

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 E

Teachers provide proactive, clear and constructive feedback to families about student progress and work collaboratively with the families and significant adults in the lives of their students.

Parents are the essential link to improving American education, and schools have to do a better job of reaching out to them. Sending home a report card is not enough. Parents want to help their children succeed in school, and often need guidance on how to be most effective.

—Richard Riley Secretary, U.S. Office of Education 1999

Professional practices referenced under each element of the Rubric for Evaluating Colorado Teachers are cumulative. Therefore, for teachers to be proficient in providing constructive feedback to families on student progress and working collaboratively with families, they must first establish a classroom environment that is inviting to families. They must also use a variety of methods to initiate communication that result in respectful relationships with students, their families and significant adults.

BASIC RATING LEVEL

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES: THE TEACHER:

- ***Establishes a classroom environment that is inviting to families and significant adults.***

The teacher who establishes an inviting classroom for families and significant adults demonstrates the importance of creating a partnership between the school and the student's home. This partnership begins with families feeling welcomed into the classroom by the teacher and the students.

While all parents want to know how to co-educate their children, not all parents know how to do this. A major barrier for these parents is that they are often not familiar with the language of learning and schools. For many of them, school was not always the most pleasant experience. (Hattie, 2012, p. 188)

A classroom that is inviting has a culture of respect for its members and visitors. The teacher communicates with families in a respectful manner that conveys the importance of the school-home connection, regardless of the family structure or experiences of the adults.

Tips for establishing an inviting environment for families and significant adults:

- Invite family members directly into the classroom to share interests and cultural traditions. This can provide a meaningful learning opportunity for students and support collaboration between families and teachers.



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- Schedule opportunities for families to participate during and after the school day. This can accommodate adults with different work hours or other commitments, but who want to be involved in their child’s educational experiences. Examples of these opportunities are: Reading Night, Author’s Night, Math and Science Activities, etc.
- Implement the creation of family projects, such as, All about Me collages and Family Trees. Displaying these projects in the classroom can create a welcoming and culturally respectful environment for students and families.
- Establish a Student of the Week recognition and invite family members to send in pictures or notes to the student. Family members may also be invited to have a special breakfast or lunch with their student.
- Use journals as a way for students to communicate with families about what they are learning and doing at school. Ask families to respond to the student’s writing. Parents may also be asked to respond to a prompt related to a concept being taught or share an experience that connects to a social skill/character trait students are learning. For example, “Describe a time you had to persevere with a task,” or “Describe a time when you felt hurt or sad, and explain how you dealt with this feeling.”

Refer to this external resource for additional information:

- Article: “Welcoming Children and Families into Your Classroom” published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children
http://www.naeyc.org/files/tyc/file/11X_%20Welcome%20Children%20and%20Families.pdf
 Article provides ideas for how early childhood teachers can create a classroom environment that is inviting to families and students.



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