

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.

PROFICIENT RATING LEVEL

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES: THE TEACHER:

- Solicits additional input from colleagues to better understand students' learning needs.

The teacher who is proficient in adapting and designing instruction to address the learning needs of all students is proactive in soliciting input from colleagues that can support the learning of all students. This may include scheduling time for colleagues to observe students, collaboratively analyzing student data, obtaining resources from colleagues, and observing or co-teaching with colleagues.

The opportunity to learn from others' experiences and expertise deepens one's knowledge and strengthens the effectiveness of classroom instruction. Learning is a social endeavor. Just as students need opportunities to interact and learn from their peers, teachers need to engage in collaboration that is solution-oriented and improves the quality of lessons for all students.

- Challenges and supports students to learn to their greatest ability.***



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Carol Dweck’s research reveals that we develop early in life a “mind-set” about what it means to be smart and how we become successful. Students with a fixed mind-set feel a sense of inevitability when they encounter difficulty in school. Students with a growth mind-set believe that if a skill or task is difficult, they can nonetheless achieve mastery because their continuing effort will win the day. Their motivation to work hard is high because they believe the payoff will be worth their investment. (Dweck, 2006)

Challenging all students requires setting high expectations for all students. It also requires the creation of a learning environment in which students feel respected and safe to take risks. Students must trust that their efforts matter and that making mistakes is an important part of the learning process.

The teacher who works to challenge and support students in learning to their greatest ability must:

- Plan instruction that addresses the academic needs and learning preferences of all students.
- Create a classroom environment in which students feel safe taking risks.
See also Standard III, Element B.
- Encourage students to feel a sense of ownership over their learning. According to Conley in the article, “A Complete Definition of College and Career Readiness,” key characteristics of college and career readiness include: student ownership of learning, which includes goal setting, persistence, self-awareness, motivation, progress monitoring, help seeking, and self-efficacy; and specific learning techniques, such as time management, study skills, strategic reading, memorization techniques, collaborative learning, technology skills, and self-monitoring. (Conley, 2012)
- Provide feedback on students’ progress and next steps. “Effective teachers set appropriately challenging goals and then structure situations so that students can reach their goals”(Kagan & Kagan, 2009). If teachers can encourage students to share commitment to these challenging goals, and if they provide feedback on how to be successful in learning as one is working to achieve the goals, then goals are more likely to be attained.

See also Standard III, Element H.



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