

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 B

Teachers demonstrate a commitment to and respect for diversity, while working toward common goals as a community and as a country.

To be effective, teachers must treat the culture, heritage, and language of all their students con respeto.
—Eva Midobuche

Professional practices referenced under each element of the Rubric for Evaluating Colorado Teachers are cumulative. Therefore, for teachers to be proficient in demonstrating a commitment to and respect for diversity, an environment in which diversity is respected and used to further student learning must be created. By using instructional strategies, activities, and materials that reflect students' backgrounds and value their individual contributions, teachers establish a sense of community in which student interactions are positive and common goals can be established.

PROFICIENT RATING LEVEL

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES: THE TEACHER:

Establishes processes that result in:

- ***A sense of community among students.***

Students need to understand that the classroom belongs to everyone, not just the teacher or a select group of students. This does not happen by accident but requires intentional planning by the teacher. The teacher who creates an environment in which diversity is respected and each student's contribution is valued is laying the foundation for establishing a community of learners within the classroom.

Refer to this external resource for additional information:

- Article: "Building Community in the Classroom" by Ellen Booth Church
<http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/article/building-community-classroom>
Article provides practical ideas for how to build a community in the classroom at the beginning of the school year.

Refer to this internal resource for additional information:

- **Strategies for Creating a Sense of Community**
Document provides practical ideas for how teachers can create a community within the classroom.
- ***Effective interactions among students.***



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The result of an environment in which diversity is respected and a sense of community is established will be effective interactions among students. For students to interact effectively, mutual respect and skills to communicate effectively with one another must exist.

The teacher can establish processes for effective interactions among students by providing opportunities for students to collaborate and communicate. This may be accomplished through the use of technology, but periodically students need to do this through face-to-face interactions.

Students' face-to-face interactions give them the chance to support each other academically and personally. When students actively invest in and support their groupmates' learning, they are practicing the skills required to be part of an effective learning team. The combination of personal and academic supports that emerge is termed "promotive interactions." (Frey, Fisher, & Everlove, 2009, p. 38)

Although technology can be an effective and motivating tool for student communication, students need opportunities to communicate with peers in a manner that requires them to "construct meaning not just from the content of words but also from the gestures, movement and expressions their partners or groupmates use." (Frey, Fisher, & Everlove, 2009, p. 38)

Refer to this internal resource for additional information:

- [Sentence Starters for Teaching Students Accountable Talk](#)
Document provides ideas for teaching students dialogue that demonstrates respect for others' perspectives.
- ***Respect for individual differences.***

To establish processes in which individual differences are respected requires the teacher to put structures in place that lead to students respecting one another's differences, as well as the differences of others outside the classroom. The teacher must model respect and incorporate materials and instructional strategies representative of diversity into his or her instruction. Students need opportunities to collaborate and communicate with students who have different backgrounds and experiences in order to develop the skills needed to respect and celebrate each individual's uniqueness.

See also professional practices under Basic and Partially Proficient.

See also Standard II, Element A.

- ***Positive social relationships.***

Social relationships with peers provide children with a range of supports and tacit acknowledgment of their acceptance in the social milieu of the school. Studies of young elementary-age children reveal that positive social relations influence their intellectual, communicative, interpersonal, and emotional development (Asher, 1983; Bates, 1975; Hartup, 1978; Parker & Asher, 1987; Rubin, 1980). During the primary grades, children begin to understand and adopt the core values of their culture, and they develop the social skills needed to act effectively on those values (Solomon, Walson, Delucchi, Schaps, & Battistich, 1988). The public school classroom has particular importance as a context for the development of relationships between groups of children who have little contact outside the school setting. (Salisbury, Gallucci, Palombaro, & Peck, 1995, para. 2)



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In his book *Visible Learning for Teachers Maximizing Impact on Learning*, John Hattie writes about the importance of positive social relationships for students.

For many students, school can be a lonely place, and low classroom acceptance by peers can be linked with subsequent disengagement and lowered achievement. There needs to be a sense of belonging and this can come from peers. Certainly, when a student has friends at school, it is a different and better place. In the studies looking at what happens to students when they move schools, the single greatest predictor of subsequent success is whether the student makes a friend in the first month (Galton et al., 2000; Pratt and George, 2005). It is incumbent therefore upon schools to attend to student friendships, to ensure that the class makes everyone welcomed, and at a minimum, to ensure that all students have a sense of belonging. (Hattie, 2012, p. 87)

Positive social relationships reflect a mutual respect for individual differences and empathy for one another, which can result in increased student engagement and learning.

See also Standard II, Element A and Standard III, Element F.

○ ***Common goals for all students.***

The creation of common goals can support the sense of a community and the role each student plays in supporting others in meeting the goals. Common goals can be behavioral or academic.

When establishing common goals, students need to have input so they are motivated to help the class reach the goal and understand their responsibility in the process. They also need to understand the importance of the goal. The teacher and students need to be able to answer the questions, “Why is this goal important?” and “How will its attainment impact all students?”

Common goals may be created based on the following:

- Classroom attendance.
- On-time arrival to school or class.
- Homework completion.
- Behavior recognitions from other teachers.
- On-task behavior and completion of assignments.
- Assessment goals based on whole-class growth.
- Number of books read.

Once common goals are created, the teacher and students should continually evaluate their progress towards attaining them and develop necessary next steps they can take together along with identifying ways they can support one another in reaching the goal.

The creation of common goals can also be a motivator and first step in students developing individual goals.



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