

Teacher Quality Standard II

Teachers establish a safe, inclusive and respectful learning environment for a diverse population of students.

The most important action an effective teacher takes at the beginning of the year is creating a climate for learning.

—Mary Beth Blegan, former U.S. Department of Education teacher-in-residence

A positive classroom environment enhances the academic achievement of all students, promotes appropriate classroom behavior, and is welcoming to families and adults. A respect for diversity and the uniqueness of each individual is valued. A sense of community is created in which members encourage and promote the learning of each other through collaboration, communication, and mutual respect as they work to achieve individual and common goals.

Element A

Teachers foster a predictable learning environment in the classroom in which each student has a positive, nurturing relationship with caring adults and peers.

Respect is your most powerful management tool for instilling good classroom discipline. But if the teacher does not have respect then it will not happen.

—Changing Minds.org

Professional practices referenced under each element of the Rubric for Evaluating Colorado Teachers are cumulative. Therefore, for teachers to be proficient in fostering a positive learning environment, they must model respect and empathy for all students. They must also create an environment in which the diverse pers

ACCOMPLISHED AND EXEMPLARY RATING LEVELS

The impact of a proficient implementation of the professional practices referenced in Element A will be students who demonstrate respect for one another and their teachers as exhibited by the manner in which they communicate and interact with one another.

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES: STUDENTS:

- **Respect their classmates and teacher(s).**

Interactions with their teacher(s) and each other:

- **Are respectful.**
- **Demonstrate mutual support.**

Classroom Examples

Kindergarten: Students are working on Colorado Academic Standard 3: Emotional and Social Wellness in Health, Grade Level Expectation 3—Exhibit understanding that one’s actions impact others. (*Implements lesson plans based on: Colorado Academic Standards*)

A kindergarten teacher notices his students are having difficulty understanding how their actions affect their classmates’ feelings. As part of Morning Meeting, he teaches a lesson on feelings using the video <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eu-Ztd0XMUo> based on the book, *I Feel* by Tessa Court. He focuses on the emotion of “mad” to help his students understand when they and their classmates have this feeling. As part of the lesson, he provides students with role-play cards based on scenarios that have occurred in the classroom. He has each student explain why a classmate’s action might make them feel mad and how their friend can make them feel better. Throughout the day, he asks students what their friends may be feeling and how they can help them feel better. (*Creates a classroom environment that features: Mutual respect. Positive relationships among students. Empathy for each student.*)



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Refer to this external resource for additional information:

- Website: “ESL-Kids”
<http://esl-kids.com/flashcards/feelings.html>

Website provides downloadable feeling flash cards.

Middle school reading, writing and communicating: Students are working on Colorado Academic Standard 1: Oral Expression and Listening, Grade Level Expectation 2—Small and large group discussions rely on active listening and the effective contributions of all participants. *(Implements lesson plans based on: Colorado Academic Standards)*

A 7th-grade teacher implements numerous strategies in her classroom to promote collaboration and communication among students. *(Creates a classroom conducive to learning.)* She teaches students the meaning of perspective and engages students in class discussions in which students are free to share their opinions and beliefs. To support students in working respectfully and collaboratively, the teacher models expectations for student dialogue by teaching students to use phrases, such as, “I agree or disagree with you because ...”, “I hear what you’re saying, but I wonder if this idea might work.”, “Can you explain that more for me?” etc. She explains to students that although they may not always agree with a peer’s perspective, they can still demonstrate respect for another’s ideas. The sentence starters are displayed in the classroom for students to reference and build on as they develop their own examples of respectful dialogue. *(Creates a classroom environment that features: Mutual respect. Positive relationships between and among students. Creates a classroom environment which values diverse perspectives.)*

Elementary reading, writing and communicating: Students are working on Colorado Academic Standard 1: Oral Expression and Listening, Grade Level Expectation 2—Listening strategies are techniques that contribute to understanding different situations and serving different purposes. *(Implements lesson plans based on: Colorado Academic Standards)*

A 5th-grade teacher makes a conscious effort each day to greet students at the door with a courteous and positive interaction that helps reinforce a respectful culture in her classroom. She always makes eye contact with students and expects them to greet her in the same manner. *(Establishes a nurturing and caring relationship with each student.)* When students answer questions or share their work, she communicates the expectation that other students will track the speaker and listen attentively. *(Creates a classroom environment that features: Mutual respect. Positive relationships between and among students.)* Over time, students begin to expect this type of interaction from her and from each other. *(Students respect their classmates and teacher (s).)* As these behaviors become routine, an environment that is nurturing and supportive of student interdependence becomes established. *(Creates a classroom environment conducive to learning.)*

Planning/Coaching Questions

- How will I ensure my classroom environment is conducive to learning?
- How will I display respect and empathy for all students?
- How will I support students in developing positive relationships with their peers?
- How will I create an environment in which students’ diverse perspectives are valued?
- How will I establish nurturing and caring relationships with my students?
- How will I model and teach students to respect one another?
- How will I model and teach elements of respectful dialogue?
- How will I provide opportunities for students to engage in respectful dialogue with one another?



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