

What Are Content-Based Standards?

Currently, most states have been developing content standards and revising their curriculum to address those standards. Effective educational standards define a common core of learning that the state believes all students should be able to achieve. These standards should:

- be clear, realistic, and challenging; require specific knowledge as well as application of that knowledge
- improve the performance of all students
- be developed at the state level
- concentrate on the basics—particularly reading, writing, mathematics, science, history, geography, and literature
- be implemented and overseen by each state to ensure improved student performance
- be related to reforms in assessment, teacher education, and the allocation of resources Source: Education World[®]

As a classroom teacher, what can you do to focus the curriculum you teach around the content-based standards in your state? How can you prepare your students for the HSEE? First, become familiar with the content standards. Then, look at your own course content and begin to align it with the state standards. Focus on the topics and activities that most closely match the state content standards. If you do not teach one of the core subjects tested on the HSEE, you *still* have an important role to play in preparing your students for the test. Ask the core teachers to share with you some of the content standards that students seem to have difficulty mastering. Then, incorporate those standards into your lessons. For example, if students are struggling with algebraic formulas and you teach a basic business class, show your students how algebraic formulas are used in an Excel spreadsheet to create a sales analysis on the school store. In addition, if the students need some additional practice writing a persuasive composition, have them write a complaint letter to a business. When students see a real-world application of the academic skill, they are better able to remember how to use that skill.