

Standard II **Element B**

LEVEL 3 PRACTICES

THE TEACHER:

5 *Delivers lessons to ensure students' backgrounds and contextual knowledge are considered.*

To meet state standards for this element, the teacher not only knows how to select instructional strategies and materials, but also knows how to implement them in a purposeful manner so they have a positive impact on student learning. Students should have an opportunity to connect what they are learning to their classroom, their home environment, their community, and/or the global community. When instructional strategies are relevant to students' experiences and culture, students are motivated to learn and engage with tasks, which can result in transference of learning.

According to Allen & Butler (1996), " ... matching the contextual conditions for learning to the cultural experiences of the learner increases task engagement and hence increases task performance, (p. 317).

Students learn and remember new information best when it is linked to relevant aspects of their backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. This can also refer to the time period in which students are living. The teacher can become familiar with the backgrounds, experiences, and points of view of students by asking the following questions:

- Who are the popular recording artists?
- Where do the students like to gather outside of school?
- What are some of the rivalries among students?
- What are popular terms and phrases used by students?
- What are the communities like in which my students live or have lived?

Madeline Hunter describes teaching as a dynamic activity, and finds it important to see each teaching situation as unique due to the interplay of many variables. The art of teaching involves not only knowing what to do and how to do it, but also knowing when to do it, and in what situations not to do it. It is this kind of thinking process that takes teaching from a scientific base to an art form. (Magestro, 1994)

The website TextProject, Inc. offers the following acronym for helping the teacher provide relevant content (Hiebert, 2012).

Creating Connections: KNOWS

- K** Did I draw on students' existing *knowledge* and experience?
- N** Did I identify what *new knowledge* can be gained from this text and guide students in gaining it?
- O** Did I support students in *organizing* their new knowledge with their existing knowledge/experiences?
- W** Did I show students ways to *widen* their knowledge?
- S** Did I support students in *sharing* their knowledge?

See also professional practices under [Level 1](#) and [Level 2](#).

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Culturally responsive teachers are adept at using diversity as an asset to promote instruction of standards-based content in authentic ways that engage all children.

One of the primary assets that children bring to the classroom is language. Indeed, linguistic diversity can take on many forms including knowledge of multiple world languages or the use of various dialects within a single language. Sonia Nieto (2013) points out that the growing population of emergent bilingual students in the U.S. schools demands that all teachers- not just ESL or bilingual teachers – become aware of and affirm the needs of such students. This includes capitalizing on students’ native languages or dialects and using these as a bridge for learning standards-based content and English through strategies that promote [bilingualism](#) and [bidialectism](#) in the classroom.

Another example of an asset that students bring to the classroom is diverse family structures. The teacher who capitalizes on diverse family structures creates an environment in which a student’s family is respected and celebrated. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways. The early childhood or elementary teacher, for example, might have students draw pictures of their family to share with classmates, then engage students in a discussion about how even though families may look different or have different members, they are still all families.

Students might also write personal narratives about their family experiences. By providing opportunities for students to share about their families, the teacher can promote an understanding and tolerance for the diversity in family structures.

Using materials such as photographs, illustrations, or texts that explore a variety of family structures can also be an effective way to communicate that all families are important and welcomed.

Books for early childhood or elementary students:

- *The Family Book* by Todd Parr—This book celebrates a variety of family structures in a fun way for young children.
- *Who’s in a Family* by Robert Skutch—This book describes a variety of family structures.
- *Rosie’s Family an Adoption Story* by Lori Rosove—This book describes adoptive families.
- *Families by Ann Morris*—This book can teach students about different family structures around the world.
- *ABC A Family Alphabet Book* by Bobbie Combs—An illustrated ABC book that looks at the lives of gay and lesbian couples and their families.
- *My Family’s Changing* by Pat Thomas—This book explains how divorce or separation can change a family.

Refer to these external resources for additional information:

- Article: “Using Ebonics or Black English as a Bridge to Teaching Standard English” published by ASCD <http://www.ascd.org/publications/classroom-leadership/apr1999/Using-Ebonics-or-Black-English-as-a-Bridge-to-Teaching-Standard-English.aspx>
Article discusses practical strategies for using bidialectism to teach Standard English while maintaining and appreciating the culturally distinct communication styles of many African American students.
- Website: Teaching Tolerance Classroom Resources and Lessons <https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/lessons>
Provides a bank of lesson plans, texts, student tasks and teaching strategies for using diversity to enhance teaching and learning. Includes lessons on diverse family structures

6 ***Uses materials and lessons that counteract stereotypes to acknowledge the contributions of all cultures.***

[Culturally responsive pedagogy](#) includes the use of instructional materials and lessons that are transformative in nature – meaning that they allow students to view several ethnic perspectives and points of view. According to Banks (1988), this approach “is not [just] the addition of a long list of ethnic groups, heroes, and contributions, but

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the infusion of various perspectives, frames for reference, and content from various groups that will extend students' understanding of the nature, development, and complexity of U.S. society" (p. 38).

When teachers engage students in transformative education, they intentionally aim to counteract stereotypes or ethnocentric views of history and society. For example, rather than framing a lesson on Christopher Columbus around the "discovery of America" a teacher may engage students in learning about the perspectives of native cultures and the ways in which European conquest has impacted our understanding of our nation's history. In addition, teachers may help students to explore the contributions of various ethnic groups and women to the fields of math, science, astronomy, medicine – contribution that might otherwise be overshadowed by traditional, Eurocentric approaches to these disciplines.

Refer to these external resources for additional information:

- Website: Teaching Tolerance Classroom Resources and Lessons
<https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/lessons>
Provides a bank of lesson plans, texts, student tasks and teaching strategies for using diversity to enhance teaching and learning.
<https://www.facinghistory.org/>
- Website: Facing History and Ourselves
<https://www.facinghistory.org/>
Provides a bank of lessons and professional development to teachers that focus on re-interpreting history through various perspectives.

Planning/Coaching Questions

- How were you able to obtain information on my students' cultures, backgrounds, and family structures?
- What changes in procedures or structures will you need to employ to acknowledge the influence of various aspects of background on student perspectives?
- What instructional approaches and materials did you use that reflect students' backgrounds and enhance student learning?
- How did you develop a sense of community within the classroom?
- How were you able to provide opportunities for students to engage in effective interactions with their peers?
- How do you model a respect for individual differences and ensure students do the same?
- **How will you model and teach students to value diverse perspectives?**
- How do you capitalize on the diversity within your classroom?

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