

Standard II **Element C**

LEVEL 1 PRACTICES

THE TEACHER:

1 *Plans for students that have a variety of learning needs and interests.*

It should be clear from looking at instructional plans how the concepts are developed and how students are to engage with the content. Besides teacher-created plans, it is also important for teachers to think through program-specific lesson plans and adjust them as needed to best meet the needs of *all* students. Anticipating the needs of *all* students before they walk into the classroom helps the teacher make thoughtful decisions related to grouping and differentiation. (*Eagle County Schools Professional Practices Rubric, 2012, p. 9*)

Many factors—academic, social, emotional, economic, physical, cultural, and/or language— can have an impact on students’ learning needs. To understand and address these needs, the teacher must be a “student of her students.”

Before instruction can be designed to meet students’ needs, the classroom environment should promote differentiation and support for all students.

Characteristics of a supportive classroom environment:

- The teacher is attuned and responsive to the affective, cognitive, and physical needs of learners.
- Students feel safe, both physically and affectively.
- The teacher respects and supports the possibilities inherent in each student.
- Individual differences are accepted as natural and positive.
- Students learn to respect one another as learners.
- The teacher and students share in the decision-making process about daily routines and classroom operation.
- Hard work is an expectation.
- Physical arrangements are flexible and support student access to a variety of learning options.
- A range of resources is available that supports student behavioral needs and self-regulation.
- Flexible student grouping capitalizes on student strengths and allows effective attention to student needs. (Adapted from Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010)

A critical component of a supportive classroom environment is the development and management of routines and procedures that help students understand, contribute to, and participate in the learning process. These routines are an important component in the design of the teacher’s instruction.

Examples of differentiated routines and procedures:

- Using signals to redirect students that may only be known to the student and teacher.
 - Providing picture cues to communicate behavior expectations and/or directions for a task.
 - Providing space in a classroom for students to spend time when they need to calm down or be alone for a few minutes.
 - Allowing students to use headsets to either listen to music while they work or eliminate the sound of noise in the classroom.
 - Adjusting the time students may take to complete tasks.
 - Providing organizational strategies, such as color-coded handouts and calendars, for students to self-
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- manage their materials and assignments.
- Providing signals for students to obtain assistance from either the teacher or a peer.

In addition to student learning needs, it is important for teachers to also consider student interests. Interest is a great motivator for learning. Interest can refer to a topic or skill that taps into a student's talents, experiences, or dreams. It can be an area of current passion for the student. It can also refer simply to ideas, skills, or work that is appealing to a student. The term might also be used to think about new possibilities a student could encounter in the classroom that would be a source of future interests. Whatever the source, students become more invested and engaged in learning that reflects their interests.

By eliciting student interests and opinions, teachers create an environment in which all parties are appreciated and respected. Like everyone, students want to feel that they are “known” — that others understand them, appreciate them, and recognize their unique qualities, skills, interests, needs, and personalities. Teachers who understand this and consciously find ways to demonstrate their interest in students will build a stronger foundation for effective classroom management and learning. (Marzano, 2007)

Human beings want to be known by others. When the teacher takes the time to know students’ interests and engages them in conversations on these topics, students feel that the teacher is interested in them and respects them. Teachers can use a variety of methods to obtain information on their students, such as:

- Interest inventories.
- Student autobiographies.
- Journaling.
- Multiple intelligence surveys.
- Learning style surveys.

Refer to these internal resources for identifying student needs and interests:

- [Examples of Ways Teachers May Differentiate in the Classroom](#)
Document identifies ways the teacher may differentiate instruction.
- [Determining Your Learning Preference](#)
Document can be used by students to determine their learning preference.
- [Characteristics of Learning Styles Preferences](#)
Document provides characteristics of learning styles or preferences: auditory, visual, and kinesthetic, with suggestions for instructional strategies.
- [Interest Inventory for Students](#)
Survey references twenty different areas of a student’s life that can be used to support the student and teacher in identifying their interests.
- [Interest Survey on a Content Topic](#)
Example survey to support the student and teacher in identifying their interests within a specific unit or content area.
- [Multiple Intelligence Survey for Secondary Students](#)
Survey supports secondary students in identifying their preferred type of intelligence, based on the work of Howard Gardner.
- [Multiple Intelligence Survey for Elementary Students](#)
Survey supports elementary students in identifying their preferred type of intelligence, based on the work of Howard Gardner.

Refer to these external resources for additional information:

- Article: “‘Teacher, I Need Your Help’ What kids with attention deficit wish their teachers knew.” By Lisa Gridley

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<http://www.additudemag.com/adhdblogs/28/print/10146.html>

Article describes how students with attention deficit disorder can feel in a classroom setting and ways the teacher can support them.

- Article: “Teaching Children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder ADHD ADD” published by ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education

<http://www.childrensdisabilities.info/adhd/teaching-adhd.html>

Article describes behaviors of ADHD or ADD students with suggestions for how teachers can modify the classroom environment and instruction.

- Article: “Working with Shy or Withdrawn Students” by Jere Brophy

<http://www.ericdigests.org/1997-3/shy.html>

Article describes how a student’s shyness can impact their engagement and learning and ways teachers can support these students.

See also [Standard III, Element A](#).

2 ***Adapts the physical environment to support individual student needs.***

The teacher who adapts the learning environment to address individual student needs is knowledgeable about how students’ behavioral, emotional, and physical needs impact their learning.

According to Tomlinson (2003), “Environment will support or deter the student’s quest for affirmation, contribution, power, purpose, and challenge in the classroom.” (p. 37)

Tomlinson recommends a room environment that is flexible with varied kinds of furniture: tables of different shapes and sizes, spots for quiet individual work, and areas for collaboration. The structure should allow students to move from whole group, to small group, pairs, and individual learning experiences and support a variety of ways to engage in learning. The environment should also support the teacher in interacting with students individually, in small groups, and as a whole class.

Examples of ways to differentiate the environment:

- Seating arrangement of students — proximity of student to the front of the classroom, to the teacher, and/or to other students.
- Calm down space for students to use as necessary or appropriate.
- Visual stimulation—visuals should be displayed in an orderly manner and serve a purpose for student learning or behavior.

Planning/Coaching Questions

- What is the best way to obtain information on my students’ needs?
- How have you adapted the physical environment to support individual student needs?
- How do you plan instruction that addresses the learning needs of all students?
- How do you apply the knowledge of specialists and colleagues to plan instruction that addresses student needs?
- How have you obtained information on my students’ interests?
- How do you utilize students’ interests when planning lessons and materials students will utilize?
- How do you ensure all students participate in class activities?
- How did you plan instruction and tasks that provided choices to motivate students to participate?
- How do you encourage students to self-advocate?

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