

Teacher Quality Standard I

Teachers demonstrate mastery of and pedagogical expertise in the content they teach. The elementary teacher is an expert in literacy and mathematics and is knowledgeable in all other content that he or she teaches (e.g., science, social studies, arts, physical education, or world languages). The secondary teacher has knowledge of literacy and mathematics and is an expert in his or her content endorsement area(s).

The key to distinguishing the knowledge base of teaching rests at the intersection of content and pedagogy.

—L. S. Shulman

To teach all students according to today's standards, teachers need to understand subject matter deeply and flexibly so they can help students create useful cognitive maps, relate one idea to another, and address misconceptions. Teachers need to see how ideas connect across fields and to everyday life. This kind of understanding provides a foundation for pedagogical content knowledge that enables teachers to make ideas accessible to others. (Shulman, 1987)

Although Shulman's work dates back to the late 1980s, the importance of teacher content knowledge and pedagogical expertise has never been more important than it is now as teachers ensure students are college and career ready for the demands of the 21st century.

Element B: All Teachers

Teachers demonstrate knowledge of student literacy development in reading, writing, speaking and listening.

This section describes professional practices that should be demonstrated by ALL TEACHERS, regardless of grade level or subject taught.

The power of literacy lies not only in the ability to read and write, but rather in an individual's capacity to put those skills to work in shaping the course of his or her own life.

—Paulo Freire

Professional practices referenced under each element of the Rubric for Evaluating Colorado Teachers are cumulative. Therefore, for teachers to be proficient in demonstrating knowledge of student literacy development, they must implement lesson plans that integrate literacy with the content being taught. Regardless of the content being taught, the teacher makes complex reading accessible to students at all skill levels. Instruction is provided that enhances students' critical thinking, information literacy, and literacy skill development.

PROFICIENT RATING LEVEL

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES: THE TEACHER:

Provides instructional support that enhances students':

- *Critical thinking and reasoning.*



[Click here to go back to the table of contents and view the resource guide in its entirety.](#)

Critical thinking differs from mere acquisition of knowledge or skills in that it involves the application of skills in order to evaluate, analyze, and/or synthesize, information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication.

Characteristics of a critical thinker:

- Asks questions that are clear, on topic, and enhance learning.
- Is open-minded and aware of different perspectives and alternatives.
- Evaluates credibility and relevancy of information.
- Interprets information and uses to develop well-reasoned conclusions and solutions.
- Is able to develop an evidence-based opinion and reasonably defend it.
- Communicates effectively with others in figuring out solutions to complex problems.

Ideas for providing instruction that enhances students' critical thinking:

- Have students apply content they are learning to previous knowledge, real-world situations, and/or other disciplines.
- Focus on fundamental and powerful concepts with high generalizability as tools for learning and application.
- Let students select learning strategies that best fit the skill required *and* their own learning preferences.

See also Standard III, Element A.

Refer to this external resource for additional information:

- Video: "What is Critical Thinking? A Definition"
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZLyUHBexz04>

Three-minute video provides a definition of critical thinking.

Refer to this internal resource for additional information:

- Common Core State Standards and Critical Thinking
Document describes how the Common Core State Standards require students to be able to think and read critically.

See also Standard III, Element E.

○ **Information literacy.**

Information literacy is the knowledge needed to research or gain knowledge on a given topic.

Students are surrounded by an ever increasing amount of information from a multitude of sources. However, not all information is created equal: some is authoritative, current, and reliable, but some is biased, out of date, misleading, and false. The teacher cannot teach students all the information they need to know; therefore, students must learn how to evaluate information regardless of the format so they can discern what is accurate and appropriate for their use.



[Click here to go back to the table of contents and view the resource guide in its entirety.](#)

Refer to these external resources for additional information:

- Article: “Literacy for the Information Age” by Renee Hobbs
<http://www.ascd.org/publications/classroom-leadership/oct2000/Literacy-for-the-Information-Age.aspx>
Article explains the importance of helping students become media literate along with strategies for teaching information literacy.
 - Article: “Information Literacy and the World Wide Web” by Michael O’Sullivan and Thomas J. Scott
<http://www.ascd.org/publications/classroom-leadership/oct1999/Information-Literacy-and-the-World-Wide-Web.aspx>
Article provides ideas for how to support students in evaluating information on the web, including a form for this process.
 - Article: “Teaching Adolescents How to Evaluate the Quality of Online Information” by Julie Coiro
<http://www.edutopia.org/blog/evaluating-quality-of-online-info-julie-coiro>
Article describes four strategies for supporting student evaluation of online information.
 - Website: S.O.S for Information Literacy a project of the Center for Digital Literacy at Syracuse University
<http://www.informationliteracy.org/>
Website provides resources, including lesson plans, handouts, presentations, and videos to support the teaching of information literacy in grades K–12.
- **Literacy skill development.**

In their article, “Teaching Disciplinary Literacy to Adolescents: Rethinking Content,” Timothy and Cynthia Shanahan provide the following definitions related to literacy skill development.

- Basic Literacy: Literacy skills such as decoding and knowledge of high-frequency words that are found in virtually all reading tasks.
- Intermediate Literacy: Literacy skills common to many tasks, including generic comprehension strategies, common word meanings, and basic fluency.
- Disciplinary Literacy: Literacy skills specialized to history, science, mathematics, literature, or other subject matter.

Refer to these external resources for additional information:

- Article: “Teaching Disciplinary Literacy to Adolescents: Rethinking Content” by Timothy and Cynthia Shanahan
<http://www.missionliteracy.com/page79/page92/assets/Teaching%20Disciplinary%20Literacy%20Shanahan%202008.pdf>
Article describes the findings from two years of research and concludes that advanced literacy instruction should be embedded within content-area classes such as math, science, and social studies.
- Article: “Integrating Writing and Mathematics” by Brad Wilcox and Eula Ewing Monroe
<http://www.readingrockets.org/article/52243>
Article provides strategies for the integration of writing and mathematics.
- Website: readwritethink maintained by the International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English
<http://www.readwritethink.org/>
Website provides instructional resources specific to many aspects of literacy development and instruction, including a variety of suggestions for integrating writing across the curriculum.
- Video: Reading Like a Historian

[Click here to go back to the table of contents and view the resource guide in its entirety.](#)



<https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/reading-like-a-historian-curriculum>

Video explains how reading like a historian can support students in developing critical thinking skills while engaging in historical inquiry.

Refer to these resources related to Element B ALL TEACHERS for more information:

- Website: Content Connection Samples (Kindergarten through 5th Grade) Colorado Department of Education

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/ContentAreas/ContentConnections/index.asp>

Website provides examples of cross-content (multi-disciplinary) connections within the Colorado Academic Standards, kindergarten through 5th grade

- Website: Literacy Design Collaborative

<http://www.ldc.org/>

Website, Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC), offers a “teacher-designed and research-proven” approach to teaching of literacy in all content areas in grades K–12.



[Click here to go back to the table of contents and view the resource guide in its entirety.](#)