

Research Seminar series 2011-2012: Standards and Accountability in the USA

Locations	Building R19, Strathcona Building, Lecture Theatre 1
Date(s)	Wednesday 9th November 2011 (14:00-16:00)
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Standards and Accountability in the USA: a policy loved in general and hated in particular



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Perhaps the biggest policy development in the United States over the last 40 years has been the development of standards and accountability. This period saw increasing central direction, although not always compulsion from the federal government. It began with minimum competency testing, moved to state standards with aligned assessments and sanctions for schools that could not meet proficiency levels. Now, we are seeing a movement to one set of challenging national standards and a smaller set of aligned assessments. Throughout this period, the inter-related ideas of standards and accountability have been unimpeachable. There has been enough support that a few professional advocates could develop and sell their ideas. The devil has been in the details and has revolved around questions like these:

- How do we have national standards without federal control?
- How is responsibility for delivering instruction distributed across federal, state, and local government?
- What policy levers should be used to promote improvement--i.e., how strong should sanctions be and who should be the target?
- What do high standards actually mean?