

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 F

Teachers create a learning environment characterized by acceptable student behavior, efficient use of time and appropriate intervention strategies.

Effective classroom management is essentially invisible, because when students are well-behaved and engaged, the focus is on instruction and learning.

—Rick Smith

Professional practices referenced under each element of the Rubric for Evaluating Colorado Teachers are cumulative. Therefore, for teachers to be proficient in creating a learning environment characterized by acceptable student behavior, they must communicate clear behavioral expectations and hold students accountable to adhere to their expectations. Teachers must also implement procedures that create a safe and orderly learning environment that results in instructional time being maximized by all students.

PROFICIENT RATING LEVEL

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES: THE TEACHER:

- ***Makes maximum use of instructional time.***

For students to meet the demands of the Colorado Academic Standards, teachers need to provide relevant and purposeful instructional tasks that increase student engagement and result in maximizing instructional time. Effective time management is one of the skills necessary for success in school as well as in everyday life and in the work world. Students need time to practice, rehearse, review, apply, and connect new learning and relate it to their everyday lives. Teachers who effectively manage time give their students the best opportunity to learn and to develop personal habits that lead to wise use of time.

For each learning experience, the time for each element of the lesson varies with the type of activity and the students' ages. Use of time and choice of instructional strategies are also based on the scheduled time for the learning experience. Time wasted getting materials and supplies at the beginning of the lesson sets a negative tone and encourages off-task behavior. Lectures and seatwork assignments that are too long and group work and hands-on activities that are too short fail to accomplish the learning objective. A hurried ending to the lesson leaves students without closure—one of the key elements important for permanent learning. It is also a critical time for teachers to assess which students accomplished the objective and which students need more time. The old adage “Time lost is never found” rings especially true in the classroom. (McLeod, Fisher & Hoover, 2003)



[Click here to go back to the table of contents and view the resource guide in its entirety.](#)

One way the teacher can maximize instructional time is with the development and communication of signals that support students in self-monitoring their behavior. The use of signals can reduce interruptions to instructional time for redirection of student behavior. Some signals may only be known to the student and the teacher, but the subtlety of the signals preserves student privacy, and its discretion can maintain the efficiency of instructional time.

Examples: Nonverbal and Verbal Reminders:

- Nonverbal Reminders
 - Teacher pauses.
 - Teacher makes eye contact with the student.
 - Teacher walks near the student.
 - Teacher places a hand on the student's desk.
 - Teacher points to the work the student is supposed to be doing.
- Verbal Reminders
 - Teacher says the name of the student, either privately or in front of the class.
 - Teacher states the class rule aloud to the class.
 - Teacher comments on other students who are behaving appropriately.

Refer to this external resource for additional information:

- Article: "Making Every Moment Count: Maximizing Quality Instructional Time" a report from The Time, Learning, and Afterschool Taskforce
http://www.reading.org/libraries/reports-and-standards/memc_070620.pdf Article describes Strategies teachers can implement in all content areas and at all levels to maximize instructional time.
- **Maintains a safe and orderly environment.**

According to Jensen (1998), "The human brain seeks pattern and desires daily events to be logical and predictable."

Teachers can provide a safe and orderly learning environment by establishing clear expectations and logical consequences for students that are implemented in a consistent and predictable manner.

Classroom environments need to be planned to suit the needs of the educational program they serve. The environment supports the learning process by physically providing equipment and setup to facilitate smooth implementation of student and teacher tasks. The environment should allow for easy access of resources, configuration of grouping arrangements, and movement by members of the classroom.

Clear traffic patterns for teacher and student movement within the classroom are essential to student safety. Ensuring clear pathways for movement, securing electrical equipment, and organizing storage of supplies and students' belongings can create an environment that is safe and orderly.

Cleanliness is an important characteristic of a safe environment. Periodically clearing the surfaces of work spaces can reduce the risk of student injuries and illnesses. Keeping the classroom free of clutter can reduce distractions and accidents.



[Click here to go back to the table of contents and view the resource guide in its entirety.](#)

Tips for a safe and orderly environment:

- Electrical cords should be properly secured so that students will not trip over them. (Refer to building safety codes for specific regulations.)
- Evacuation maps should be displayed so they are visible to all members of the classroom.
- Trash cans and recycle bins should be available to reduce excess paper and avoid clutter.
- Disinfectant wipes or other cleaning supplies can be used by the teacher and students to clean common surface areas.

When supplies, equipment, and resources are organized and accessible, students are more likely to be independent learners. When students are able to work independently, behavior management issues decline and student engagement increases. Therefore, it is advantageous to everyone when students can help themselves to frequently used supplies so that learning is not interrupted and instructional time is maximized. Consistently displaying visual supports in the same place for each lesson not only makes them easily accessible, but also increases the likelihood students will use them.

When wall space and the overall appearance of the classroom are aligned with the learning goals and instructional priorities, students receive reinforcement for the value of what they are learning and why they are learning it. (Marzano, 2009, p. 202)

Visuals displayed on walls should have strong instructional purposes and not just serve as decorations.

Refer to this internal resource for additional information:

- Purposeful Use of Visuals
Document identifies benefits from the use of visuals and suggestions for how to create and utilize visuals in a purposeful manner.



[Click here to go back to the table of contents and view the resource guide in its entirety.](#)