

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.

See also Standard III, Element A for information on the adaption of instruction based on students' academic needs.

BASIC RATING LEVEL

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES: THE TEACHER:

- **Adapts learning environment to address individual student needs.**

The teacher who adapts the learning environment to address individual student needs is knowledgeable about how students' behavioral, emotional, and physical needs impact their learning.

According to Tomlinson (2003), "Environment will support or deter the student's quest for affirmation, contribution, power, purpose, and challenge in the classroom." (p. 37)

Tomlinson recommends a room environment that is flexible with varied kinds of furniture: tables of different shapes and sizes, spots for quiet individual work, and areas for collaboration. The structure should allow students to move from whole group, to small group, pairs, and individual learning experiences and support a variety of ways



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to engage in learning. The environment should also support the teacher in interacting with students individually, in small groups, and as a whole class.

Examples of ways to differentiate the environment:

- Seating arrangement of students — proximity of student to the front of the classroom, to the teacher, and/or to other students.
- Calm down space for students to use as necessary or appropriate.
- Visual stimulation—visuals should be displayed in an orderly manner and serve a purpose for student learning or behavior.

See also Partially Proficient Professional Practice, Designs instruction to address learning needs of all students.



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