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 G

Teachers communicate effectively, making learning objectives clear and providing appropriate models of language.

Talk can cure, and talk can foster constructive change. But it must be the right kind of talk.
—Thomas Gordon, Teacher Effectiveness Training

Professional practices referenced under each element of the Rubric for Evaluating Colorado Teachers are cumulative. Therefore, for teachers to be proficient in communicating clear learning objectives, they should provide a model of effective communication and provide opportunities for students to com

ACCOMPLISHED AND EXEMPLARY RATING LEVELS

The result of a proficient implementation of the professional practices referenced in Element G will be students who are able to apply effective written and oral communication skills and use academic language in spoken and written work.

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES: STUDENTS:

- ○ *Apply effective written and oral communication skills in their work.*
- ○ *Use academic language in spoken and written work.*

Academic language is the language used in textbooks and assessments. It is the language or vocabulary associated with concepts, skills, and content taught in classrooms. It is also the language of formal communication. For students to be able to comprehend the teacher's instruction, discuss what is being learned, communicate their ideas, read for different purposes, and write about their learning, they need to understand and be able to use academic language. (Scarcella, 2003)

Research shows that students' knowledge and use of academic language is directly related to their attainment of content knowledge and comprehension. Therefore, it is critical for students to possess a deep understanding of academic language in order to understand the concepts they are expected to master as outlined in the content standards. (Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986)

Examples of academic language:

- *Mathematics:* equation, fraction, exponent, and monomial. Often mathematical terms have multiple meanings leading to confusion (i.e., square, coordinate, degree)
- *Language arts:* text, main idea, inference, prediction, and comprehend
- *Assessments:* define, explain, describe, justify, and determine

Tips for promoting students' use of academic language:

- Identify the structure and genre of the text that will be utilized and the vocabulary needed to comprehend the text. (e.g., a lab report for chemistry requires different academic structure and language than a newspaper article for social studies or a novel for language arts).
- Provide explicit instruction and analysis of the text to support students' comprehension of the text (e.g., teaching students how to deconstruct a word problem in algebra requires different academic language than deconstructing a poem in language arts or a proof in geometry).
- Provide scaffolded instruction on the use of academic language, both orally and visually (e.g., display vocabulary that students will need to understand and utilize; provide graphics to support vocabulary meaning; incorporate academic language during direct instruction; provide sentence stems that include the academic language of the concept or skill being taught).

Classroom Examples

Elementary science: Students are working on Colorado Academic Standard 3: Earth Systems Science, Grade Level Expectation 1—Earth's materials can be broken down and/or combined into different materials such as rocks, rock cycle, formation of soil, and sand – some of which are usable resources for human activity. *(Implements lesson plans based on: Colorado Academic Standards)*

Students in a 3rd-grade classroom are working with partners to create landforms from clay or through illustrations. Prior to students working collaboratively, the teacher models how he illustrated a landform based on its attributes. In his model, he uses the sentence stem, "The landform I illustrated is a _____ because a _____ is _____." For example, "The landform I illustrated is a peninsula because a peninsula is surrounded by water on three sides. His explanation includes the academic language associated with a peninsula, as well as the language needed to explain his illustration. *(Communicates effectively with students. Models effective communication skills. Teaches students to be effective communicators.)* Students are provided sentence stems to communicate with one another about the landform they create. As he circulates during students' group work, he continually questions students about their creation or illustration and uses prompts to support them in using the academic language

modeled. *(Encourages students to communicate effectively. Provides opportunities for students to practice communication skills.)*

Middle school physical education: Students are working on the Colorado Academic Standard 1: Movement Competence and Understanding in Physical Education, Grade Level Expectation 1—Combine the critical elements of movement and skills concepts. *(Implements lesson plans based on: Colorado Academic Standards)*

A physical education teacher is teaching a unit on basketball to 7th-grade students. As he models skills needed to play the game, he labels each skill, using the academic language associated with basketball (e.g., dribble, pass, guard, foul shot, defense, offense, and block). In this way, students learn not only how to play the game, but the terminology needed to label what they are doing. *(Communicates effectively with students.)*As students observe their peers playing a game, they use the language modeled by the teacher to provide feedback to their classmates. *(Models effective communication skills. Teaches students to be effective communicators.)* When students use everyday language instead of language associated with basketball such as bounce instead of dribble, the teacher prompts them to use the correct terms. *(Encourages students to communicate effectively. Students use academic language in spoken and written work.)*

High school reading, writing, and communicating: Students are working on Colorado Academic Standard 3: Writing and Composition, Grade Level Expectation 1-- Style, detail, expressive language, and genre create a well-crafted statement directed at an intended audience and purpose.*(Implements lesson plans based on: Colorado Academic Standards)*

A teacher tells his 12th-grade students they will be learning how to write persuasive pieces. He defines the term "persuasive" and asks students how this term applies to a type of writing. Student' tasks are to complete a job application and write a cover letter to a potential employer. The teacher asks students to explain how the task connects to the learning objective. Prior to students beginning their task, the teacher models his resume and cover letter. During the model, he explicitly labels how he decided on the information to include based on his audience and purpose for writing. *(Models effective communication skills. Teaches students to be effective communicators. Provides opportunities for students to practice communication skills. Students apply effective written and oral communication skills in their work.)*

Planning/Coaching Questions
- How will I ensure that I am communicating effectively with all students?
- How will I communicate the learning objective to students?
- How will I plan for strategies that model and teach effective communication skills?
- What opportunities will I provide for students to communicate orally and/or in writing with others?
- What will be the academic language I will include in my model and instruction?
- How will I ensure students are able to utilize the academic language associated with the content and skill being taught?