

Aligning Teacher Assignments and Student Work to Rigorous Standards

What can you expect to get from this module?

This module teaches participants how to use The Education Trust's six-step *Standards in Practice*[™] process to make sure that assignments and assessments match standards. This process also serves as a vehicle for professional development and school improvement, as teacher teams look critically and think deeply about the work they assign, the scoring guides they use and the standards to which they are accountable. The six steps in the process are modeled, and participants work through samples as well as examples from their own practice.

Who should take this training?

This module is for school leaders and potential school leaders. The audience may include school teams of principals, aspiring leaders, teacher leaders and others who are members or potential members of the school's instructional leadership team. **NOTE:** In order for this training to have significant impact, the principal **MUST** be part of the school team being trained. In addition, it is beneficial to include district staff involved in curriculum, standards and instruction.

Other SREB Leadership Curriculum Modules that support this module:

There are no formal prerequisites for this SREB module. However, participants may find it helpful to have attended the module *Prioritizing, Mapping and Monitoring the Curriculum*.

What will you have to do to get the most from this module?

Participants must commit to attending as a team, completing the prework, attending two initial days, completing a homework assignment and attending one follow-up day. It is important for teams to have time to reflect and apply what they have learned between the initial training and the follow-up session.

Big Ideas in This Module

- Students can do no better than the assignments they are given.
- A study by Dataworks of California showed that 98 percent of assignments given to fifth-graders were below level, requiring a level of work that most closely matched national standards for grades two and three.
- Teacher teams that use the *Standards in Practice*[™] process usually find that the rigor of their assignments increases, and so does student achievement.
- The *Standards in Practice* process gives you a way to calibrate your assignments and grading practices against your own standards and those of the state and nation.
- By working as a team, you not only improve the assignment you're looking at, but you also gain skills in improving other assignments.
- By requiring you to create a scoring rubric, the Standards in Practice process helps you to gain a common understanding of what is "proficient" work related to any given standard.
- Teachers often gain insights simply from observing other teachers completing an assignment that they have given to students.
- The final step in the *Standards in Practice* process — planning a course of action based on findings — is where the rubber meets the road. Participants may identify changes needed in expectations, the assignment, a unit of study, or grading. They also may identify schoolwide, districtwide or statewide issues.

Module Design. *Aligning Teacher Assignments and Student Work to Rigorous Standards* is a three-day workshop (2+1). It also includes prework and homework assignments. Each section is described below.

Prework (about three hours). Participants read two articles, “Curriculum Calibration” and “Youth at the Crossroads: Facing High School and Beyond.” They are also asked to bring an assignment that teachers have given students, 10 representative samples of student work from that assignment, related assignments from the same unit, the course text and related curriculum standards.

Introduction (three hours). The training begins with a reenactment of a middle grades assignment which will feel familiar to most teachers. Through this activity, participants gain an appreciation for the difference that the *Standards in Practice*[™] (SIP) process can make in the quality of assignments. Participants discuss the prework calibration article and learn what the SIP process is and how it can be used to improve instruction and assessment in their schools. They are introduced to the steps in the process through a video.

Demonstration of the SIP Process (about six hours). In this section, participants gain a better understanding of the process as they work through it as participants. The trainer acts as coach and facilitates the entire process, with time for discussion and processing before, during and after each step. This section starts on Day One and continues to Day Two.

Practicing the SIP Process (five hours, 30 minutes). Participants practice going through the process. They have three hours to practice in class using materials brought as part of the prework, and then they go back to their schools and practice there. When they return (on Day Three), they have two and one-half hours to discuss tips, strategies and questions related to their at-home practice.

Homework between Days Two and Three. Participants gather a group of interested teachers who share a common planning period (or who are willing to meet before or after school) and work through the process once a week. Participants should return to class prepared to discuss questions and strategies that were tried and tips for others.

Leadership and the SIP process (about one hour). Participants discuss the steps they need to take as school leaders to bring the SIP practice to their schools and use it to raise achievement. Topics discussed include making time for meetings, getting the right team and the role of administrators.

Summary and Portfolio Assignments (one hour, 30 minutes). Participants complete an action plan that will show how they are going to get the SIP process up and running. They also work as a team to identify three keys to success for bringing their knowledge, skills and process back to the school. Their portfolio assignment is to implement that plan. Participants submit a portfolio that contains team products as well as individual reflections and narratives.