

## 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 C

**Teachers engage students as individuals with unique interests and strengths.**

*Learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much just sitting in classes listening to teachers, memorizing prepackaged assignments, and spitting out answers. They must make what they learn part of themselves.*

*—Chickering & Gamson*

Professional practices referenced under each element of the Rubric for Evaluating Colorado Teachers are cumulative. Therefore, for teachers to be proficient in engaging students as individuals, they should be utilizing information from results of student interest inventories or surveys, etc. and implementing lessons that reflect these interests. Students must be encouraged to expand and enhance their learning through the use of challenging questions that are appropriately scaffolded. Teachers also acknowledge students' accomplishments and implement lessons that support all students in participating in class activities.

#### **PARTIALLY PROFICIENT RATING LEVEL**

##### **PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES: THE TEACHER:**

- ***Encourages students to expand and enhance their learning.***

The teacher who encourages students to expand and enhance their learning provides opportunities for students to move beyond merely following directions or memorizing facts. Opportunities that expand and enhance student learning can lead to students generating their own questions, applying skills and concepts to a variety of situations, and seeking and offering different perspectives.

##### **Practices that can encourage students to expand and enhance their learning:**

- Use of higher order questions that require students to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information.
- Use of debates in which students must provide evidence for their ideas and opinions as they discuss topics from a variety of perspectives.
- Use of problem-solving activities that require students to apply what they have learned to new situations.

*See also Proficient Professional Practice, Asks appropriately challenging questions of all students.*

*See also Standard III, Element E.*

- ***Acknowledges students for their accomplishments.***



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An accomplishment is the successful completion of something, such as obtaining a personal or group goal. Acknowledging students' accomplishments can increase their self-esteem and confidence and motivate them to continue engaging in the learning process. It is important that the teacher ensures she is not just recognizing the same top performers or focusing on intelligence only but finds opportunities to acknowledge each student's successes and growth. Along with the acknowledgement, it is important for the teacher to label the student's actions that led to the accomplishment. By labeling the student's actions, there is a greater chance the actions will be repeated. *(Labeling a student's action can also be an example of actionable, timely, specific feedback. Standard III, Element H)*

A classroom that teaches students to equate their intelligence and their worth with their performance will, in general, stifle the desire to learn and will make students afraid of challenges. After all, the next challenge may show you up and lead you to be branded as less intelligent or less worthy. When students believe in their own ability to change, grow, and improve over time, learning becomes fun and challenges become rewarding. (Dweck, 2006)

Examples of ways teachers can acknowledge student accomplishments:

- Display student work that is representative of a variety of students.
- Implement "A Student of the Week" recognition. Create a space in the classroom to celebrate the student's talents and accomplishments both in the classroom and outside the classroom.
- Share examples of students persevering with challenging tasks and the resulting successes.
- Use student work as exemplars. This practice not only serves to acknowledge a student's accomplishments, but provides a visual of performance expectations.
- Highlight student behaviors that exemplify classroom expectations. Instead of correcting misbehaviors, recognize students who are doing the right thing as a model for others to follow.

*See also Standard II, Element B Partially Proficient Professional Practice, Acknowledges the value of each student's contributions to the quality of lessons.*



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