

## Teacher Quality Standard III

**Teachers plan and deliver effective instruction and create an environment that facilitates learning for their students.**

Study after study shows the single most important factor determining the quality of the education a child receives is the quality of the teacher. Quality teachers have knowledge of content, curriculum, and standards. They are able to plan and implement instructional strategies in an effective and purposeful manner that enhances student learning and independence. Research shows that when implemented effectively and purposefully, the professional practices referenced in Standard III can result in an environment in which all students can learn and succeed.

### Element A

**Teachers demonstrate knowledge of current developmental science, the ways in which learning takes place, and the appropriate levels of intellectual, social, and emotional development of their students.**

*Not all students are alike. We must not differentiate who will learn what but rather how we will teach so that all students have access to, and support and guidance in, mastering the content.*

—Paula Rutherford

Professional practices referenced under each element of the Rubric for Evaluating Colorado Teachers are cumulative. Therefore, for teachers to be proficient in the application of current developmental science to address student needs, they must effectively differentiate instruction and modify content based on research of current studies and knowledge of students' intellectual, social, and emotional development. Proficient teachers expand their knowledge through collaboration with colleagues and apply this knowledge to improve the quality of lessons.

### ACCOMPLISHED AND EXEMPLARY RATING LEVELS

The impact of a proficient implementation of the professional practices referenced in Element A will be students who are able to take ownership of their learning. By developing an understanding of how they learn best, students are able to make choices about materials and strategies they need to utilize in order to maximize their strengths while supporting their needs and learning styles related to a learning objective.

#### PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES: STUDENTS:

- ***Seek materials and resources appropriate for their personal approach to learning.***

**Seek to understand:**

- ***How they learn best.***
- ***Where their time and efforts are best used.***



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*Differentiation enables teachers to go beyond the question, “How can I make sure a student masters a body of information?” to asking instead, “How can I help create a real learner?”*

Students need to develop an awareness of what they are doing, where they are going, and how they are getting there; they need to know what to do when they do not know what to do. Such self-regulation, or meta-cognitive skills, is one of the ultimate goals of all learning: they often are called skills for ‘lifelong learning,’ and it is why students need opportunities to become “their own teachers.”

### *Classroom Examples*

**Elementary reading, writing, and communicating:** Students are working on the Colorado Academic Standard 2: Reading for All Purposes, Grade Level Expectation 3—Increasing word understanding, word use, and word relationships increases vocabulary. *(Implements lesson plans based on: Colorado Academic Standards)*

Third-grade students are assigned vocabulary homework. The teacher elects to assign more complex vocabulary words to a group of students with 6<sup>th</sup>-grade level vocabulary skills and simpler vocabulary words to a group of students with 1<sup>st</sup>-grade level vocabulary skills. She assigns vocabulary words based on the students’ current skills rather than having all students work on the same list. *(Modifies content to assure that students are able to work at their ability levels.) (Tomlinson, 2001, p. 72).*

**Elementary science:** Students are working on Colorado Academic Standard 3: Earth Systems Science, Grade Level Expectation 1—Earth is part of the solar system, which includes the Sun, Moon, and other bodies that orbit the Sun in predictable patterns that lead to observable paths of objects in the sky as seen from Earth. *(Implements lesson plans based on: Colorado Academic Standards)*

During a lesson on the solar system, the 4<sup>th</sup>-grade teacher displays a poster of the planets, students act out the alignment of the planets, and the class reads an article on one of the planets. Within this lesson, the selected materials support visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners’ needs. *(Applies knowledge of current developmental science to address student needs.)*



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### *Planning/Coaching Questions*

- How will I identify students' interests, learning styles and strategies, and academic readiness in order to differentiate?
- How will I plan for a variety of instructional methods during a lesson?
- How will I differentiate the content for students while ensuring students have access to grade-level material?
- How can I benefit from the expertise of my colleagues to improve my instruction?
- How will I use my knowledge of students to develop appropriate grouping arrangements?
- How will I provide opportunities for students to make choices about the resources and materials they will use?
- How will I support students in identifying how they learn best?
- How will I determine if my differentiation is effective?



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