components (e.g., Anchor Standards and Foundational Skills for ELA; Standards for Mathematical Practice), and the Appendices (ELA).

Following a thorough reading of these introductory sections, discuss the changing instructional emphases called for by the Standards and their implications. For example, the ELA Standards demand a greater balance between reading informational and literary texts, and stress the use of text-based evidence to support argumentation in writing and speaking. The Mathematics Standards accentuate the focus on a smaller set of conceptually larger ideas that spiral across the grades (as opposed to simply "covering" numerous skills) with an emphasis on meaningful application using the Practices.

We cannot overemphasize the value of taking the time to collaboratively examine the Standards in this way. Failure to understand the Standards and adjust practices accordingly will likely result in "same old, same old" teaching with only superficial connections to the grade-level standards. In that case, their promise to enhance student performance will not be realized.

## Common Core Big Idea Series 2: The Standards Are Not Curriculum

DECEMBER 4, 2012

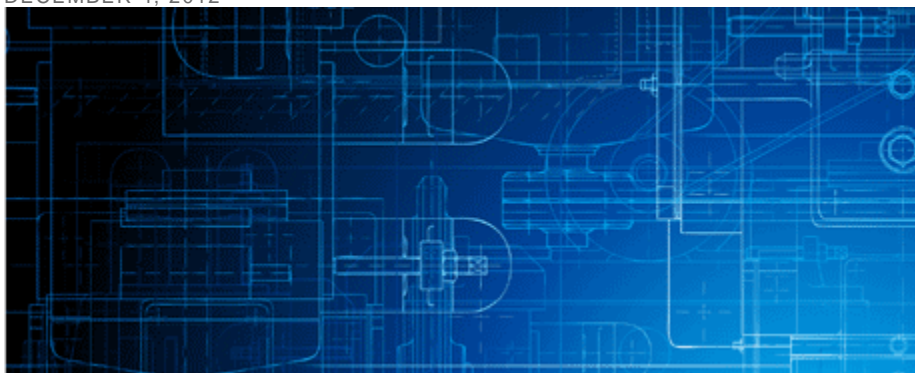


Photo credit: iStockPhoto

**Editor's note:** *This is the second post in a five-part series which takes a look at five big ideas for implementation of the Common Core State Standards, authored by Jay McTighe and [Grant Wiggins](#)*

The Introduction to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for Mathematics makes a noteworthy point: "These Standards do not dictate curriculum or teaching methods." (p 5). A similar point is offered by the ELA Standards:

*"The Standards define what all students are expected to know and be able to do, not how teachers should teach. For instance, the use of play with young children is not specified by the Standards, but it is welcome as a valuable activity in its own right and as a way to help students meet the expectations in this document... The Standards must therefore be complemented by a well-developed, content-rich curriculum consistent with the expectations laid out in this document." (p. 6)*



Indeed, these statements highlight the intent of *any* set of standards; i.e., they focus on outcomes, not curriculum or instruction. The implication is clear -- educators must translate the CCSS into an engaging and effective curriculum. So, what is the relationship between the Standards and curriculum? Consider another analogy with home building and renovation: The standards are like the building code. Architects and builders must attend to them but they are *not* the purpose of the design. The house to be built or renovated is designed to meet the needs of the client in a functional and pleasing manner -- while also meeting the building code along the way.

Similarly, while curriculum and instruction must address established standards, we always want to keep the long-term educational ends in mind -- the development of important capabilities in the learner. In other words, a curriculum works with the CCSS to frame optimal learning experiences. To shift analogies, these standards are more like the ingredients in a recipe than the final meal; they are more like the rules of the game instead of strategy for succeeding at the game.

So then, what *is* a curriculum? In research for our book, *Understanding by Design* (Wiggins and McTighe, 1997), we uncovered 83 different definitions or connotations for the word, curriculum, in the educational literature! Such a variety of meanings confer an unhelpful ambiguity on the challenge of moving from standards to curriculum. Worse, most definitions focus on inputs, not outputs -- what will be “covered” rather than a plan for what learners should be able to accomplish with learned content. This is a core misunderstanding in our field. Marching through a list of topics or skills cannot be a “guaranteed and viable” way to ever yield the sophisticated outcomes that the CCSS envision.

The ELA Standards make this point clearly by framing everything around “anchor standards,” all of which highlight complex abilities and performances that students should master for college and workplace readiness. The Mathematics Standards’ emphasis on the need to weave the Content and Practice Standards together in a curriculum makes the same point.

## Common Core Big Idea 3: Standards Must Be Unpacked

DECEMBER 5, 2012



Image credit: iStockphoto

**Editor's note:** This is the third post in a five-part series which takes a look at five big ideas for implementation of the Common Core State Standards, authored by Jay McTighe and [Grant Wiggins](#)

As suggested in my previous post, the first step in translating the Common Core Standards into engaging and outcome-focused curriculum involves a careful reading of the documents in order to ensure clarity about the end results and an understanding of how the pieces fit together. This idea is not new. Over the years, we have suggested various ways of unpacking standards in conjunction with our work with the *Understanding by Design* framework.

When working with the Common Core, we recommend that educators “unpack” them into four broad categories -- 1) Long-term Transfer Goals, 2) Overarching Understandings, 3) Overarching Essential Questions, and 4) a set of recurring Cornerstone Tasks.

The first category, Transfer Goals, identifies the effective *uses* of content understanding, knowledge, and skill that we seek in the long run; i.e., what we want students to be able *to do* when they confront new challenges -- both in and outside of school. They reflect the ultimate goals, the reason we teach specific knowledge and skills. Unlike earlier generations of standards where transfer goals were implicit at best, the Common Core Standards have made them more overt. Indeed, the College and Career Anchor Standards in ELA specify long-term transfer goals, while the Mathematics Standards strongly suggest a goal such as; *Students will be able to use the mathematics they know to solve “messy,” never-seen-before problems using effective mathematical reasoning.*

The second and third unpacking categories -- Overarching Understandings and Essential Questions -- are like two sides of a coin. The Understandings state what skilled performers will need in order to effectively transfer their learning to new situations, while explorations of the Essential Questions engage learners in making meaning and deepening their understandings.

Here are examples for Mathematics and English Language Arts, respectively:

	<b>Overarching Understandings</b>	<b>Overarching Essential Questions</b>
Mathematical Modeling	Mathematicians create models to interpret and predict the behavior of real world phenomena. Mathematical models have limits and sometimes they distort or misrepresent	<i>How can we best model this (real world phenomena)?</i> <i>What are the limits of this model?</i> <i>How reliable are its predictions?</i>
Determining Central Ideas in Text	Writers don’t always say things directly or literally; sometimes they convey their ideas indirectly (e.g., metaphor, satire, irony).	<i>What is this text really about? (e.g. theme, main idea, moral)</i> <i>How do you “read between the lines?”</i>

The term, overarching, conveys the idea that these understandings and questions are not limited to a single grade or topic. On the contrary, it is expected that they be addressed *across* the grades with application to varied topics, problems, texts and contexts.

The fourth category, Cornerstone Tasks, are curriculum-embedded tasks that are intended to engage students in applying their knowledge and skills in an authentic and relevant context. Like a cornerstone anchors a building, these tasks are meant to anchor the curriculum around the most important performances that we want learners to be able to do (on their own) with acquired content knowledge and skills. Since these tasks are set in realistic contexts, they offer the natural vehicle for integrating the so-called 21st century skills (e.g., creativity, technology

use, teamwork) with subject area content knowledge and skills. They honor the intent of the CCSS, within and across subject areas, instead of emphasizing only the content measured more narrowly on external accountability tests. These rich tasks can be used as meaningful learning experiences as well as for formative and summative purposes.

Cornerstone tasks are designed to recur across the grades, progressing from simpler to more sophisticated; from those that are heavily scaffolded toward ones requiring autonomous performance. Accordingly, they enable both educators *and* learners to track performance and document the fact that students are getting progressively better at *using* content knowledge and skills in worthy performances. Like the game in athletics or the play in theater, teachers teach toward these tasks without apology.

The four categories that we recommend are initially unpacked at the “macro”, or program, level to establish the equivalent of a curriculum blueprint. More specific course and grade level curriculum maps are then derived from backward from them, just as rooms in a building are constructed using the architect’s blueprint as a guide. Practically speaking, this macro level work is best undertaken at the state, regional or district levels by teams of content experts and experienced teachers. Currently two states, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, have assembled teams of content experts to unpack their Common Core state standards in this very manner, and the Next Generation Arts Standards, presently in development, are using this same construct to frame the Standards from the start!

While we strongly advocate this type of unpacking and have witnessed its benefits, we have also seen the process become way too narrow and granular when applied at the “micro” level. Thus, we concur with the important cautionary note offered by the Kansas Department of Education about a misapplication of Standards unpacking:

*“‘Unpacking’ often results in a checklist of discrete skills and a fostering of skill-and-drill instruction that can fragment and isolate student learning in such a way that conceptual understanding, higher order thinking, cohesion, and synergy are made more difficult. Too often, the process of ‘unpacking’ is engaged in an attempt to isolate the specific foundational or prerequisite skills necessary to be successful with the ideas conveyed by the overall standard and is a common precursor to test preparation and reductive teaching. Although this process may be important work in some instances and can certainly be enlightening, it also poses substantial problems if those completing the work never take the time to examine the synergy that can be created when those foundational or prerequisite skills are reassembled into a cohesive whole. Metaphorically speaking, ‘unpacking’ often leads educators to concentrate on the trees at the expense of the forest.”*

*From “A Cautionary Note About Unpacking, Unwrapping, and Deconstructing The Kansas Common Core Standards”  
(DOC)05/03/2011*

## Common Core Big Idea 4: Map Backward From Intended Results

DECEMBER 6, 2012

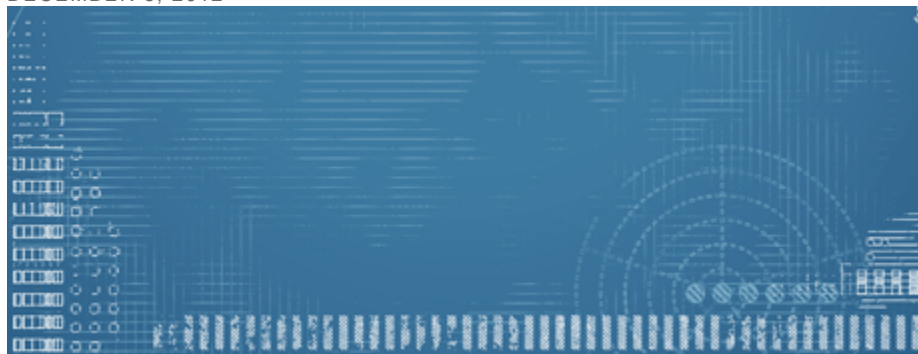


Image credit: iStockphoto

**Editor's note:** This is the fourth post in a five-part series which takes a look at five big ideas for implementation of the Common Core State Standards, authored by Jay McTighe and [Grant Wiggins](#)

The key to avoiding an overly discrete and fragmented curriculum is to design backward from complex performances that require content. A return to the linguistic roots of “curriculum” reveals the wisdom in this outcome-focused view. The Latin meaning of the term is a “course to be run.” This original connotation helpfully suggests that we should think of a curriculum as the pathway toward a destination. As mentioned above, our conception is that curriculum should be framed and developed in terms of worthy *outputs*; i.e., desired performances by the learner, not simply as a listing of content *inputs*.

This is not a new idea. Ralph Tyler made this very point more than 60 years ago (Tyler, 1949). He proposed a curriculum development method involving a matrix of content and process components that would guide teachers in meshing these two elements into effective performance-based learning. As Tyler points out, the “purpose of a statement of objectives is to indicate the kinds of changes in the student to be brought about... Hence it is clear that a statement of objectives in terms of content headings... is not a satisfactory basis for guiding the further development of the curriculum.” pp. 45-6. Indeed, the Mathematics Standards recommend just such an approach:

*“The Standards for Mathematical Practice describe ways in which developing student practitioners of the discipline of mathematics increasingly ought to engage with the subject matter as they grow in mathematical maturity and expertise throughout the elementary, middle and high school years. Designers of curricula, assessments, and professional development should all attend to the need to connect the mathematical practices to mathematical content in mathematics instruction.” (p. 8)*

Thus, the first question for curriculum writers is not: *What will we teach and when should we teach it?* Rather the initial question for curriculum development must be goal focused: *Having learned key content, what will students be able to do with it?*

Our long-standing contention applies unequivocally to the Common Core Standards as well as to other standards: The ultimate aim of a curriculum is independent transfer; i.e., for students to be able to employ their learning, autonomously and thoughtfully, to varied complex situations, inside and outside of school. Lacking the capacity to independently apply their learning, a student will be neither college nor workplace ready.

The ELA Standards make this point plainly in their characterization of the capacities of the literate individual:

*“They demonstrate independence. Students can, without significant scaffolding, comprehend and evaluate complex texts across a range of types and disciplines, and they can construct effective arguments and convey intricate or multifaceted information... Students adapt their communication in relation to audience, task, purpose, and discipline. Likewise, students are able independently to discern a speaker’s key points, request clarification, and ask relevant questions... Without prompting, they demonstrate command of standard English and acquire and use a wide-ranging vocabulary. More broadly, they become self-directed learners, effectively seeking out and using resources to assist them, including teachers, peers, and print and digital reference materials.”*

-- Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts

These points underscore a potential misunderstanding resulting from a *superficial* reading of the Standards documents (especially in Mathematics). One could simply parcel out lists of discrete grade-level standards and topics along a calendar while completely ignoring the long-term goal of transfer. A curriculum envisioned and enacted as a set of maps of content and skill coverage will simply not, by itself, develop a student’s increasingly autonomous capacity to *use* learned content effectively to address complex tasks and problems. Such traditional scope-and-sequencing of curriculum reinforces a “coverage” mentality and reveals a misconception; i.e., that teaching bits of content in a logical and specified order will somehow add up to the desired achievements called for in the Standards.

A related misconception is evident when teachers assume that the CCSS prescribe the instructional sequence and pacing. Not so! To assume that the layout of the documents imply an instructional chronology is as flawed as thinking that since a dictionary is helpfully organized from A to Z, that vocabulary should therefore be taught in alphabetical order. While the grade-level standards are certainly not arbitrary and reflect natural long-term “learning progressions,” a rigid sequence within each grade level was never intended. The authors of the Common Core Standards explicitly call attention to this misconception and warn against it:

*“For example, just because topic A appears before topic B in the standards for a given grade, it does not necessarily mean that topic A must be taught before topic B. A teacher might prefer to teach topic B before topic A, or might choose to highlight connections by teaching topic A and topic B at the same time. Or, a teacher might prefer to teach a topic of his or her own choosing that leads, as a byproduct, to students reaching the standards for topics A and B.” (p. 10)*

The implications of these points are critical not only for curriculum mapping but for the very nature of instructional practice. Consider this advice from a non-academic source -- the United States Soccer Coaches Federation. In *Best Practices for Coaching Soccer in The U.S.*, the Federation recommends a change in the soccer “curriculum” of practice:

*“When conducting training sessions, there needs to be a greater reliance on game oriented training that is player centered and enables players to explore and arrive at solutions while they play. This is in contrast to the ‘coach centered’ training that has been the mainstay of coaching methodology over the years. ‘Game centered training’ implies that the primary training environment is the game as opposed to training players in ‘drill’ type environments. This is not to say that there is not a time for a more ‘direct’ approach to coaching. At times, players*

*need more guidance and direction as they are developing. However, if the goal is to develop creative players who have the abilities to solve problems, and interpret game situations by themselves, a 'guided discovery' approach needs to be employed."*

*Best Practices for Coaching Soccer in The U.S. -- Appendix C pp. 62-64*

We propose that this recommendation applies equally to teachers of academics as to coaches of soccer. In other words, if we want students to be able to apply their learning via autonomous performance, we need to design our curriculum backward from that goal. Metaphorically speaking, then, educators need to ask, what is the "game" we expect students to be able to play with skill and flexibility? In other words, we need clarity and *consensus* about the point of content learning -- *independent* transfer. Then, we can build the curriculum pathway backward with those worthy performances in mind.

To design a 12-K curriculum backward from the goal of autonomous transfer requires a deliberate and transparent plan for helping the student rely less and less on teacher hand-holding and scaffolds. After all, transfer is about *independent* performance in context. You can only be said to have fully understood and applied your learning if you can do it without someone telling you what to do. In the real world, no teacher is there to direct and remind you about which lesson to plug in here or what strategy fits there; transfer is about intelligently and effectively drawing from your repertoire, independently, to handle new situations on your own. Accordingly, we should see an increase, by design, in problem- and project-based learning, small-group inquiries, Socratic Seminars, and independent studies as learners progress through the curriculum across the grades.

Our point here is straightforward: if a curriculum simply marches through lists of content knowledge and skills without attending to the concomitant goal of cultivating independent performance, high-schoolers will remain as dependent on teacher directions and step-by-step guidance as fourth graders currently are. The resulting graduates will be unprepared for the demands of college and the workplace.

## **Common Core Big Idea 5: Consider Meaningful Assessment**

DECEMBER 7, 2012



Image credit: iStockphoto

*Editor's note: This is the fifth post in a five-part series which takes a look at five big ideas for implementation of the Common Core State Standards, authored by Jay McTighe and Grant Wiggins.*

A prevalent misconception about standards in general is that they simply specify learning goals to be achieved. A more complete and accurate conception, in line with the colloquial meaning of the term, recognizes that standards also refer to the desired *qualities* of student work and the degree of *rigor* that must be assessed and achieved.

Think about what we mean when we talk about “high standards” in athletics, music or business: we refer to the quality of outcomes, not the inputs. We ask if work is up to standard, not whether we “covered” such standards as teachers. In this sense, the standards are at their core a set of criteria for building and testing local *assessment*. They tell where we must look and what we must look for to determine if student work is up to standard. Such information is crucial to guide local assessments and insure that these are validly anchored against national standards.

Ironically (and unfortunately), this important point is not made in the main body of the ELA Common Core Standards but in Appendix B and C. These Appendices are arguably the most important sections of the ELA Standards because there the authors describe the degree of text difficulty that students must be able to handle, the features that need to be evident in student writing, and the kinds of performance tasks that will provide the needed evidence. Accompanying samples of scored work illustrate the qualities of performance that must be attained to meet the Standards.

This performance-based conception of standards lies at the heart of what is needed to translate the Common Core into a robust curriculum and assessment system. The curriculum and related instruction must be *designed backward* from an analysis of standards-based assessments; i.e., worthy performance tasks anchored by rigorous rubrics and annotated work samples. We predict that the alternative -- a curriculum mapped in a typical scope and sequence based on grade-level content specifications -- will encourage a curriculum of disconnected “coverage” and make it more likely that people will simply retrofit the new language to the old way of doing business.

Thus, our proposal reflects the essence of backward design: Conceptualize and construct the curriculum back from sophisticated “cornerstone” tasks, reflecting the performances that the Common Core Standards demand of graduates. Indeed, the whole point of Anchor Standards in ELA and the Practices in Mathematics is to establish the genres of performance (e.g., argumentation in writing and speaking, and solving problems set in real-world contexts) that must *recur* across the grades in order to develop the capacities needed for success in higher education and the workplace.

Our recommendation to construct curriculum around assessments may lead to a related misunderstanding; i.e., that we need to assess *each* grade-level Standard in isolation, one by one. We think that this view is due in part to the layout of grade-level Standards and to the look and feel of traditional standardized tests, in which very discrete objectives are the subject of most test items. This confuses means and ends; it conflates the “drill” with the “game.” The authors of the Common Core Standards wisely anticipated this misconception and they caution against it: “While the Standards delineate specific expectations in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language, each standard need not be a separate focus for instruction and assessment. Often, several standards can be addressed by a single rich task. (ELA Standards, p. 5).”

In sum, moving from standards to curriculum requires careful reading and thoughtful interpretation to avoid the predictable misunderstandings noted above, while building the curriculum backward from worthy tasks offers the pathway to the performances envisioned by the Common Core.