

## 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 perspectives of individuals are valued and nurturing, and caring relationships are established with each student.

#### BASIC RATING LEVEL

##### PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES: THE TEACHER:

**Creates a classroom environment that facilitates:**

- **Mutual respect.**

Cultured, polite people can be identified by their manners. The heart of courtesy is respect for persons. The neglect of courtesy leads to the collapse of community, and this can be seen in ineffective schools and classrooms where people demean one another. (Wong, 2005, p. 71)

Effective teachers treat students with respect in all circumstances. Students gauge the teacher's respect based on what the teacher does rather than what the teacher is thinking. One of the more promising aspects of teacher-student relationships is that it is not a function of what teachers feel. Rather, it is a function of what teachers do. More specifically, students cannot see inside a teacher's head to determine a teacher's thoughts. They cannot see if a teacher is having positive or negative thoughts about the class as a whole or an individual student. Rather, students look at the teacher's behaviors and interpret those behaviors as signs of the teacher's attitude about the class or the individual student. (Marzano, 2007)

Modeling a respectful culture starts with the teacher and filters down into every aspect of the classroom.

##### Teaching students to be respectful:

- Stress the importance of students treating others the same way they want to be treated.
- Support students in understanding the consequence of thoughtless, unkind words and actions.
- Role-play difficult situations for students in order to demonstrate appropriate responses.



[Click here to go back to the table of contents and view the resource guide in its entirety.](#)

- Teach students the importance of respecting and thanking others, e.g., writing thank-you notes.

*Refer to these external resources for additional information:*

- Article: “Creating a Climate of Respect” by Jonathan Cohen, Richard Cardillo, and Terry Pickeral  
<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/sept11/vol69/num01/Creating-a-Climate-of-Respect.aspx>  
Article describes four goals for creating a classroom climate that fosters mutual respect.
  - Article: “Metaphors of Mindful Engagement and a Vision of Better Schools” by Paul J. Baker  
[http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/journals/ed\\_lead/el\\_199104\\_baker.pdf](http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/journals/ed_lead/el_199104_baker.pdf)  
Article explains how the metaphors of firms, families, fairs, or forums can promote an environment of mutual respect and academic learning.
  - Videos:  
Student Rap on Respect  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGuT9-Y5J4&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGuT9-Y5J4&feature=player_embedded)  
Student Rap on Stopping Bullying  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7-X3Pu20w24&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7-X3Pu20w24&feature=player_embedded)
- **Positive relationships between and among students.**

Teachers who create positive relationships between and among students displays the following behaviors:

- Addressing students by name.
- Saying “please” and “thank you” to students and other adults.
- Maintaining a controlled, disarming smile and open stance.
- Listening to and encouraging all students to share ideas and opinions.
- Acknowledging and valuing individual student differences.

When the teacher has the same expectations for respect with regard to student-to-student interactions, students will embrace this behavior and treat each other accordingly. It is important that the teacher hold students accountable for polite, appropriate, and caring interactions with each other. For this to become the norm, the teacher must model and teach student-to-student dialogue and appropriate interactions. Respectful behavior and positive interactions among students are hallmarks of a well-managed classroom. (*Eagle County Schools Professional Practices Rubric, 2012, p. 80*)

An effective way to teach early childhood students the social skills they need for developing positive relationships is through literature. The following books can be useful for this purpose:

- *The Recess Queen* by Alexis O’Neill
- *The Very Greedy Bee* by Steve Smallman
- Harold B. Wigglebottom series of books by Howard Bemkow

*Refer to this internal resource for additional information:*

- Student Bill of Rights by Robert Marzano  
Document provides examples of documents teachers may use to support the development of respectful relationships.

*See also resources listed under Professional Practice, Empathy for each student.*

- **Empathy for each student.**

**Empathy** plays an essential role in how we communicate and develop relationships. It is a lifelong skill that impacts how we learn and interact with others. A classroom environment that features empathy for each student helps breed a sense of community while teaching students to be emotionally intelligent. However, empathy does not



[Click here to go back to the table of contents and view the resource guide in its entirety.](#)

come naturally to all students. Teachers can help students develop this trait by displaying empathy for each student and teaching students to understand their own emotions as well as the emotions of others.

In his book, *Visible Learning*, John Hattie sites the following claims by Cornelius-White:

... to improve teacher-student relationships and reap their benefits, teachers should learn to facilitate students' development by demonstrating they care for the learning of each student as a person (which sends a powerful message about purpose and priority), and empathizing with students – “see their perspective, communicate it back to them so that they have valuable feedback to self-assess, feel safe, and learn to understand others and the content with the same interest and concern.” (Hattie, 2009, p. 119)

Teachers who display high levels of empathy are able to ‘see learning through the eyes of the students’ and show students that they understand how they are thinking and how then their thinking can be enhanced. This requires that teachers pay special attention to the way in which students define, describe, and interpret phenomena and problem-solving situations, so that they can begin to understand these experiences from the unique perspectives of students (Gage & Berliner, 1998). Indeed, a powerful way in which to see such learning through the eyes of the students is to listen to student questions, and how students then answer their peers’ questions. (Hattie, 2012, p. 112)

*Refer to these external resources for additional information:*

- Websites: Sponsored by KidsHealth in the Classroom  
Early childhood: <http://classroom.kidshealth.org/prekto2/personal/growing/empathy.pdf>  
Elementary: <http://classroom.kidshealth.org/3to5/personal/growing/empathy.pdf>  
Middle school: <http://kidshealth.org/classroom/6to8/personal/growing/empathy.pdf>  
High school: <http://classroom.kidshealth.org/9to12/personal/growing/empathy.pdf>
- Website: Sponsored by Teaching Tolerance, a Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center  
<http://www.tolerance.org/lesson/developing-empathy>  
Website includes lesson ideas for early childhood through high school.
- Article: “Promoting Empathy in Preschool Students”  
[https://wiki.uww.edu/other/childdevresource/images/7/7d/Promoting\\_Empathy\\_in\\_Children\\_Angie.pdf](https://wiki.uww.edu/other/childdevresource/images/7/7d/Promoting_Empathy_in_Children_Angie.pdf).  
Article provides rationale and ideas for teaching empathy to preschool students.

*Refer to this internal resource for additional information:*

- Teaching Empathy and Respect through Literature  
Document provides a list of books that can be used to teach empathy and respect at all grade levels.



[Click here to go back to the table of contents and view the resource guide in its entirety.](#)