Content Standards

1. What are content standards and benchmarks, and how are they used?

Standards can be split into two categories. The content standards are guidelines which dictate the crucial skills, knowledge and understanding that students must learn in certain content areas. They list what the student will be able to do after a lesson is completed. Performance or achievement standards list the level of mastery the student is expected to achieve within the given content. Content standards are mapped out by the State and are set for every grade level and every content area. If all of the standards are adhered to and achieved, the student will have reached their educational goals. Benchmarks on the other hand, are more specific than standards and are geared towards grade levels and even more specifically, can be incorporated into instructional units. As the word suggests, benchmarks are a designated point where the student should reach academically.

Assessment aids in deciphering whether or not benchmarks have been met.

2. Which student learning characteristics should teachers identify before developing instruction? Why is this important?

Before developing instruction, teachers should determine the level of mastery their students have of different skills and how they function in the classroom. Some learning characteristics that should be assessed are background knowledge and experience, learning styles such as whether the student learns best with the use of visual or hands on aids, academic strengths, academic improvement areas, responsiveness to instruction and
correction, social and interpersonal behaviors, interested, talents, home language and any second language issues, and cultural, community and religious factors. It is important to identify where the students strengths and weakness lie, so the teacher can create instruction that will enhance their weaker skills, reinforce or utilize their stronger skills, and adapt instruction as is needed. Materials that may need to be adjusted as a result of a student’s learning characteristics are level of reading materials, topics concepts and skills or relevance or interest, concepts in relation to those of students’ own cultures, small or large group instruction, and the presentation of materials.

3. Describe the information-processing model of learning.

There are three stages involved with the information-processing model of learning, receiving information, connecting the information to prior knowledge and using the information. During the first stage of learning, receiving information, students who absorb the material that is being taught store it in the short term memory. To move the information to the long term memory where it can be built upon and recalled, the teacher can incorporate a number of different strategies which will adhere to the second level of learning, connecting the information to prior knowledge. By organizing information into easily recognizable categories, repetition, and grouping the information, teachers can associate new knowledge with old so that they are stored together. The last step involves recalling the knowledge. Teachers can use suggestive words during instruction to make the information easy to retrieve. They can also associate a new topic with something the students are interested in outside of school, whether it be music, arts or sports and to draw connections which will elicit easy information recall.

4. Adapting instruction is important. Discuss two reasons why this is so.
Everyone is entitled to the same access to education as stated by law, therefore instruction must be adapted to different student needs. Another reason adaptation of curriculum is so important, is to ensure the success of students who do not or can not learn in the same manner as average mainstream students. Students who have physical ailments as well as learning disabilities come with their own set of learning requirements that must be adhered to in order for the student to achieve learning success.

5. Name three components of a good assessment.

To be a fair and successful evaluative tool, assessments must, measure the skills, knowledge, or abilities the teacher holds important, match purpose with the skills assessed and provide relative evidence.

6. Describe three stages of the instructional cycle.

Having a plan in mind as to what students should learn and the proper way to assess learning is part of the instruction cycle. The three stages involved in the instructional cycle are intended instruction outcomes, planning and assessment. In the intended instructional outcome stage, teachers identify the content standards and benchmarks their unit will address. Then measurable learning outcomes are rendered from the content standards. After this is completed, the teacher has an outline of what she wants her students to know, understand, and which curriculum based standards her students will meet. In the planning stage, the teacher should create lesson plans by recognizing effective teaching and instructional strategies and incorporating them into the lesson plans. Proper assessments must accompany the lesson plans, and the lessons must be performed with the students. In the last stage, assessments will be administered to the
students and judges will be made about whether standards and the intended learning outcomes have been met.

7. What should guide teachers’ planning in order to meet the needs of all students? Teachers should adhere to curriculum planning guidelines in order to ensure the needs of all students are met. The teacher must consider such things as the need to analyze the general curriculum, the availability of support materials, and strategies used to teach material to students. Any or all of these six guidelines can be incorporated into curriculum planning, big ideas, conspicuous strategies, mediated scaffolding, strategic integration, primed background knowledge and judicious review.

8. How should teachers identify lesson topics to include in instruction? Lesson topics should initially be derived from the adopted standards-based curriculum for a school or district. The lesson topic should adhere to a larger, unit of instruction. Specific topics can also result from student questions or interests, community resources local expectations included in the content standards and other topics listed in the standards.