

## **Standard II** **Element D**

### **LEVEL 1 PRACTICES**

#### **THE TEACHER:**

Establishes:

**1      *A classroom environment that encourages participation from families and/or significant adults.***

The teacher who establishes an inviting classroom for families and/or significant adults demonstrates the importance of creating a partnership between the school and the student's home. This partnership begins with families feeling welcomed into the classroom by the teacher and the students.

While all parents want to know how to co-educate their children, not all parents know how to do this. A major barrier for these parents is that they are often not familiar with the language of learning and schools. For many of them, school was not always the most pleasant experience. (Hattie, 2012, p. 188)

A classroom that is inviting has a culture of respect for its members and visitors. The teacher communicates with families and/or significant adults in a respectful manner that conveys the importance of the school-home connection, regardless of the family structure or experiences of the adults.

#### **Tips for establishing an inviting environment for families and/or significant adults:**

- Invite family members directly into the classroom to share interests and cultural traditions. This can provide a meaningful learning opportunity for students and support collaboration between families and teachers.
- Schedule opportunities for families to participate during and after the school day. This can accommodate adults with different work hours or other commitments, but who want to be involved in their child's educational experiences. Examples of these opportunities are: Reading Night, Author's Night, Math and Science Activities, etc.
- Implement the creation of family projects, such as, All about Me collages and Family Trees. Displaying these projects in the classroom can create a welcoming and culturally respectful environment for students and families.
- Establish a Student of the Week recognition and invite family members to send in pictures or notes to the student. Family members may also be invited to have a special breakfast or lunch with their student.
- Use journals as a way for students to communicate with families about what they are learning and doing at school. Ask families to respond to the student's writing. Parents may also be asked to respond to a prompt related to a concept being taught or share an experience that connects to a social skill/character trait students are learning. For example, "Describe a time you had to persevere with a task," or "Describe a time when you felt hurt or sad, and explain how you dealt with this feeling."

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**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

*Refer to this external resource for additional information:*

- Article: “Welcoming Children and Families into Your Classroom” published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children  
<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/tyc/apr2013/welcome-children-and-families>  
Article provides ideas for how early childhood teachers can create a classroom environment that is inviting to families and students.

**2 *Respectful relationships with families and/or significant adults.***

... the right kinds of school-family connections – those built on relationships, listening, welcoming, and shared decision making – can produce multiple benefits for students, including higher grade point averages and test scores, better attendance, enrollment in more challenging courses, better social skills, and improved behavior at school. (Ferlazzo, 2011, p. 10)

Respectful relationships are maintained when the teacher values the background, family structure, and culture of each student, family, and/or significant adult. The teacher refrains from placing blame or judging, but works as a partner with families and/or significant adults to support each student’s educational success.

Resources for connecting with families and/or significant adults:

- Boys and Girls Clubs of America—<http://www.bgca.org/>
- Coalition for Community Schools—<http://www.communityschools.org/>
- Communities in Schools—<http://www.communitiesinschools.org/>
- National Network of Partnership Schools— [www.partnershipschools.org/](http://www.partnershipschools.org/)
- YMCA/YWCA Programs—<http://www.ymca.net/>, <http://www.ywca.org/>

*See also* [Standard II, Element B.](#)

*Planning/Coaching Questions*

- How do you best create a classroom environment that is inviting to students’ families and/or significant adults?
- How do you ensure that the relationships you have with students, families, and/or significant adults are respectful?
- What methods have you used to communicate with families and/or significant adults?
- How do you coordinate the flow of information between students’ families and/or significant adults and other colleagues who provide student services?
- How do you ensure families and/or significant adults are aware of services available to students and their families?
- How do you recognize and seek solutions to obstacles to family and community participation?

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