This article talks of the current reform movement, its beginnings with the 1989 Education Summit and what needs to be accomplished in order for Goals2000 to be properly implemented. The authors talk of linking standards, assessments and opportunities to learn in order for the standardization to be a success. There was a panel put together to develop a report on standards based reform. The panel was called The NAE Panel for Education Reform and made up of many educators and other from the education field with differing views. (NAE= National Academy of Education) There main recommendations are below.

Criticism of Standards-Based Reform

1. Diverting attention from more fundamental educational needs
   - Standards have political motivations
   - Focus on outcomes may prevent debate about how instruction should be delivered and learning be supported by the community

2. Undermining professional and local responsibility for student learning
   - Can’t make centralized decisions about education and learning for diverse students

3. Heightening educational inequities
   - Standards could worsen inequities because they will not support disadvantaged groups (SES)

4. Threatening Basic-Skills instruction
   - Could introduce value issues into the school curriculum
   - Too much emphasis on higher order thinking, concept knowledge skills ignores basic needs

Guidelines for developing Standards-based strategies

The proposed changes in instructional goals and in approaches to teaching and learning make this a massive educational undertaking for the adults as well as the children in the system.

- Should also be developed through public process.
- Standards should be guided by existing research and professional knowledge.
- Standards and assessments must be valid and fair and consequences should be closely monitored.
- There should be an ongoing evaluation and improvement of the system.
- It should foster a shared sense of responsibility.

Issues and Recommendations for content standards

- Standards provide a coherent structure to guide curriculum and instruction
- Multiple standards approach: multiple sets of standards for a content domain can improve knowledge base learning and localities can choose rather than be forced to adopt the standards
- Who should define standards?
  - Professional and public involvement is valuable and necessary to acceptance and long-term viability of new content standards, but educational professionals should be the guides.
  - All relevant stakeholders should be informed about and included in the adoption of state and local content standards.
  - Level of system: teachers must be able to respond professionally to the learning needs of their students and compulsory public education in a democracy should be relevant to the diverse backgrounds and local contexts of the students it serves.

Designing standards as tools for instructional improvement: what to keep in mind

- Level of specificity of standards: standards should reflect broad statements of ed goals and should be delineated so specifically as to preclude integration of curriculum or professional discretion in meeting needs of particular students
• Overall scope: how much of a field of study should we expect schools to teach and students to learn? Rigorous standards for any content area must also be reasonably attainable in the context of total curriculum.
• Degree to which they are linked to actual student performance: connections between content standards and benchmarks for student performance be evident throughout content standards documents.

Summary of recommendations
1. Certification of voluntary national content standards should not be restricted to one set of standards per subject area.
2. Voluntary national content standards should embody a coherent, professionally defensible competition of how a field can be framed for purposes of instruction.
3. Content standards should be consistent with a research-based model of learning.
4. All relevant stakeholders, especially the public and the profession, should be informed about and involved in the adoption of state and local content standards.

Performance Standards
Concrete examples and explicit definitions of what students have to know and be able to do to demonstrate that such students are proficient in the skills and knowledge framed by the content standards. They help to clarify and explain the kind of instruction and learning intended.

Accountability and Certification
Require that performance standards be explicitly tied to an assessment that adequately represents the content standards and must be articulated in the form of rules for translating assessment results into student achievement categories. Requires greater field experience.

Recommendations for Performance Standards
1. Initial emphasis should be placed on the exemplification use of performance standards, especially in the early years of implementing a standards-based curriculum.
2. PS should include multiple benchmarks along each proficiency scale so as to demonstrate progress and ensure instructional attention for students at all levels of achievement.
3. A study group should be established by a national organization or a consortium of states, to explore the technical, legal, and fairness issues with respect to the use of performance standards and assessments for student certification purposes.

Opportunity to learn standards
Level and availability of programs, staff and other resources sufficient to enable all students to meet challenging content and performance standards.