

Action Overview: Learning Progressions

Action: Identify learning progressions across grades as represented by standards and benchmarks.

This set of resources is designed to help educators develop shared understanding of the learning progressions within a set of standards.

Introduction

Learning progressions, also referred to as learning trajectories, describe an increasing sophistication of knowledge and skills over time. Though learning progressions could be viewed as confined within a grade or even a unit of study, in the Standards Portal, they are discussed as progressions across grades. This thinking is a shift from a focus on individual modules or learning units to intentionally sequenced experiences designed to support student learning and to address core disciplinary ideas and practices that lead to career and college readiness (Duschl, Maeng, & Sezen, 2011, p. 124).

For example, after a third grade team investigated how a particular idea develops from first grade through fifth grade, they realized that they had been addressing benchmarks from higher grade levels. As a result, the team focused on the grade level expectations, revised their lesson plans to target the third grade standards and benchmarks, and therefore made more efficient use of instructional time.

What are the benefits of understanding progressions of learning?

Understanding learning progressions provides many implications for changing and aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices.

- Educators may identify steps in learning not explicitly articulated in the standards and benchmarks.
- Educators can both explore:
 - The way aspects of a big idea are presented and integrated over time.
 - The building blocks of knowledge and performance over time.
- Educators can plan for pretesting or preassessment to:
 - Avoid false assumptions of learner readiness.
 - Identify learners ready for greater rigor.
 - Consider learner preconceptions.
 - Address or avoid inequities resulting from varied learners' prior knowledge and opportunities.
- Educators consider and plan for scaffolds available to assist students in their development.
- Educators consider criteria for creating or adjusting the educational opportunities presented through the curriculum to ensure appropriate levels of rigor and performance.

Suggested Activities

To assist staff in building a deeper understanding of the learning progressions, the Portal provides an activity that allows educators to focus on progressions of concepts, processes, and skills across grade levels in each content area.

Sources

Duschl, R., Maeng, S., & Sezen, A. (2011). Learning progressions and teaching sequences: A review and analysis. *Studies in Science Education* (47)2, 123-182.