

We have designed each “White Paper” to explore a fundamental educational principle and key issues engaging the education community we serve. It is our goal to partner with our readers as they meet the challenges they face.



Student Review, Testing & Assessment
CastleLearning.com



626 Layport Drive, Suite 100
Sebastian, FL 32958
800-345-7606
Fax: 772-581-1066

Prepared by Bill Ingui
President and Retired Educator

Teaching for Understanding & Castle Learning Online

If students ‘understand’ a topic, they can not only reproduce knowledge, but also use it in unscripted ways. (Project Zero, Harvard University School of Ed) The classroom is the most obvious platform where teachers engage students in understanding. Good teachers seek the best methods for learning and are excited about their profession. They convey this to their students every day. The project at Harvard emphasizes a **performance view** of a student’s content knowledge base. This view is the result of **teaching for understanding**.

Teaching for understanding can produce a wonderful experience for the student who demonstrates his/her understanding through **performances of understanding**. They are closely knit ways of thinking about student learning. As a result, **teaching for understanding** focuses on the process of understanding as the goal of learning rather than simply the development of specific skills. Students progress to demonstrating how they understand information, how they can take that knowledge and apply it in new ways. It focuses on forming connections and seeing relationships among facts, procedures, concepts, and principles, and between prior and new knowledge. **Performances of understanding** can be seen in these examples:

- When students in US. History can extemporaneously explain the purpose of the Declaration of Independence.
- When students can act out a scene from a novel being studied in their English class.
- When students can apply mathematics concepts to designing a house in an Owner-Builder class.

Castle Learning Online’s database of questions helps teachers in that first step of **teaching for understanding** before students exhibit **performance understanding**. Teachers can monitor their teaching by assessing what students are learning and adapting their lessons to address any weaknesses. Teachers can focus their time and energy on helping students understand and then use innovative ways to demonstrate that understanding.

Experience in the field with educators has shown me that teachers know how *Castle Learning Online* can benefit **teaching for understanding**. Here’s what they had to say:

- The *Castle Learning Online* questions “reinforce the content” that is being taught, and it serves as a “good analysis of students’ strengths and weaknesses.”
- An educator stated that “learning is reinforced by *Castle Learning Online*, because it addresses the different learning styles of students and it parallels the instructional content of the course.”
- *Castle Learning Online* provides “topic review at the click of a button and it allows the students to get hints and vocabulary related to the topic. I gained an insight into individual and class misconceptions” about what was being taught.
- With *Castle Learning Online* “I can compare classes by class and by individual analysis,” and it is a “good way of finding out what topics I need to review in class before state tests.”
- Improving the delivery of content is made easier when “I can assess the areas that need to be re-taught or reviewed and I can tell quickly and easily which students are having troubles with a topic. I can learn what is working and what isn’t with regards to how I present material.”

Castle Learning Online has become the teacher’s friend, giving them immediate feedback when they are **teaching for understanding** and is an excellent springboard to **performance understanding**. Schools are built upon extra curricular programs that are defined by **student performance** (ex. Student Government, a statewide Science Fair, LEGO Robotics® or Math contests). With a strong baseline of knowledge, our students are ready to apply this in any performance forum.