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 F

Teachers provide students with opportunities to work in teams and develop leadership qualities.

When learning groups are established successfully, positive independence results in students' recognizing that their individual success is inextricably linked to the success of every other member of the group.
—Frey, Fisher, & Everlove

Professional practices referenced under each element of the Rubric for Evaluating Colorado Teachers are cumulative. Therefore, for teachers to be proficient in providing students with opportunities to work in teams and develop leadership qualities, students must be included in individual and group activities that are flexible and adjusted based on lesson objectives and student needs. To ensure group activities result in high levels of student engagement and increase student learning, lesson plans must include opportunities for students to participate using various roles and modes of communication that create opportunities for students to learn from each other.

PROFICIENT RATING LEVEL

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES: THE TEACHER:

- ○ *Flexibly groups students.*

Flexible grouping is based on learning goals and student needs. When teachers flexibly group students, they ensure students are given opportunities to learn in a variety of settings and from a mix of other students. When appropriate, students may have choices of which groups to join.

- ○ *Adjusts team composition based on learning objectives and student needs.*

Teacher decisions about student grouping are based on a number of considerations. Chief among these is suitability to the instructional goals. The type of instructional group should reflect the learning

outcomes of the lesson and meet the needs of all students (Danielson, 2007). Therefore, the ability of a teacher to effectively group students is directly connected to her knowledge of the students, their individual needs, interests, and abilities.

See also Standard III, Element A.

    ○ *Varies group size, composition, and tasks to create opportunities for students to learn from each other.*

Placing students in **learning groups** to complete group activities differs from placing students in groups for direct instruction. Direct instruction focuses on a set of skills or knowledge that a whole group, a small group, or individual student must acquire, which is when ability grouping is appropriate (i.e., guided reading groups). In learning groups where students are completing an activity together, they process not only content but learn beneficial social behaviors, such as cooperation and **collaboration**.

Students may be grouped in many different ways to enhance their level of engagement and learning.

- A single, large group, led by the teacher or another student
- Small groups, either independent or in an instructional setting with a teacher
- Homogeneous
- Heterogeneous
- Students can choose their own grouping — with partners, in triads, or in other configurations that they or a teacher establish.

    Grouping has benefits for many aspects of teaching. One of those benefits is that it can enhance the processing of new information because interacting in groups provides students with multiple reference points. It allows each student to see how others process information, and it allows each student to see how others react to his or her processing of information. (Marzano, 2007)

Refer to this internal resource for additional information:
- Strategies for Forming Groups
    Document provides examples of different grouping structures.

Misconceptions about grouping students:

- *My students sit in groups so they can work together whenever they need support.* Although classroom arrangement can **s**upport group activities, placing desks in groups or seating students at tables does not guarantee students will work cooperatively or collaboratively. Without clear procedures and clarity of purpose, classroom arrangement can result in off-task behavior and students "piggy backing" off their stronger or more motivated peers.
- *When I notice student engagement decreasing, I use a Turn and Talk response method.* A Turn and Talk can be an effective way to engage all students in responding to questions and learning

from each other. However, for it to enhance student learning, teachers must provide clarity on what students are expected to talk about and how to listen and respond to each other. It is also helpful for teachers to designate which partner talks first.

*

* *I would like to use group activities, but my students do not work well in groups.* Working cooperatively and collaboratively with others are life skills that students need to be taught. Teachers can do this by communicating clear expectations for how students should display respect for group member's opinions and ideas. When teachers assign roles and responsibilities and teach accountable talk, students can develop the skills needed for working effectively with others. Teachers may also need to scaffold group activities from partners to large groups of four or more to allow students opportunities to build trust in their peers and feel confident in sharing their thinking with others.