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.

PARTIALLY PROFICIENT RATING LEVEL

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES: THE TEACHER:

☐ Designs instruction to address learning needs of all students.

Many factors—academic, social, emotional, economic, physical, cultural, and/or language— can have an impact on students' learning needs. To understand and address these needs, the teacher must be a "student of her students."

Before instruction can be designed to meet students' needs, the classroom environment should promote differentiation and support for all students.

Characteristics of a supportive classroom environment:
- The teacher is attuned and responsive to the affective, cognitive, and physical needs of learners.
- Students feel safe, both physically and affectively.
- The teacher respects and supports the possibilities inherent in each student.
- Individual differences are accepted as natural and positive.
- Students learn to respect one another as learners.
- The teacher and students share in the decision-making process about daily routines and classroom operation.
- Hard work is an expectation.
- Physical arrangements are flexible and support student access to a variety of learning options.
- A range of resources is available that supports student behavioral needs and self-regulation.
- Flexible student grouping capitalizes on student strengths and allows effective attention to student needs. (Adapted from Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010)

A critical component of a supportive classroom environment is the development and management of routines and procedures that help students understand, contribute to, and participate in the learning process. These routines are an important component in the design of the teacher's instruction.

Examples of differentiated routines and procedures:
- Using signals to redirect students that may only be known to the student and teacher.
- Providing picture cues to communicate behavior expectations and/or directions for a task.
- Providing space in a classroom for students to spend time when they need to calm down or be alone for a few minutes.
- Allowing students to use headsets to either listen to music while they work or eliminate the sound of noise in the classroom.
- Adjusting the time students may take to complete tasks.
- Providing organizational strategies, such as color-coded handouts and calendars, for students to self-manage their materials and assignments.
- Providing signals for students to obtain assistance from either the teacher or a peer.

Refer to these external resources for additional information:
- Article: "'Teacher, I Need Your Help' What kids with attention deficit wish their teachers knew." By Lisa Gridley
  http://www.additudemag.com/adhdblogs/28/print/10146.html
  - Article describes how students with attention deficit disorder can feel in a classroom setting and ways the teacher can support them.
- Article: "Teaching Children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder ADHD ADD" published by ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education
  http://www.childrensdisabilities.info/adhd/teaching-adhd.html
  - Article describes behaviors of ADHD or ADD students with suggestions for how teachers can modify the classroom environment and instruction.

- Article: "Working with Shy or Withdrawn Students" by Jere Brophy
  http://www.ericdigests.org/1997-3/shy.html
  - Article describes how a student's shyness can impact their engagement and learning and ways teachers can support these students.

- **Monitors the quality of student participation and performance.**

To create a safe, inclusive, and respectful learning environment, the teacher should continually monitor student behaviors. Maintaining a constant watch on students' behavior allows the teacher to collect data that help determine the causes of both appropriate and inappropriate behaviors; this information then can be used to create a safe and respectful environment.

No behavior, whether it is positive or negative, exists in isolation. Student behaviors are often the result of another action, such as something that occurred in school or at home. Knowing what actions precede student behavior can help determine the appropriate action to either increase desired behavior or decrease inappropriate behavior.

Another important step in monitoring the quality of student participation and performance is the design of instruction and tasks that are motivating and meaningful for students. Participation in the process of learning should never be optional. Students should not only want to engage but be held accountable to engage.

> In the traditional classroom, the teacher asks students a question, and only those who know the answer, or who are daring enough to respond, raise their hands. The rest of the class can opt out. When students have the option of nonparticipation, many don't participate. This is especially true for shy students, lower achievers, and early language learners. The result: They don't learn as much or as quickly. (Kagan & Kagan, 2009)

Monitoring the quality of student participation and performance also requires the teacher to establish clear expectations for student behavior. Assigning roles and responsibilities for group work can help to increase the quality of student participation.

See also Standard III, Element F.

Teachers may monitor the quality of student participation and performance by:
- Conferencing with students during group and independent tasks by asking questions and providing descriptive feedback.
- Asking students to reflect on their level of engagement and collaboration with peers. Allow students to set goals related to their interactions with peers and contributions to the group.
- Having students reflect on their performance on class assignments or homework. When students rate their performance or understanding of a concept or skill, it provides valuable information the teacher can use to monitor student performance.

Refer to this external resource for additional information:
- Student Self-Assessment and Reflection*s* developed by the Indiana Secondary Transition Resource Center http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/styles/iidc/defiles/INSTRC/TuesTips/Student_Self_eval_benefits.pdf
  - Document is an example of a form students may complete in order to identify their strengths and areas of need related to a project or activity. This may be utilized by the student and the teacher to monitor participation and performance.

- ***Implements recommendations of specialists and colleagues to address student needs.***

To design instruction that addresses the learning needs of all students, the teacher must be willing to seek and implement recommendations of specialists and colleagues with knowledge and experience in addressing a variety of student needs. This may include specialists from student support services or other teachers.

Student Support Services	Teachers
Physical and Occupational therapists	Special education teachers
Speech language pathologists	Gifted and talented teachers
School orientation and mobility specialists	Second-language teachers
School psychologists	Specialists, such as music, art, band, chorus, and physical education teachers
Audiologists	Interventionists
School nurses	Instructional coaches
School social workers	Content area specialists
School counselors	Previous year's teachers

When teachers have opportunities to collectively analyze student data and collaborate on strategies and interventions to meet identified needs, teacher and student growth can increase.

Benefits of teachers working together to address student needs:

- Teachers' understanding of essential content and of the needs of their students is deepened.
- Instructional strategies can more appropriately be aligned with students' needs and content goals.
- Teachers have opportunities to implement strategies and then reflect on their effectiveness in order to identify next steps.