

## Standard III Element F

### LEVEL 1 PRACTICES

#### THE TEACHER:

#### 1 ***Establishes classroom practices to support effective communication.***

When teachers create a classroom environment that features mutual respect and values students’ diverse perspectives, students will feel encouraged and safe to communicate their ideas and share their questions.

Teachers can encourage students to communicate with peers through effective grouping arrangements, having students respond to their peers’ answers and questions, and by setting the expectation that students should support their ideas with evidence-based rationale.

#### Tips for supporting effective communication:

- 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.

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 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.

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2 ***Provides clear directions to guide student learning and behavior.***

Communicating effectively with students helps to ensure learning and behavior expectations are clearly understood by students. Communication is the interchange of information. Therefore, the term “communicates” implies that students know and understand a teacher’s expectations.

Effective communication involves the skills of speaking and listening as well as nonverbal and interpersonal skills.

*Giving Clear Directions: Management in the Active Classroom:* (This video provides an example of a teacher giving clear directions to ensure student learning and behavior prior to a group assignment.)

<https://eleducation.org/resources/giving-clear-directions>

*Giving Clear Concise Directions:* This article provides specific steps to ensuring clear and concise directions that result in student learning and behavior.

<http://nelearn.mylearning.org/mod/page/view.php?id=194>

**Give Clear Instructions**

<b>Principles of Effective Instruction Delivery</b>	
<b>Internalize your plan</b>	Planning alone is not enough to guarantee delivery of clear instructions. Even the best plans fail when you can’t remember the content or flow of what you are going to say.
<b>Ensure that you have every student’s full attention before (and while) you give instructions</b>	It won’t matter how clear and coherent your directions are if no one is listening. Resist the temptation to plow through your instructions without first confirming that you have the full attention of every student in the class.  For more on communicating high expectations for behavior, visit the <a href="#">E-4 page</a>  For more on developing procedures to get students’ attention, visit the <a href="#">P-6 page</a>  For more on executing procedures to get students’ attention, visit the <a href="#">E-5 page</a>
<b>Communicate the activity’s connection to the objective</b>	Students must be keenly aware of how the practice session aligns to the objectives. Remind students of the lesson objective (by pointing to it on the board, by having a student restate it, etc.). Connect the activity to the objective by explaining exactly how it will develop the knowledge/skills required to master the objective. When

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	working in groups students should understand why they are working together and the rationale for doing so.
<b>Emphasize key parts of the instructions</b>	<p>Reiterate key points by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ restating the most important information– and by having students restate it</li> <li>▪ using visual aids</li> <li>▪ posting written directions for easy reference</li> </ul> <p>Just like the other phases of the lesson plan cycle, it is crucial to specify exactly how you want students to behave. Provide explicit instructions (both behavioral and academic) that model expectations. Set clear guidelines upfront for the behaviors you wish to see in individual, partner or small group work.</p> <p>Go step-by-step through the process, explain and model expectations, and give detailed, specific instructions that explain <i>everything</i> they will need to do (where to write names; how to use a glue stick; when to raise hands; what constitutes completion, division of labor within groups, etc.) as well as what they are expected to produce, and how and where to turn in their work when applicable. If using learning centers, ensure that students know how to use the activities effectively so that their time at a center is well spent.</p>
<b>Address potential confusion</b>	As you internalize and rehearse your plans, put yourself in a student’s shoes and anticipate and preempt potential points of challenge by asking yourself what might confuse you about the directions or the activity? Include these questions and answers in your initial instructions.
<b>Communicate and enforce specific time periods for each task</b>	Write start and end times for each discrete phase of the activity on the board. Give students two minutes warnings before they are to move on to the next task. At the start of each new task, remind them how long they have to complete it.
<b>Use age-appropriate language and directions</b>	Think carefully about vocabulary; be aware of the complexity of instructions (e.g. the number of steps students must remember); select the format of your directions carefully (written? oral? pictures?). Younger students may need more repetition and more frequent checks for comprehension.
<b>Find the right balance between “too much” information and “not enough”</b>	Reflect on the amount of time it took to give instructions (if you took too much time, scale back on the detail) and the degree of comprehension (if students asked many clarifying questions you probably didn’t include enough detail). Adjust accordingly the next time.

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<b>Check that students understand directions</b>	Check for comprehension. Students must demonstrate that they understand why they are doing what you've just asked them to do, how they will do it, and what they will produce in the end. When applicable, have students record the necessary steps (or distribute them) so they will have a reference on hand. Check for understanding by 1) asking questions, 2) having students reiterate and model the instructions, and 3) providing feedback.
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### *Planning/Coaching Questions*

- How will you ensure that you are clearly and effectively articulating thoughts and ideas to all students?
- How will you teach students to consider their audience when articulating their thoughts and ideas with others?
- How will you plan for strategies that model and teach effective communication skills?
- What opportunities will you provide for students to communicate orally and/or in writing with others?
- What will be the academic language included in your model and instruction?
- How will you ensure students are able to utilize the academic language associated with the content and skill being taught?

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