

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 F

Teachers make instruction and content relevant to students and take actions to connect students' background and contextual knowledge with new information being taught.

Professional practices referenced under each element of the Rubric for Evaluating Colorado Teachers are cumulative. Therefore, for teachers to be proficient in making instruction and content relevant to students they must provide opportunities for students to make connections to prior learning, experiences and culture in a manner that supports student engagement and provides opportunities for students to select tasks that accelerate their learning.

ACCOMPLISHED AND EXEMPLARY RATING LEVELS

The impact of a proficient implementation of the professional practices referenced in Element F will be students who interact with materials in a manner that support their asking questions and solving problems that are relevant to them. They are able to make connections to prior learning and select tasks that demonstrate their ability to transfer knowledge.

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES: STUDENTS:

- *Interact with materials that are relevant to them.*
- *Ask questions and solve problems that are relevant to them.*
- *Make connections to prior learning to understand current content.*



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- **Select tasks that demonstrate transfer of knowledge to other theories, ideas, and/or content.**

Classroom Examples

Elementary reading, writing, and communicating: Students are working on Colorado Academic Standard 3: Writing and Composition, Grade Level Expectation 1—Exploring the writing process helps to plan and draft a variety of literary genre. *(Implements lesson plans based on: Colorado Academic Standards)*

Second-grade students have been writing narratives about a vacation they have taken or would like to take and are learning how to include adjectives to make their details more specific. The teacher reviews the book they had read aloud, *My Rotten Redheaded Older Brother* by Patricia Polacco, and has students identify the author’s use of adjectives. *(Encourages and provides opportunities for students to make connections to prior learning.)* As a hook, the teacher brings in several objects that students might have used during a vacation (e.g., a swimming suit, a camping stove, a map of Disneyland) to encourage the use of sensory descriptions in their writing assignment. *(Selects instructional materials and strategies based on their: Relevance. Delivers lessons and units and uses instructional strategies that: Help students connect to their learning by linking the current lesson with prior knowledge, experiences, and/or cultural contexts.)* Before moving on to the lesson’s learning objective and criteria for success, the teacher gives the students a few minutes to explore each item, discuss their findings with a partner, and generate a list of descriptive words to use in their writing *(Provide supports that facilitate engagement.)* *(Eagle County Schools Professional Practices Rubric, 2012, p. 22. Used with permission).*

Elementary science: Students are working on Colorado Academic Standard 2: Life Science, Grade Level Expectation 2—Human body systems have basic structures, functions, and needs. *(Implements lesson plans based on: Colorado Academic Standards)*

Fifth-grade students are studying the circulatory and respiratory systems. During their study of how the two systems function and support each other, they also study diseases of the two systems. Students interview adults who have survived these diseases to learn about their lifestyles and changes they made to become healthier. *(Selects instructional materials and strategies based on their: Relevance. Central contexts. Foundational evidence base.)* The teacher has students use the information they have gained to develop plans for a healthy lifestyle that could help prevent heart attacks, lung cancer, etc. Students choose how to present their plans (e.g., pamphlet, article, PowerPoint presentation, video) to other students and to the school administration. *(Provide supports that facilitate engagement.)* They also use the plans to develop a healthy menu for submission to the school cafeteria. *(Provides opportunities for students to self-select tasks that accelerate their learning. Students interact with materials that are relevant to them. Students ask questions and solve problems that are relevant to them.)*



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High school history: Students are working on Colorado Academic Standard 1: History, Grade Level Expectation 1—Use the historical method of inquiry to ask questions, evaluate primary and secondary sources, critically analyze and interpret data, and develop interpretations defended by evidence. *(Implements lesson plans based on: Colorado Academic Standards)*

Eleventh-grade students are studying the causes and effects of the Vietnam War. The teacher knows his students will connect with the material in more meaningful ways if he is able to make it relevant to their lives. To help students place the turmoil of the Vietnam War into perspective, he has them compare and contrast the causes of the Vietnam War to both the American Revolution and the war in Iraq. Since students are more familiar with those two wars, they can draw upon their knowledge to help them understand the complex string of events that led to the Vietnam War. *(Links lessons to students' prior knowledge.)* After gaining background information on the Vietnam War, students receive a list of veterans in the area to interview and questions for them to use in addition to the ones they develop based on what they want to learn. *(Delivers lessons and uses materials to ensure that students' backgrounds and contextual knowledge are considered. Provides opportunities for students to self-select tasks that accelerate their learning.)* After completing the interviews, students work in groups of three to identify the impact of the war on soldiers and their families. They compare their findings to the impact of other wars they have studied during the year in order to identify the common effects of war.

High school drama and theatre arts: Students are working on Colorado Academic Standards 1, 2, and 3.

Standard 1: Create

High School Fundamental and Extended Pathway Grade Level Expectations:

Fund 1—Creative process in character development and script improvisation

Ext 1—Character development in improvised and scripted works

Fund 4 – Interpretation of drama using scripted material

Ext. 3 – Ideas and creative concepts in improvisation and play building

Standard 2: Perform

High School Fundamental Grade Level Expectation: Communicate meaning to engage an audience

Standard 3: Critically Respond



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High School Fundamental and Extended Pathway Grade Level Expectations:

Fund 1—Analysis and evaluation of theatrical works

Ext 1—Contemporary and historical context of drama (*Implements lesson plans based on: Colorado Academic Standards*)

Students are learning that, as actors, their personal emotions inform the development and portrayal of character relationships throughout the acting process. The teacher selects key improvisation exercises that will allow students to safely explore various personal emotions (i.e., happiness, euphoria, disappointment, suspicion, grief, anger) and invites them to share how they pulled from personal experience to emulate a particular emotion. The teacher then chooses well-known excerpts from varied scripted works (e.g., “You Can’t Handle the Truth” from *A Few Good Men*, Atticus Finch’s courtroom scene) to assist students in transferring their personal emotional context to a scripted work. As students experiment with emotional portrayals of scripted lines, the teacher models possible ways to modify a portrayal, saying, “now imagine these lines make you feel joyful, sad, or angry.” (*Help students connect to their learning by linking the current lesson with prior knowledge, experiences, and/or cultural contexts.*) Once students experiment with reading the same scripted lines with varied emotional responses, the teacher asks them to give suggestions to one another to refine performances. As students perform a script and uncover multiple emotional perspectives, the teacher guides them through varied exercises, including these:

- Provide a rationale for your acting choices by considering contexts of social, political, historical, and/or environmental factors that the character faces.
- Refine and or modify your character portrayal by performing scenes in which the character must interact with at least one additional character.
- Analyze and discuss as a group when/if/how emotions should be modified for various contexts.

Planning/Coaching Questions

- How will I select instructional materials and strategies that provide relevance, central contexts, and are foundational evidence-based?
- How will I link lessons to students’ prior knowledge?
- How will I encourage students to make connections to prior learning?
- How will I help students to link learning to experiences and their culture?
- What supports will I provide to facilitate engagement?
- How will I provide opportunities for students to self-select tasks that accelerate their learning?



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