

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 D

Teachers demonstrate knowledge of the content, central concepts, tools of inquiry, appropriate evidence-based instructional practices and specialized character of the disciplines being taught.

A teacher must believe in the value and interest of his subject as a doctor believes in health.

—Gilbert Higher

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 the content they teach, they must break down concepts into manageable parts and provide explanations that are accurate, clear, concise, and comprehensible for students. This is done by using instructional materials that are accurate and appropriate for the learning objective along with a variety of strategies, explanations, and representations of the content to address student needs and to allow students to explore new ideas and theories.



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PARTIALLY PROFICIENT RATING LEVEL

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES: THE TEACHER:

Provides explanations of content that are:

- Accurate.***
- Clear.***
- Concise.***
- Comprehensive.***

Explanations of content can be provided in a variety of ways. The teacher may model examples of the skills being taught through direct instruction or modeling, provide visuals or labels that illustrate new content, and/or provide analogies for new ideas and concepts. Whichever method is utilized, it is critical that the teacher's explanations (oral and written) are accurate, clear, concise, and comprehensive to support all students in being successful with the rigor required by the Colorado Academic Standards.

Explanations that are *accurate* are void of error or misinformation. They provide students with the knowledge and skills they need to correctly apply the content being taught.

Explanations that are *clear* and *concise* focus on the most important concepts or ideas students need to learn to master the content. The teacher avoids introducing random facts or ideas that are not connected to the learning objective and can confuse students. For explanations to be clear and concise, they also must include language that is understandable to students.

Imagine the incredible amount of stimuli bombarding students as they try to learn. The overwhelming experience can be reduced if communication is operative and allows students to focus on the lesson at hand. This is particularly important for students learning a new language and students with learning disabilities, but benefits all students. (Hill & Flynn, 2006)

Explanations that are *comprehensive* include all information or steps students need to master the learning objective. The teacher who provides explanations that are comprehensive is clear about the outcomes for student learning and knows what students must say or do to demonstrate mastery. The teacher then uses these outcomes to plan explanations that will support student mastery.

See also Standard III, Element G.



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