

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 communicate with one another about their learning.

PROFICIENT RATING LEVEL

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES: THE TEACHER:

- ***Teaches students to be effective communicators.***

As teachers plan for how they will teach students to communicate effectively, they should refer to the Speaking and Listening standards referenced in the Colorado Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, and Communicating.

Students in the 21st century are seldom out of touch with their peers. They spend hours on their cell phones, texting or emailing each other. Even though they communicate frequently with one another informally, many lack the skills needed for formal or academic communication. The development of written, oral, and interpersonal communication skills necessary to succeed in college and career is dependent on teachers implementing strategies and activities that explicitly teach these skills and provide opportunities for student application.



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See also Basic Professional Practice, Communicates effectively with students and Partially Proficient Professional Practice, Models effective communication skills.

Tips for teaching communication skills:

- Set the expectation that students orally respond to questions using complete sentences.
- Provide sentence starters for students to use when communicating and collaborating with peers. This is referred to as Accountable Talk, which is a way teachers can encourage and teach students to communicate their thinking and listen with purpose.
- Model for students how to identify and analyze the audience with whom they will be communicating. Have students think about the audience's expectations and interests when writing and developing presentations.

Refer to these external resources for additional information:

- Article: "Teaching Basic Communication Skills" by Edward Wilczynski
<http://www.seenmagazine.us/articles/article-detail/articleid/209/teaching-basic-communication-skills.aspx>.
Article explains the rationale for teaching communication skills and describes ways to do so.
- Video: Why is it important for English learners to talk every day and how can teachers engage these students in academic conversations? with Rosita Apodaca
http://ifl.lrdc.pitt.edu/index.php/resources/ask_the_educator/rosita_apodaca
Video discusses why English learners must go beyond fluency in everyday English and how teachers can help students become fluent listeners and speakers of academic English.
- Article, "Content-Area Conversations" by Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey and Carol Rothenberg
<http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/108035/chapters/Procedures-for-Classroom-Talk.aspx>.
Article describes ways teachers can support ELL students' communication skills and strategies for implementing group activities in the classroom.

Refer to this internal resource for additional information:

- Sentence Starters for Teaching Students Accountable Talk
Document provides examples of sentence starters that can be used to support the development of students' communication skills.

- *Provides opportunities for students to practice communication skills.*



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Once teachers have developed the skills to communicate effectively with students and planned and implemented strategies for modeling and teaching these skills, teachers must purposefully plan opportunities for students to practice these skills.

Students can practice communication skills in a variety of ways. For example, students may engage in activities such as role-playing, storytelling, or interviewing.

See also Standard III, Elements D and F.

Common Misconceptions	
Misconceptions	Explanations
I ask a lot of questions, which gives my students opportunities to communicate.	Questioning is a teacher action. For students to practice communication skills, they need opportunities to respond to peers’ answers and ask questions of each other and the teacher.
My students already talk a lot.	Students enter our classrooms knowing how to “chit chat.” However, what they lack are the skills and language necessary for academic discourse. In her book, <i>Comprehension Through Conversation</i> , Maria Nichols points out that the “heightened level of engagement” and “flexible thinking” necessary for academic discourse must be explicitly taught and practiced.
My students are motivated to debate and engage in lively discussions with each other.	Debate can be a form of academic discourse. However, when students “dig in their heels” with the goal being to win, communication can become more argumentative than evidence-based. Students need opportunities to evaluate a variety of perspectives and work collaboratively to develop evidence-based arguments.
My students enjoy sharing about the books they are reading. We have “book talks” on a weekly basis.	When student communication is limited to sharing their opinions about a text, then the impact on deepening student learning is limited. The purpose for student communication about their reading should be to deepen and challenge students’ thinking. Students should have opportunities to answer and ask questions about what they read based on evidence from a text.



Refer to this external resource for additional information:

- Article: “Comprehension Through Conversation the Power of Purposeful Talk in the Reading Workshop”
by Maria Nichols
<http://www.heinemann.com/shared/onlineresources/E00793/chapter5.pdf>

Article describes how teachers can engage students in purposeful talk during a read aloud.



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