

Teacher Education Program Standards for Skillful Teaching

Standard 1: Deep Content Understanding. Teachers help students develop deep understanding of key concepts using a variety of teaching methods and providing multiple pathways to learning, including new technologies. Teachers use developmentally appropriate material and strategies to differentiate and scaffold instruction in ways that help all learners, including students with disabilities and students with various levels of English language proficiency, build on and move beyond what they already know and understand. Learners demonstrate individually that they understand the content of lessons through their explanations, responses to questions, and ability to apply their understanding to new situations.

Standard 2: Coherence and Continuity. Teachers plan, set learning goals, and teach using a connected sequence of ideas and /or information. The connections are both within individual lessons and across lessons, building to well-designed and carefully sequenced curriculum units that have clearly defined goals. Teachers reference the connections between lessons and help learners identify their developing skills and the progression of their thinking and understanding over time. Learners make connections between current lessons and what they have studied in the past and are able to use those connections to further their understanding.

Standard 3: Real-World Connections. Teachers situate learning in real-world contexts and connect classroom instruction to students' lives and to the world beyond the classroom by taking advantage of the cultural knowledge and practices students bring to the classroom. They acknowledge the difference between "real world" understandings and academic, classroom-based understandings and try to connect the two. Learners bring their life experience into the classroom and come to understand how their personal lives interact with the larger social and civic worlds beyond the classroom.

Standard 4: Active Learning. Teachers create a non-threatening and engaging learning environment that encourages learners to think for themselves, to make choices, to ask questions, and to take ownership of the learning process. They facilitate learning by doing by encouraging students to investigate, explore, inquire, research, and develop understanding in response to material presented by the teacher and to evidence they gather on their own. Teachers model independent thinking and help learners take increasing responsibility for their learning over time. Learners are able to pursue answers to questions they pose, think and work independently, and demonstrate their understanding through projects, reports, presentations, and student exhibitions.

Standard 5: Critical and Creative Thinking. Teachers encourage students to question and analyze, rather than simply memorize facts and to consider ideas from a variety of perspectives. Teachers ask open-ended questions that have no pre-established answers, which enables learners to respond creatively. The classroom environment promotes risk-taking and inspires learners to develop original and unique ideas. Learners identify patterns, take positions and develop arguments, construct explanations, and draw conclusions demonstrating higher order and innovative thinking.

Standard 6: Teacher's Reflective Thinking. Teachers systematically analyze the effects of their teaching in order to adjust and improve it. They are able to describe and explain teaching principles, research, and theory, and determine how and why such knowledge works to enhance students' performance. Diagnostic and formative assessments of teachers' effectiveness lie at the heart of their practice. Teachers collect a variety of data, including student work, testing data, self-assessments, and assessments of supervisors and use that data to influence future practice. When working with scripted curriculum, they assess its effectiveness and make appropriate adjustments to meet the needs of their students. By modeling reflection, teachers encourage learners to reflect as well and help them develop strategies for improving their performance. Learners provide feedback and participate in classroom evaluations. Teachers develop self-awareness and awareness of the political and social contexts that influence schooling, placing them on a path toward teacher leadership.