



## **Essential Element 4: Classroom Instruction**

Classroom instruction appropriate to the needs and characteristics of young adolescents provided by skilled and knowledgeable teachers.

*Every young adolescent requires skilled and caring teachers who have a thorough understanding of their subject(s) and of the students they teach.*

Teachers in middle-level classrooms understand and appreciate the emotional, intellectual, physical, psychological, and social changes that are occurring within their students and recognize the behaviors manifested by these changes. They use instructional techniques and processes that capitalize on the unique developmental characteristics and individual needs of early adolescents.

Successful middle-level teachers in a standards-focused school:

- 4.1** Are caring and respectful in their interactions with students and with other adults.
- 4.2** Provide instruction that is standards-based, challenging, rigorous, and purposeful.
- 4.3** Know and understand the needs and developmental characteristics of young adolescents.
- 4.4** Have a deep understanding of their subject matter, of different approaches to student learning, and of diverse teaching techniques.
- 4.5** Know and understand each of the State's 28 learning standards and - when and where appropriate - reinforce them routinely during regular classroom instruction.
- 4.6** Use a range of successful, research-based teaching strategies that are developmentally and cognitively appropriate, matching instruction to the students' varied learning styles and different intelligences.
- 4.7** Involve students in their learning, encouraging them to contribute to their learning experiences, to make choices, to explore, to question, to experience, to learn, to grow, to develop social, interpersonal and leadership skills in addition to academic proficiency.
- 4.8** Vary activities to maintain student interest.
- 4.9** Use technology and other instructional resources purposefully to support and enhance learning.
- 4.10** Focus instruction on thinking, reasoning, and problem solving and, at the same time ensure that students acquire necessary content and subject matter.
- 4.11** Use interdisciplinary approaches to help students integrate their studies and meet learning standards.
- 4.12** Use flexible grouping based upon student needs and interests to help each student achieve the learning standards, with students changing groups often, depending on individual needs and program purposes.

## ***Essential Element 4: Classroom Instruction (con't)***

- 4.13** Use classroom assessments that reflect the State's learning standards and are aligned with State assessments.
- 4.14** Use classroom assessments that are instructionally useful indicators of individual student growth and performance not only to monitor each student's progress in meeting the State's learning standards but also to plan instruction.
- 4.15** Use student data, both personal and achievement, to make curricular and instructional decisions.
- 4.16** Use cooperative learning groups and peer-tutoring opportunities to develop social and interpersonal skills in addition to academic proficiency.
- 4.17** Consult with each other and with other school personnel. Teachers with regular education assignments and those assigned to programs for students with special needs work closely together.
- 4.18** Maintain performance expectations that are consistent and interrelated across and within subject areas.
- 4.19** Inform and involve parents of middle-level students in their children's education by helping them understand the learning standards their children must meet, the instructional program, their children's progress, and how to help their children at home with schoolwork, school decisions, and successful development through adolescence.
- 4.20** Are themselves learners who are constantly engaged in professional and intellectual growth activities.
- 4.21** Recognize that they must work together cooperatively and collaboratively - rather than individually and in isolation - to ensure that all their students achieve at high levels and meet all the State's learning standards.

**4. Classroom instruction appropriate to the needs and characteristics of young adolescents provided by skilled and knowledgeable teachers.**

Criteria	1	2	3	4
<p><i>4.a The degree to which teachers' instructional techniques and process are purposeful and strategic</i></p>	<p>i. Course, unit, and lesson objectives and teachers' techniques and processes seem idiosyncratic and lack direction or purpose.</p>	<p>i. Course, unit, and lesson objectives are organized around appropriate criteria.</p> <p>ii. Teachers' instructional techniques and processes reflect these criteria leading to minimal or superficial understanding.</p>	<p>i. Course, unit, and lesson objectives are purposefully organized around concepts, themes, issues and/or standards.</p> <p>ii. Teachers' instructional techniques and processes support students' learning of these objectives promoting basic understanding.</p>	<p>i. Objectives and goals are clearly and publicly derived from National Standards, NYS Learning Standards performance indicators, and local curricula.</p> <p>ii. Teachers' instruction is designed to promote depth of understanding rather than breadth; instruction is strategically implemented and designed to challenge and encourage.</p>
<p><i>4.b The degree to which teachers' instructional techniques and process reflect the developmental characteristics of young adolescents</i></p>	<p>Teachers fail to recognize the unique characteristics and concomitant needs of young adolescents.</p>	<p>The teachers recognize developmental differences of early adolescents but instructional techniques and processes fail to reflect these differences.</p>	<p>The teachers know and understand the needs and developmental characteristics of young adolescents and use this knowledge when planning students' learning experiences.</p>	<p>The teachers have a comprehensive understanding of the continuum of developmental characteristics within the range of early adolescence. They consistently and effectively apply this knowledge of, and experience with, developmental characteristics of students to their instruction of students in the middle grades.</p>

Comments:

**4. Classroom instruction appropriate to the needs and characteristics of young adolescents provided by skilled and knowledgeable teachers (con't).**

Criteria	1	2	3	4
<i>4.c The degree to which teachers' instructional practices reflect content knowledge and pedagogy</i>	Teachers lack the content knowledge and the knowledge of instructional practices necessary to insure students can meet the Intermediate Standards.	Teachers have a minimal understanding of their content area. Teacher-directed instruction is more common than learner-centered practices.	Teachers have a solid understanding of their content area and emphasize a variety of student-centered approaches to their learning.	Teachers have a deep understanding of their subject matter and its connection to other content areas. Teachers rely on student-centered teaching and assessment practices and revisit these practices by examining them in light of students' learning.
<i>4.d The degree to which teachers know and understand, the Learning Standards</i>	Teachers are unfamiliar with their content standards and have not formally used them in their planning or teaching.	Teachers know and understand NYS Learning Standards although there is little evidence of their presence in teachers' assessment. They either teach or assess the Standards.	Teachers know and understand the Learning Standards in their area and use them as a lens for deciding what to teach. They teach and assess the Standards.	Teachers consistently teach, assess and integrate the Standards during classroom discussions and other learning and assessment opportunities.
<i>4.e The degree to which teachers utilize technology and other instructional technology</i>	Teachers do not apply technology to instruction. If there are technologies in a classroom, it is exclusively for teacher use.	Teachers occasionally include technology as a part of instruction, but primarily as a special event.	Teachers use current technology to support and enhance teaching and learning through its use in selected teaching and assessment activities that are presentational in nature.	Teachers' application of current technology within instruction is seamless, learner-centered, and used as a tool or means to an end, rather than as an end in itself; technology is applied within the context of regular instruction rather than as a special event.

Comments:

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Criteria	1	2	3	4
<p><i>4.f The degree to which learning opportunities are rigorous and academically challenging</i></p>	<p>Instruction is focused almost exclusively on memorization of facts, terms, and algorithms.</p>	<p>Instruction is focused at the knowledge and comprehension levels, and students are rarely asked to apply or use what they learn.</p>	<p>Instruction is focused on thinking, reasoning, and problem solving as well as helping students acquire necessary content and skills.</p>	<p>Instruction demands that students search for in-depth understanding of what they are learning through systemic research and inquiry.</p>
<p><i>4.g The degree to which instructional groups are flexible</i></p>	<p>i. Permanent homogeneous groups are used throughout the year.</p> <p>iv. Student grouping drives Master Schedule development</p>	<p>i. Students work in some homogeneous and some heterogeneous groups.</p> <p>ii. Group membership tends to remain the same throughout the year.</p> <p>iv. Students are primarily grouped by ability with some flexibility in changing group membership built into the Master Schedule.</p>	<p>i. Flexible grouping is used based upon student needs and interests.</p> <p>ii. Students change groups often, depending on their individual needs.</p> <p>iv. The Master Schedule provides opportunity for frequent re-grouping of students based on curriculum content, as well as, student needs and interests.</p>	<p>i. Instructional groups are productive and fully appropriate to the instructional goals of the lesson.</p> <p>ii. Groups change, depending on student progress, experience and individual needs and purposes of their program.</p> <p>iii. Students take the initiative to influence instructional groups to advance their learning.</p>

*Comments:*

**4. Classroom instruction appropriate to the needs and characteristics of young adolescents provided by skilled and knowledgeable teachers (con't).**

Criteria	1	2	3	4
<i>4.h The degree to which teachers exhibit a collaborative relationship and culture</i>	Teachers plan and deliver learning experiences without regard for other content areas.	Teachers occasionally make deliberate interdisciplinary connections and/or collaborate on activities.	Teachers routinely make explicit interdisciplinary connections.	The content areas are integrated so seamlessly that students see and understand the interconnectedness of their learning.
<i>4.i The degree to which teachers use student data, both personal and achievement, to make curricular and instructional decisions</i>	<p>i. Teachers use only teacher-generated numerical data to make curricular and instructional decisions.</p> <p>ii. Accountability data are viewed as lacking usefulness and are disregarded by staff.</p> <p>iii. Curricular and instructional decisions are based on teacher preferences and past practice without reference to any data.</p>	<p>i. Teachers use multiple measures/data sources to make curricular and instructional decisions.</p> <p>ii. Accountability data are understood to be useful, but staff members don't know how to use them or don't know where to begin.</p> <p>iii. Curricular and instructional decisions tend to be based on teacher perception of need, as well as teacher preference and past practice.</p>	<p>i. Teachers use multiple measures/data sources to make curricular and instructional decisions. Instruction is designed to address groups of students' strengths and needs.</p> <p>ii. Accountability data are reviewed and used by teachers to ascertain program strengths and weaknesses.</p> <p>iii. Curricular and instructional decisions tend to be informed by a periodic review of program data.</p>	<p>i. Teachers' curricular and instructional decisions routinely reflect individual student interests, strengths, learning styles, and needs, as determined by the analysis of both personal and achievement data.</p> <p>ii. Multiple sources of data are used by staff on a regular basis to inform both instructional and program decisions.</p>

Comments:

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Criteria	1	2	3	4
<p><i>4.j The degree to the school communicates with the parents/guardians and the community regarding student achievement</i></p>	<p>i. There is an assessment process in place. Parents/guardians receive report cards at the end of each marking period. There is no process for conversations with parent/ guardians.</p> <p>ii. A yearly report is given to the community relating to school accountability information.</p>	<p>i. There is an assessment process in place. Parents receive reports cards and teachers communicate with parents/guardians regarding student achievement. Teachers provide opportunities for parent input regarding student progress.</p> <p>ii. School accountability information is discussed only at the faculty level.</p>	<p>i. The assessment process includes reporting student progress over time. Teachers seek parent input relating to student achievement.</p> <p>ii. There is a process for reporting school accountability information to a limited scope of stakeholders.</p>	<p>i. The assessment process includes reporting student progress over time, and teachers make suggestions for home-school collaboration.</p> <p>ii. There is an identifiable process for reporting school accountability information to all stakeholders.</p>

Comments:

