Teaching for High Standards: What Policymakers Need to Know and Be Able to Do

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Abstract
In this report, Ball and Darling-Hammond discuss the relationship between teacher knowledge and student performance; they summarize what the research suggest about what kinds of teacher education and professional development teachers need in order to learn how to teach to high standards; and they describe what states are doing to provide these opportunities for teacher learning, and with what effects.

Comments
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Education standards are the starting point for defining what all students should know and be able to do to live and work in the 21st century. Their development has been driven by the need to define what all students should learn in school to participate successfully in a global, technology-driven economy. Touching upon every aspect of the education system, the movement to establish education standards is challenging long-held assumptions about how education should be conducted in the nation’s schools, particularly for students who have had the least access to high quality learning environments. Content standards are broadly defined as what learners should know and be able to do in a certain subject or practical domain (American Institutes for Research and U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 2005; Kendall, 2001). Content standards describe the knowledge and skills that adult students will have upon successful completion of an instructional program. The use of content standards in adult ESL instruction is a relatively new undertaking, and more research needs to be done on the effects of standards-based education on adult English language acquisition and on best practices in developing and implementing standards and training teachers to use standards.