

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.

PARTIALLY PROFICIENT RATING LEVEL

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES: THE TEACHER:

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.***

Students should have an opportunity to connect what they are learning to their classroom, their home environment, their community, and/or the global community. When instructional strategies are relevant to students' experiences and culture, students are motivated to learn and engage with tasks which can result in transference of learning.



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Prior knowledge: *See also professional practices under Basic.*

Experiences or cultural contexts:

According to Allen & Butler (1996), “ ... matching the contextual conditions for learning to the cultural experiences of the learner increases task engagement and hence increases task performance, (p. 317).

A student’s culture or background can also refer to the time period in which students are living. The teacher can become familiar with the culture of students by asking the following questions:

- Who are the popular recording artists?
- Where do the students like to gather outside of school?
- What are some of the rivalries among students?
- What are popular terms and phrases used by students?
- What are the communities like in which my students live or have lived?

○ **Provide supports that facilitate engagement.**

Active engagement of students is necessary if they are to acquire and retain content. Designing and implementing engaging activities in the classroom increases student motivation, energy, and academic achievement. “When engagement is characterized by the full range of on-task behavior, positive emotions, invested cognition, and personal voice, it functions as the engine for learning and development.” (Marzano, 2007, p. 99)

Marzano (2007) encourages teachers to consider various strategies to ensure that students are intellectually, emotionally, and socially engaged with the content. He identifies some general factors related to student engagement:

- High Energy—the teacher creates with her enthusiasm about the content.
- Missing Information—mystery, games, inquiry.
- The Self-System—situations where students can talk about themselves or their interests in relationship to the content.
- Mild Pressure—time limits.
- Mild Controversy (debates, discussion).
- Competition (teams or individuals).

An important instructional strategy for facilitating student engagement is the use of appropriate pacing.

The following questions can help guide the teacher’s planning of time segments within a lesson.

- Is appropriate time devoted to each element of the lesson?
- Will the lesson have a logical flow?
- Will any students experience down time which can result in lack of focus or disengagement?



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- How will students who complete tasks early remain engaged in the learning process?
- How will the pacing of the lesson need to be differentiated based on students' needs?

Marzano also suggests nine “action steps” for classroom practice that can increase engagement:

- Use games that focus on academic content
- Use inconsequential competition [define here and remove from glossary](#)
- Manage questions and response rates
- Use physical movement
- Use appropriate pacing
- Demonstrate intensity and enthusiasm for content
- Engage students in friendly controversy
- Provide opportunities for students to talk about themselves
- Provide unusual information

(Eagle County Schools Professional Practices Rubric, 2012, p. 24. Used with permission.)

An additional practice that can facilitate student engagement is the implementation of collaborative learning opportunities. When implementing these opportunities, the teacher should communicate expectations for individuals and for the group. When students are assigned meaningful roles and responsibilities that support their success and that of their peers, engagement can increase.

See also Standard III, Element F.

Reference this external resource for additional information:

- Website: <http://donnayoung.org/homeschooling/games/game-boards.htm>
Website provides templates the teacher may use to develop content specific games that can facilitate engagement.



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