

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.

PROFICIENT RATING LEVEL

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES: THE TEACHER:

- ***Delivers lessons and uses materials to ensure that students' backgrounds and contextual knowledge are considered.***

To display proficiency for this element, the teacher not only knows how to select instructional strategies and materials, but knows how to implement them in a purposeful manner so they have a positive impact on student learning.



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Madeline Hunter describes teaching as a dynamic activity, and finds it important to see each teaching situation as unique due to the interplay of many variables. The art of teaching involves not only knowing what to do and how to do it, but also knowing when to do it, and in what situations not to do it. It is this kind of thinking process that takes teaching from a scientific base to an art form. (Magestro, 1994)

See also professional practices under Basic and Partially Proficient.

- ***Provides opportunities for students to self-select tasks that accelerate their learning.***

According to Vatterott (2009), “When we customize tasks to fit student learning styles and interests, the task becomes theirs, not ours. The goal of ownership is to create a personal relationship between the student and the content.”

Giving students choices is as much a fundamental principle of good teaching as it is a specific intrapersonal teaching strategy. Essentially, choice... consists of building in opportunities for students to make decisions about their learning experiences. Making choices is like lifting weights. The more frequently students choose from a group of options, the thicker their responsibility muscles become. (Armstrong, 2009, p. 92)

Examples of sentence starters to use when presenting students with choices:

- “You may choose to work on _____ or _____.” (small and limited)
- “Select the kind of project you would like to do.” (significant and open ended)
- “Decide which topic you would like to explore.” (choices related to content)
- “Choose from this list a method for...” (choices related to process)
- “Okay, would you rather stop now or continue talking about this?” (informal and spur-of-the-moment). (Armstrong, 2009, p. 92)

Accelerated learning occurs when students are allowed to learn in their preferred style and in a manner that challenges their thinking and promotes the acquisition of knowledge.

Factors that help students accelerate their learning:

- *Positive Learning Environment:* Students learn best in a positive physical, emotional, and social environment, one that promotes safety and risk-taking and values individual differences.
- *Engagement:* Students need to be actively involved in the learning process and take responsibility for their own learning. Knowledge is not something students can passively absorb.
- *Collaboration:* Students need opportunities to share their thinking with others. Learning is a shared experience that involves peer collaboration and communication in which students learn from one another.
- *Choices:* Students are more motivated to learn when they have a variety of materials and tasks from which to choose based on their interests, learning preferences, and academic needs.



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