

## 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 D

**Teachers adapt their teaching for the benefit of all students, including those with special needs, across a range of ability levels.**

*Learning occurs best in a positive environment - one that contains positive interpersonal relationships and interactions, that contains comfort and order, and in which the learner feels appreciated, acknowledged, respected, and validated.*

*—Barbara McCombs and Jo Sue Whisler, The Learner-Centered Classroom and School*

Professional practices referenced under each element of the Rubric for Evaluating Colorado Teachers are cumulative. Therefore, for teachers to be proficient in adapting their teaching for the benefit of all students, they must be actively soliciting recommendations from specialists and colleagues to address student needs. These recommendations should then be utilized to design instruction that addresses the learning needs of all students. Student participation and performance is monitored so the teacher can challenge and support each student to learn to his greatest ability.

This element relates to the teacher's adaptation of instruction based on students' behavioral, physical, and/or emotional needs.

#### **ACCOMPLISHED AND EXEMPLARY RATING LEVELS**

The impact of a proficient implementation of the professional practices referenced in Element D will be students who advocate for themselves by articulating their learning needs. They are able to apply coping skills and offer support to fellow classmates by sharing these skills.

#### **PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES: STUDENTS:**

##### **Advocate for themselves by:**

- **Articulating their learning needs to their teacher and/or parent.**
- **Communicating freely and openly with teachers about circumstances that affect their classroom performance.**
- **Apply coping skills such as self-reflection, self-regulation and persistence to classroom situations.**
- **Help fellow classmates by offering support.**



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## Classroom Examples

**Elementary reading, writing, and communicating:** Students are working on the Colorado Academic Standard 3: Writing and Composition, Grade Level Expectation 3--Apply standard English conventions to effectively communicate with written language. *(Implements lesson plans based on: Colorado Academic Standards)*

Fourth-grade students are editing personal narratives they have written. The teacher knows that a particular student can become easily frustrated when she has to redo her work; the student struggles with spelling but wants her writing to be “perfect.” Prior to this lesson, the teacher meets with a colleague to learn how he supports students with this same need. *(Solicits additional input from colleagues to better understand students’ learning needs.)* During the lesson, when her students begin editing, the teacher reads the student’s writing aloud with her as a support in identifying the words she needs to correct. She talks with the student about how authors of the books she reads had to redo their writing many times before it became published. She discusses the character trait of perseverance and points out that part of learning and doing one’s best work includes making mistakes in the process. *(Challenges and supports students to learn to their greatest ability.)* To promote the student’s independence, the teacher provides her a list of sight words and a picture dictionary that is easier for her to use than the classroom set of dictionaries. *(Adapts learning environment to address individual student needs. Implements recommendations of specialists and colleagues to address student needs.)* Before she moves to conference with other students, she tells her to correct at least two words and then she will come back to check on her progress, and that she is looking forward to reading the final draft of her narrative. *(Monitors the quality of student participation and performance.)*

**High school history:** Students are working on Colorado Academic Standard 1: History, Grade Level Expectation 1—Use the historical method of inquiry to ask questions, evaluate primary and secondary sources, critically analyze and interpret data, and develop interpretations defended by evidence. *(Implements lesson plans based on: Colorado Academic Standards)*

Students are studying the Great Depression and will be interviewing an individual who was living during that time period to get a first-hand account of the impact it had on people’s lives. The teacher is concerned about two students being able to complete the task. One student is shy and withdrawn, and the other is easily angered when dealing with individuals she does not trust. Prior to assigning the task to the whole class, the teacher plans a time to meet with both students individually to explain the purpose of the task and his expectations. He also provides strategies for how to ask questions that display respect for the life experiences of older adults. As the students develop the interview questions, he allows them to role play the interview with him. *(Adapts learning environment to address individual student needs. Monitors the quality of student participation and performance. Challenges and supports students to learn to their greatest ability.)* He also suggests individuals they may interview and offers to set up times for them to meet prior to the interview. On the day of the interviews, he joins the student who is easily angered as a silent support. His presence helps the student feel safe and able to engage in the interview. *(Adapts learning environment to address individual student needs. Monitors the quality of student participation and performance.)*

## Planning/Coaching Questions

- How will I obtain information on my students’ needs?
- How will I adapt the learning environment to address individual student needs?
- How will I design instruction that addresses the learning needs of all students?
- How will I monitor the quality of student participation and performance?
- How will I plan instruction and tasks that motivate students to participate?
- How will I use the knowledge of specialists and colleagues to plan instruction that addresses student needs?
- How will I challenge all students to learn to their greatest ability?



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