

# Middle Childhood Generalist Standards

Fourth Edition

for teachers of students ages 7–12

*National Board Certification  
Promotes Better Teaching,  
Better Learning, Better Schools*

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# Preface

## About the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (National Board) is a not-for-profit professional organization, created and governed by practicing teachers and their advocates. The founding mission of the National Board is to advance the quality of teaching and learning by

- maintaining high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do;
- providing a national voluntary system certifying teachers who meet these standards; and
- advocating related education reforms to integrate National Board Certification into American education and to capitalize on the expertise of National Board Certified Teachers.

Recognized as the “gold standard” in teacher certification, the National Board believes higher standards for teachers means better learning for students.

Founded in 1987, the National Board began by engaging teachers in the development of standards for accomplished teaching and in the building of an assessment—National Board Certification—that validly and reliably identifies when a teacher meets those standards. Today, there are 25 certificate areas that span 16 content areas and four student developmental levels. The essence of the National Board’s vision of accomplished teaching is captured in the enduring document *What Teachers Should Know and Be Able to Do*, at the heart of which are the Five Core Propositions:

1. Teachers are committed to students and their learning.
2. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.
3. Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.
4. Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.
5. Teachers are members of learning communities.

The National Board believes that board certification should become the norm, not the exception, and should be fully integrated into the fabric of the teaching profession. In other professions, such as medicine, engineering, and architecture, board certification has helped to create a culture of accomplished practice and is a major reason why those professions are held in such high regard by the public. Those professions did what teaching must now do: strengthen the coherent pipeline of preparation that begins in pre-service and continues through board certification and beyond, with each step engineered to help teachers develop toward accomplished. More than 110,000 teachers had achieved board certification by 2014, a number which represents the largest group of identified teaching experts in the country. Given the size of the teaching workforce, however, this sizable number represents fewer than 3 percent of teachers.

For most children that means they go through their entire schooling without being taught by a board-certified teacher. Each teacher who pursues board certification helps to close this gap, strengthening the profession and the quality of teaching and learning. In a world where board certification is the standard that all teachers aspire to and most achieve, students experience accomplished teaching throughout their schooling, unleashing their potential.

## About the Standards

Every child deserves an accomplished teacher—one who is qualified to equip students with the skills to succeed in a global community. The core mission of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is to create field-specific standards for accomplished teaching that are grounded in the Five Core Propositions and that articulate the actions that accomplished teachers employ to advance student learning. Each standards document represents a professional consensus on the attributes of practice that distinguish accomplished teaching in that field. Many school systems use the standards as the basis for ongoing professional development, and many colleges and universities incorporate the standards into their undergraduate and graduate teacher education programs.

Standards are developed and revised by a committee of 12–15 members who are representative of accomplished professionals in their field. A majority of standards committee members are practicing Board certified teachers. Other committee members are experts in academic content and child development, including teacher educators, researchers, and other professionals in the relevant field. Standards are disseminated widely for public comment and subsequently revised as necessary before adoption by the National Board’s Board of Directors.

Throughout the development of both the standards and the certification process, the National Board ensures broad representation of the diversity that exists within the profession; engages pertinent disciplinary and specialty associations at key points in the process; collaborates closely with appropriate state agencies, academic institutions, and independent research and education organizations; and establishes procedures to detect and eliminate instances of external and internal bias.

National Board Standards and certifications are defined by the developmental level of the students and by the subject or subjects being taught. Teachers select the subject area that makes up the substantive focus of their teaching. They may choose Generalist certificates if they do not focus on one particular subject area in their practice. The four overlapping student developmental levels (listed below) indicate the age of the majority of their students.

- Early Childhood (EC)—ages 3–8
- Middle Childhood (MC)—ages 7–12
- Early Adolescence (EA)—ages 11–15
- Adolescence and Young Adulthood (AYA)—ages 14–18+

## About Certification

National Board Certification® is a voluntary, standards-based process designed for teachers to transform the Five Core Propositions into practice. In order to be eligible for certification a teacher must

- Hold a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution<sup>1</sup>;
- Have a minimum of three years' teaching experience at the early childhood, elementary, middle school, or high school level; and
- Where it is required, hold a state teaching license.

The assessments, aligned with the Five Core Propositions and the standards, are designed so that teachers demonstrate their practice by providing evidence of what they know and do. The evidence-based assessment honors the complexities and demands of teaching.

In 2014, the National Board initiated revision of the assessment to make the process more flexible, affordable, and efficient for teachers. In all certificate areas, candidates for National Board Certification are now required to complete four components: three portfolio entries, which are submitted online, and a computer-based assessment, which is administered at a testing center. Teachers develop portfolio entries that require analysis of their practice as it relates to student learning and to being a reflective, effective practitioner. Designed to capture what a teacher knows and is able to do in real time and in real-life settings, the portfolio consists of description, analysis, and reflection focused on student learning that is captured on video and in student work samples. The process requires teachers to reflect on the underlying assumptions of their practice and the impacts of that practice on student learning.

Teachers also demonstrate content knowledge by responding to open-ended and multiple choice questions delivered at a secure testing site. The assessment center component complements the portfolio, validates that the knowledge and skills exhibited in the portfolio are accurate reflections of what a candidate knows, and provides candidates with opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and skills not sampled in the portfolio.

Assessments are based on the standards and are developed for every certificate area by educators who specialize in the same content and student developmental level as the candidates. Educators who are themselves practitioners in the certificate area score the submitted portfolio entries. They must successfully complete intensive training and qualify for scoring on the basis of their understanding of National Board Standards and scoring guidelines.

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<sup>1</sup> Candidates registering for the Career and Technical Education certificate are required to hold a bachelor's degree only if their state required one for their current license.

# Foundation of National Board Certification for Teachers

## Five Core Propositions

The National Board framework for accomplished teaching was established in its 1989 publication, *What Teachers Should Know and Be Able to Do*. The Five Core Propositions serve as the foundation for all National Board standards and assessments, defining the level of knowledge, skills, abilities, and commitments that accomplished teachers demonstrate. Teachers embody all Five Core Propositions in their practices, drawing on various combinations of these skills, applications, and dispositions to promote student learning.

### 1. Teachers are committed to students and their learning.

Accomplished teachers base their practice on the fundamental belief that all students can learn and meet high expectations. They treat students equitably, recognizing the individual differences that distinguish one student from another and taking account of these differences in their practice. They adjust their practice based on observation and understanding of their students' interests, abilities, skills, knowledge, language, family circumstances, and peer relationships. They view students' varied backgrounds as diversity that enriches the learning environment for every student.

Accomplished teachers understand how students develop and learn. They consult and incorporate a variety of learning and development theories into their practice, while remaining attuned to their students' individual contexts, cultures, abilities, and circumstances. They are committed to students' cognitive development as well as to students' ownership of their learning. Equally important, they foster students' self-esteem, motivation, character, perseverance, civic responsibility, intellectual risk taking, and respect for others.

### 2. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.

Accomplished teachers have a rich understanding of the subject(s) they teach and appreciate how knowledge in their subject is created, organized, linked to other disciplines, and applied to real-world settings. While maintaining the integrity of disciplinary methods, content, and structures of organization, accomplished teachers develop the critical and analytical capacities of their students so they can think for themselves.

Accomplished teachers command specialized knowledge of how to convey and reveal subject matter to students. They are aware of the preconceptions and background knowledge that students typically bring to each subject and draw upon pedagogical and subject matter understandings to anticipate challenges,



modify their practice, and respond to students' needs. They also demonstrate a commitment towards learning about new strategies, instructional resources, and technology that can be of assistance. Their instructional repertoire and professional judgment allow them to generate multiple paths to knowledge in the subjects they teach, and they are adept at teaching students how to pose and solve their own problems so they can continue exploring and advancing their understanding.

### 3. Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.

Accomplished teachers view themselves as facilitators of student learning within dynamic instructional settings. They create, enrich, maintain, and alter learning environments while establishing effective ways to monitor and manage those environments and the student learning that occurs within them. They possess a comprehensive knowledge of instructional methods, know when each is appropriate, and can implement them as needed. They use instructional time constructively and efficiently, customizing physical layout, resources, and instructional methods. They enlist the knowledge and support of a wide range of stakeholders to provide their students with enriched opportunities to learn. They understand the strengths and weaknesses of pedagogical approaches they may take, as well as the suitability of these approaches for particular students.

Accomplished teachers know how to engage students in varied settings and group configurations. They create positive and safe learning environments that guide student behavior and support learning, allowing the schools' goals for students to be met. They are adept at setting norms for social interaction among students and between students and teachers. They understand how to motivate students and value student engagement, supporting them as they face and learn from challenges.

Accomplished teachers assess the progress of individual students as well as that of the class as a whole. They apply their knowledge of assessment to employ multiple methods for measuring student growth and understanding. They use the information they gather from monitoring student learning to inform their practice, and they provide constructive feedback to students and families. They collaborate with students throughout the learning process and help students engage in self-assessment.

### 4. Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.

Accomplished teachers possess a professional obligation to become perpetual students of their craft. Committed to reflective learning, they are models of educated persons. They exemplify the virtues they seek to inspire in students—curiosity, honesty, fairness, respect for diversity and appreciation of cultural differences—and the capacities that are prerequisites for intellectual growth: the ability to reason and take multiple perspectives, to be creative and take risks, and to adopt an experimental and problem-solving orientation.

Accomplished teachers draw on their knowledge of human development, subject matter, and instruction, and their understanding of their students to make principled judgments about sound practice. Their decisions are not only grounded in established theories, but also in reason born of experience. They engage in lifelong learning, which they seek to encourage in their students.

Accomplished teachers seek opportunities to cultivate their learning. Striving to strengthen their teaching and positively impact student learning, teachers use feedback and research to critically examine

their practice, seek to expand their repertoire, deepen their knowledge, sharpen their judgment and adapt their teaching to new findings, ideas and theories.

## 5. Teachers are members of learning communities.

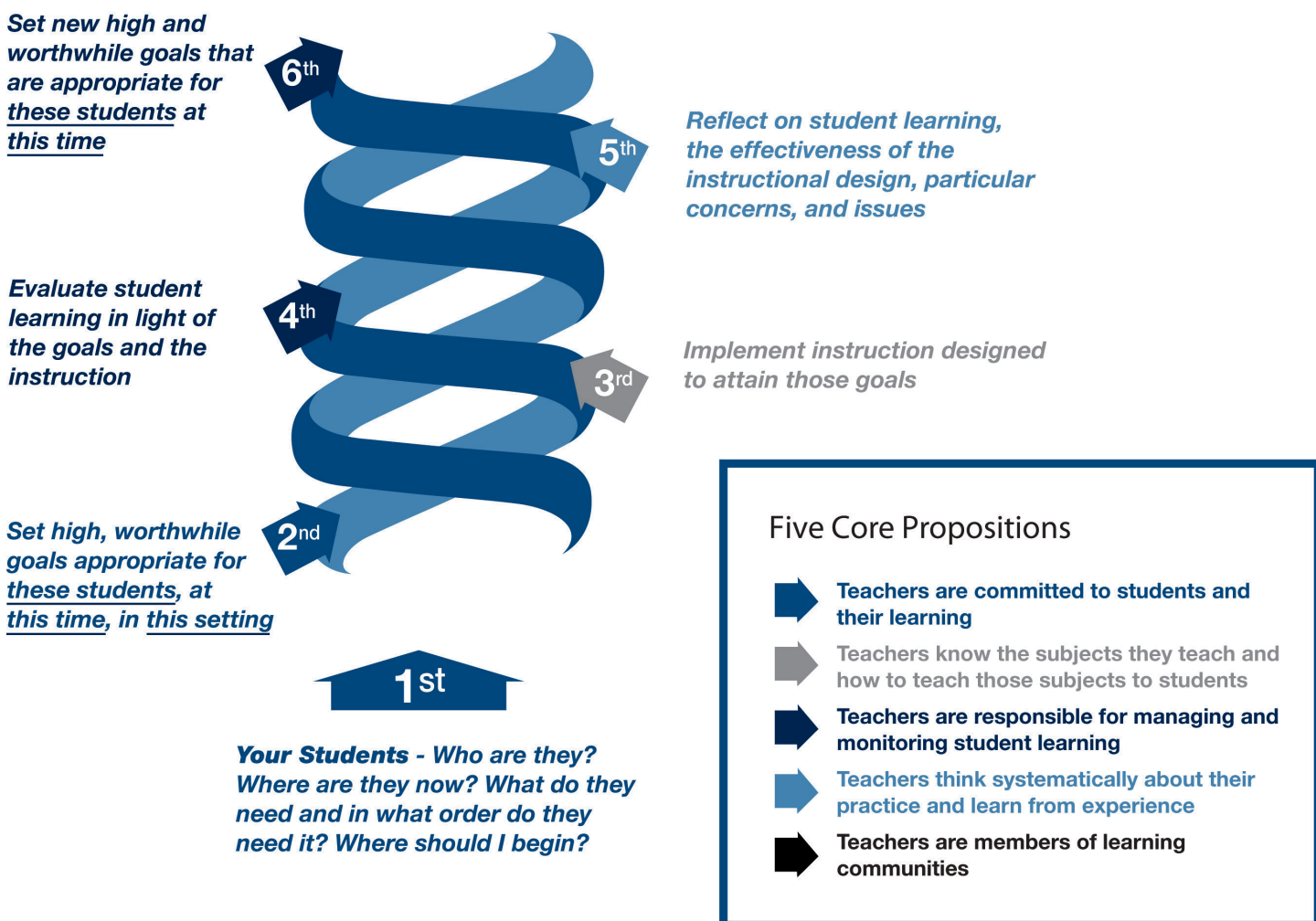
Accomplished teachers participate actively in their learning communities to promote progress and achievement. They contribute to the effectiveness of the school by working collaboratively with other professionals on policy decisions, curriculum development, professional learning, school instructional programs, and other functions that are fundamental to the development of highly productive learning communities. They work collaboratively and creatively with families and the community, engaging them productively in the work of the school and cultivating students' connections with the opportunities, resources, and diversity they afford.

Accomplished teachers can evaluate school progress and the allocation of school resources in light of their understanding of state and local educational objectives and their knowledge of student needs. They are knowledgeable about and can advocate for specialized school and community resources that can be engaged for their students' benefit, and are skilled at employing such resources as needed.

# Architecture of Accomplished Teaching

The Architecture of Accomplished Teaching provides a view of how the use of the Five Core Propositions and the standards that are developed from them result in student learning. As depicted in the Architecture of Accomplished Teaching illustration, shown below, one strand represents teaching practice as grounded in the Five Core Propositions, while the other strand represents the teacher’s impact on students and their learning.

## The Architecture of Accomplished Teaching: What is underneath the surface?



The National Board program certifies accomplished teachers who positively influence student learning through effective teaching practice. The process includes the core propositions for all teachers, a common set of accomplished teaching standards specific to the content field and students’ developmental levels, and a set of evidence-based assessments specific to the field that certify what accomplished teachers know and do.

# Standards

## Introduction

Accomplished teachers believe that educators are critical to making the world a better place. They know that teachers are powerful agents of change. They understand the profound power of a teacher's words and their ability to influence the children who enter and leave their classrooms. Accomplished teachers reflect continually on their practice as well as the decisions they make because they appreciate the artistry, knowledge, and skills that characterize excellent teaching.

Accomplished middle childhood generalists view their students as the future—as aspiring communicators, contributors, and problem solvers who will one day make decisions on a local, regional, national, and global level. These teachers make learning relevant—integrating it within a variety of contexts so that the opportunities for learning are evident and applicable—showing students how to make connections to the world around them. Teachers and their students belong to interrelated learning communities, informed by the relationships between classroom, home, local, and global cultures. Accomplished teachers thus collaborate with families, community members, and other educators and present multiple perspectives on issues to produce critical, independent thinkers who embrace individuality while exercising intellectual responsibility in a global society. These teachers want their students to think about the world beyond themselves, their families, and their communities. Accomplished middle childhood generalists know that students can reach potentials they cannot yet conceive; they realize that the boundless possibility of these children is powerful and inspiring. To achieve this goal, they consider the needs of the whole child—social, physical, emotional, and intellectual.

Accomplished teachers demonstrate confidence, flexibility, perseverance, and competence, which they strive to instill in their students and model for their colleagues. This revised edition of Middle Childhood Generalist Standards emphasizes the significance of developing and refining effective, innovative teaching skills while strengthening creative problem solving and response to change. Foundational to these goals is the importance of professional practice: what it means to advocate and work for students, their families, and communities; to act as educational leaders; and to reflect upon teaching and learning in a sustained and comprehensive manner. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards committees responsible for the revised edition of these standards recognize and acknowledge the increasing demands placed on, and the responsibilities assigned to, educators of the twenty-first century. They understand that, in the face of these challenges, it is imperative for teachers to become empowered as professionals, to enhance their pedagogical skills, and to build their capacity as educational leaders and change agents.

Accomplished teachers know that all children can learn. These teachers engage students by sharing the joy of learning and fostering curiosity, persistence, and a desire to succeed. Accomplished middle childhood generalists teach in a variety of settings and hold a myriad of responsibilities, but they all share a singular passion—the desire to have students know, understand, and fully realize that learning can enrich their lives. Such teachers accept the significant challenge of helping students transition from early

childhood to adolescence. These teachers encourage their students to become more resilient so they will be able to negotiate future challenges on their own.

Accomplished teachers know they can make a significant difference in a child's life by helping that child build a strong sense of character and a feeling of self-worth. These teachers see their students as individuals, with their own likes, dislikes, families, cultures, histories, and aspirations. Accomplished teachers strive to build their students' trust within inclusive environments.

Middle childhood generalists distinguish themselves not only by a command of the subject areas they teach, but also by their disposition toward students, the pedagogy they use to enhance their students' learning and development, and their commitment to the integration of subject area knowledge. This emphasis on interdisciplinary studies stems from a desire to help students see important connections among ideas and find relevance and meaning in their learning. The world outside the classroom requires a multifaceted approach to thinking and acting; seldom do individuals face compartmentalized tasks that require knowledge of only one discipline. To teach in an integrated manner, accomplished generalists possess a strong foundation in the content knowledge and skills of the various subject areas comprising the elementary school curriculum (English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, the arts, and health and wellness). This depth of knowledge provides teachers with the flexibility to vary their approaches, depending on their students' needs and their immediate instructional goals; it also allows them to distinguish between significant ideas and topics of lesser importance. Teachers' extensive knowledge base allows them to determine and address ambitious but reasonable expectations for student learning, to sequence instructional activities in ways that make sense conceptually, to see the underlying structures and connections among various subjects, and to coordinate strategies and ideas as part of interdisciplinary teams.

Accomplished practitioners employ a wide variety of instructional strategies that actively engage all students, promote collaboration, provide for various levels of concrete and abstract representations, foster student inquiry, and promote creative thinking. Sensitive to their students' individual differences, accomplished teachers tailor their instruction accordingly. In these revised standards, Knowledge of Content and Curriculum covers the breadth of subject area knowledge that accomplished middle childhood generalists possess, while Instructional Decision Making addresses how they employ this knowledge in their teaching. The latter standard emphasizes the cyclical and interrelated nature of assessment, instruction, and reflection with an understanding that information is not simply delivered to students but that meaningful learning requires students to employ new ideas in real world contexts. Accomplished teachers forge relationships with their students that help guide them in developing the habits of critical and creative thinkers and the inquiring nature of the intellectually curious. These endeavors, which result in the acquisition of deepening knowledge, in turn lead to the joy of learning and the pleasure of teaching others.

Accomplished teachers work collaboratively to create educational partnerships that increase student learning. Partnership and Outreach seeks to provide a broad understanding of family structures, which vary widely, and a focused description of how accomplished teachers view their partnerships with each family. These teachers understand that communication does not emanate solely from the classroom to the home as directed by a teacher; rather, it accommodates a flow of ideas, projects, and programs from multiple sources, such as between the home and the classroom or between the classroom and the local community and beyond. In Establishing an Environment for Learning, the learning environment is viewed as an ever-widening community that encompasses classroom, home, local, and global cultures with which accomplished teachers work in the collective pursuit of educating all children. The accomplished teacher monitors the social and emotional dynamics of the classroom while establishing a learning environment that

thrives on these social interactions. The revised edition of the standards emphasizes an understanding of classroom climate, as well as the accomplished teacher's ongoing reflection upon this and other aspects of knowledge for pedagogical teaching.

To support content-related and pedagogical goals, accomplished teachers integrate and use instructional tools, including technology, within the curriculum. Applications of such technological and other related instructional tools are thus embedded throughout the standards with an awareness that today's emerging technology will likely look much different in the future. While no one can predict the specific types of innovations we may one day enjoy, accomplished teachers remain as open as possible to the current and future use of emerging instructional tools. The standards therefore explore how such tools, including technology, may be used to support teaching and learning for themselves and their students instead of focusing on how to use specific tools which may change.

The increasingly rapid pace of social interaction and technological advancement requires teachers and their students to be flexible, critical, and creative problem solvers. Changes in policies, educational practice, and social dynamics affect decisions and classroom cultures. This necessarily influences the ways accomplished teachers approach the profession. The management of outside influences can be challenging for the accomplished teacher, making a proactive attitude and consistent reliance on careful responses critical. Defining the course of the profession is imperative in this context, which is why the committee created a new standard, Responsiveness to Change.

Another standard, Professionalism, Leadership, and Advocacy, has been expanded to include the importance of acting as a professional within various contexts, helping to define the course of the profession, advocating for students, promoting teachers as educational leaders, and modeling for students what it means to be a lifelong learner and an engaged citizen. This standard acknowledges that leadership can be demonstrated in different ways, but the assertiveness of the accomplished teacher and the empowerment of the teaching profession remain paramount, especially given the proliferation of educational data and policies impacting teaching and teachers. Accomplished teachers have powerful voices. They realize their potential and seek forums for voicing their views, beliefs, and ideals, to speak among and with one another to define teaching excellence for their profession and the educational community at large.

Finally, while diversity and reflection are topics addressed within separate standards, they are an important focus throughout the standards due to their influence on every aspect of learning and teaching for students and teachers alike. An appreciation of individual differences and a respect for others occurs when we take the time to learn about each other and strive to achieve common goals. Similarly, the accomplished educator reflects continually on actions and decisions to improve teaching practice. A thoughtful respect for diversity and a disciplined reliance on reflection are hallmarks of accomplished teachers.

These standards should in no way be considered definitive or all-inclusive. They are meant to address critical issues, describe teaching expectations, and provide a lens for professional development. The art and science of teaching are complex. As in so many other fields, there is typically more than one way to achieve any given goal. This document does not intend to suggest that one approach is preferable to another. Accomplished teachers realize that different approaches are needed for different students at different times. More importantly, they understand that all goals lead to student learning. Accomplished teachers believe that students represent the first and final consideration for all educators.



## Developing High and Rigorous Standards for Accomplished Practice

Middle Childhood Generalist Standards describes what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do. The standards are meant to reflect the professional consensus at this point about the essential aspects of accomplished practice. The deliberations of the third and fourth edition committees were informed by various national and state initiatives on student and teacher standards that have been operating concurrently with the development of NBPTS Standards. As the understanding of teaching and learning continues to evolve over the next several years, these standards will be updated again.

An essential tension of describing accomplished practice concerns the difference between the analysis and the practice of teaching. The former tends to fragment the profession into any number of discrete duties, such as designing learning activities, providing quality explanation, modeling, managing the classroom, and monitoring student progress. Teaching as it actually occurs, on the other hand, is a seamless activity.

Everything an accomplished teacher knows through study, research, and experience is brought to bear daily in the classroom through innumerable decisions that shape learning. Teaching frequently requires balancing the demands of several important educational goals. It depends on accurate observations of particular students and settings, and it is subject to revision on the basis of continuing developments in the classroom.

The paradox, then, is that any attempt to write standards that dissect what accomplished teachers know and are able to do will, to a certain extent, misrepresent the holistic nature of how teaching actually takes place. Nevertheless, the fact remains: Certain identifiable commonalities characterize the accomplished practice of teachers. The standards that follow are designed to capture the knowledge, artistry, proficiency, and understandings—both deep and broad—that contribute to the complex work that is accomplished teaching.

### The Standards Format

Accomplished teaching appears in many different forms, and it should be acknowledged at the outset that these specific standards are not the only way it could have been described. No linearity, atomization, or hierarchy is implied in this vision of accomplished teaching, nor is each standard of equal weight. Rather, the standards are presented as aspects of teaching that are analytically separable for the purposes of this standards document but that are not discrete when they appear in practice.

**Standard Statement**—This is a succinct statement of one vital aspect of the practice of the accomplished middle childhood generalist. Each standard is expressed in terms of observable teacher actions that have an impact on students.

**Elaboration**—This passage provides a context for the standard, along with an explanation of what teachers need to know, value, and do if they are to fulfill the standard. The elaboration includes descriptions of teacher dispositions toward students, their distinctive roles and responsibilities, and their stances on a range of ethical and intellectual issues that regularly confront them.

In addition, throughout the document are examples illustrating accomplished practice and demonstrating how decisions integrate various individual considerations and cut across the standard document. If the

standards pull apart accomplished teaching into discrete elements, the examples put them back together in ways more clearly recognizable to teachers. Because the National Board believes there is no single “right” way to teach students, these examples are meant to encourage teachers to demonstrate their own best practice.



## Middle Childhood Generalist Standards Statements

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has organized the standards for Accomplished Middle Childhood Generalists into the following nine standards. These standards have been ordered to facilitate understanding, not to assign priorities. They each describe an important facet of accomplished teaching and often occur concurrently because of the seamless quality of accomplished practice. These standards serve as the basis for National Board Certification in Middle Childhood/Generalist.

### Standard I: Knowledge of Students

Accomplished teachers use their knowledge of child development, their knowledge of students as individuals, and their knowledge of students as learners to develop and strengthen relationships that enhance learning.

### Standard II: Respect for Diversity

Accomplished teachers respect and comprehend the complex nature of diversity. They provide opportunities for all students to access the knowledge, skills, and understandings they need to become caring and thoughtful participants in a global citizenry.

### Standard III: Establishing an Environment for Learning

Accomplished teachers establish and maintain safe and respectful learning communities that nurture relationships and create climates that promote student engagement in learning.

### Standard IV: Knowledge of Content and Curriculum

Accomplished teachers draw on and expand their knowledge of content and curriculum to determine what is important for students to learn and experience within and across the subject areas of the middle childhood years.

### Standard V: Instructional Decision Making

Accomplished teachers are effective instructional decision makers. They use a process of assessing, planning, implementing, and reflecting to guide teaching and learning.

### Standard VI: Partnership and Outreach

Accomplished teachers establish and maintain partnerships with families and the greater community to enhance teaching and support student learning.

### Standard VII: Professionalism, Leadership, and Advocacy

Accomplished teachers are leaders who advocate for the teaching profession and student learning.

### Standard VIII: Responsiveness to Change

Accomplished teachers are cognizant of the changes that occur in society and in education. They thoughtfully and proactively analyze and respond to change as it affects their students and their profession.

### Standard IX: Reflective Practice

Accomplished teachers reflect on their practice continually to improve the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning.

# Standard I

## Knowledge of Students

Accomplished teachers use their knowledge of child development, their knowledge of students as individuals, and their knowledge of students as learners to develop and strengthen relationships that enhance learning.

### Introduction

To chart an educationally sound course for their students, accomplished middle childhood generalists must understand child development and be acquainted with students as individuals and as learners. They must relate to them in a variety of ways and appreciate the similarities as well as the differences that characterize each child. Teachers<sup>1</sup> help students grow and mature by working vigilantly to learn what students know, how they think, what they value, who they are, where they come from, and what motivates them. To meet this goal, middle childhood generalists consistently observe and listen to students as they work, learn, and play in a variety of settings. Teachers use the knowledge they gain to determine the direction, approach, and focus of their instruction. The more they learn about their students, the more they can adapt their teaching to engage and motivate students while meeting their specific needs.

### Child Development

The knowledge that accomplished teachers have of their students is enhanced by their understanding of the social, physical, emotional, and intellectual development that characterizes middle childhood. Teachers recognize that these students are maturing in their ability to progress from concrete to symbolic and abstract thinking. These students are beginning to consider perspectives other than their own and are becoming increasingly aware that learning holds intrinsic value.

Although a number of generalizations can be made about students at this age, accomplished teachers understand that each class and each student is unique. They realize that every student begins the school year with a specific combination of interests, capabilities, and attitudes or dispositions toward learning. Teachers remain sensitive to their students throughout the year, noticing changes that may occur in patterns of behavior, social interactions, and physical development and considering how these changes might impact student performance as a whole.

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<sup>1</sup> All references to teachers in this document, whether stated explicitly or not, refer to accomplished middle childhood generalists.

Accomplished teachers use their understanding of child development to meet their students' needs and to promote learning. They appreciate the importance of having students learn with and from one another and thus provide opportunities for student interaction and participation in class and small group discussions. They know and value that creative expression and play nurture children's imaginations and innovative thinking. Importantly, they realize that their students' creativity, inquisitiveness, energy, sense of fair play, and—as they get older—skepticism, are assets to learning.

## Students as Individuals

Accomplished teachers cultivate interactions with their students to connect with each child on a meaningful level. They employ a variety of strategies and assessments to accomplish this objective. Teachers learn about students by observing them at work and play. This type of observation helps teachers determine the areas in which their students are successful and those in which they are less adept. Teachers gather information about student interests, abilities, learning preferences, and motivations. They may do so by using written inventories, interactive devices, or other forms of communication, including personal conversations with students and their families. Middle childhood generalists use a number of ways to learn about their students by interacting with them and their families<sup>1</sup> and by gaining knowledge about their communities, languages, and cultural backgrounds.

Accomplished teachers understand that a variety of factors including, but not limited to, language, culture, socioeconomic status, family configuration, sexual orientation, self-confidence, physical and social well-being, race, ethnicity, and gender, can influence learning and affect the nature of the interactions they have with students. They view the diverse backgrounds of their students as assets to teaching and learning. Accomplished teachers may therefore call upon children to share their life experiences; they may also use language learners fluent in another language as resources, asking these students to explain how a concept or idea might be expressed differently in their native languages. Middle childhood generalists acknowledge the individuality of their students while capitalizing on the similarities that unite these children. (See [Standard II—Respect for Diversity](#).)

Accomplished teachers know that the interests young people share can provide contexts for engaging students in learning. Discussions about subjects such as music, entertainment, or sports can foster class cohesion while providing students with safe forums to express their individuality. Teachers carefully counter any gender, racial, ethnic, or other stereotypes that might appear during these interactions, doing so through their observation of the classroom environment as well as their selection of instructional topics. They may therefore use instances of stereotyping as opportunities to address individuality and respect in a constructive manner.

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<sup>1</sup> The terms family and parent are used throughout this document to refer to people who are the primary caregivers, guardians, or significant adults in the lives of children.

Accomplished teachers know that changes in a child's demeanor or schoolwork may signal the start of a significant developmental breakthrough or a problem requiring attention. Knowledge of the challenges that many young people face—poverty, family violence, health issues, divorce, or societal ills—may help shape teachers' instructional decisions. They work to find solutions when students struggle with situations. For example, teachers may sometimes provide accommodations on homework assignments, while maintaining high expectations for students. Using different strategies as needed helps teachers respond and adapt to individual changes. By providing each student with additional opportunities to learn, middle childhood generalists help all students experience success, enjoyment, and a growing measure of self-confidence.

## Students as Learners

Accomplished teachers hold high expectations for their students and believe that each student benefits when challenged. They are aware of the ways that students develop analytic and abstract thinking skills and provide appropriate opportunities for students to test their abilities. These teachers understand that all students have the capacity for reflection, self-evaluation, and analysis and are shortchanged if their schooling prioritizes the rote recollection of facts and skills. At the same time, teachers recognize that an understanding of, and proficiency with, basic tasks provides students with a foundation for success in problem solving and higher-level learning.

Accomplished teachers know that children prefer to learn in different ways. Some students are more comfortable working alone, while others prefer to work in teams. Teachers nurture a variety of strategically planned learning experiences to help students interact within the learning environment.<sup>1</sup> They prepare students to work in collaborative and cooperative groups, some of which are teacher-guided and others student-led. They also provide support for students to work independently and represent their understandings in different modalities. Some students may express themselves more easily in writing than in group discussions, while others may thrive with the use of hands-on approaches or visual cues. Accomplished teachers combine their knowledge of students with their teaching experience and understanding of research to design innovative practices and utilize proven methods that promote learning for all students.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this document, the term *learning environment* refers to the physical and virtual spaces in which students learn as well as the social communities in which they grow and develop. The term is thereby meant to represent the interrelation between the physical and social components of any classroom space.

# Standard II

## Respect for Diversity

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Accomplished teachers respect and comprehend the complex nature of diversity. They provide opportunities for all students to access the knowledge, skills, and understandings they need to become caring and thoughtful participants in a global citizenry.

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### Appreciating Diversity

Accomplished middle childhood generalists are cognizant of the need to show respect for their students as they teach and model advocacy for the rights of all. In an increasingly pluralistic society, they recognize and value diversity among people of different ages, genders, sexual orientations, physical characteristics, races, ethnicities, cultures, primary languages, origins of birth, socioeconomic status, family configurations, religions, abilities, achievements, and exceptionalities. Teachers address diversity dynamically, as an ongoing learning process, by making a concerted effort to learn about their students' uniqueness through personal interaction with students, families, colleagues, community members, and other individuals.

Accomplished teachers understand that diversity provides a meaningful context for teaching and learning. They know that their instructional methods may impact the manner in which their students learn. Because they recognize their power to influence and affirm each student's sense of personal worth, teachers acknowledge their personal biases and consider how these perspectives may affect the learning environment. They strive to be self-aware and reflect on how these insights can be used to increase their students' ability to access learning. Accomplished teachers understand and uphold the belief that all students should be treated with dignity and feel safe to learn in their schools and communities, so they may work with students in various ways to create environments in which bullying is not tolerated. By assisting students in recognizing discrimination, prejudice, and stereotypes, accomplished teachers help students understand and use democratic principles of freedom, justice, and equality. In so doing, they nurture the development of these civic values in their students.

Accomplished teachers understand that a learning environment is enriched when students of various cultures, backgrounds, and abilities can see themselves in curricula and work together to achieve common goals. Exposing students to cultures unlike their own and teaching them an understanding of difference prepares students for interactions with groups and cultures with which they are not familiar. Accomplished teachers may thus discuss with their students literature related to different family

structures, people with exceptionalities, or social issues such as homelessness. An inclusive climate nurtures their students' ability to recognize, acknowledge, and appreciate diversity, setting the stage for effective cross-cultural communication and a comprehensive and global approach to problem solving.

## Addressing Diversity

By providing students with opportunities to be familiar with different ethnic and cultural communities, accomplished teachers help students confront personal biases and stereotypes while nurturing a more global awareness. Teachers use pedagogy that is fair and equitable, providing all students with opportunities to experience success in academic and social arenas. They lead students to discover positive personal identities and attitudes regarding differences in themselves and others.

Accomplished teachers demonstrate effective communication skills with a heightened awareness of, and sensitivity for, the members of a diverse learning environment. While appreciating variations in the English language, they strive to demonstrate and develop students' oral proficiency in social and academic English. Furthermore, teachers understand how the context and purpose of learning activities can affect oral and written language. They understand that children with diverse cultural histories may be accustomed to different forms of social interaction and beliefs or modes of communication. For example, grandparents who speak languages other than English may be the primary care givers of children. School expectations of language use may differ from the expectations of culturally diverse students and their families. Middle childhood generalists employ resources that can help them communicate better with families, creating or seeking translations for written communication or acquiring the support of interpreters for oral communication.

Accomplished teachers identify, model, and teach the skills that students need to interact with classmates from different groups in a way that reduces bias, fear, anxiety, and discrimination. They create student groups that stimulate cohesion and reveal similarities between and among classmates to support the improvement of intergroup relations and to facilitate commonalities in the ways students learn. Teachers may stress similarities in values between or among groups to reduce prejudice, for example, by demonstrating how ideals like freedom and charity exist across cultures, ethnicities, and racial groups.

Accomplished teachers understand that required curricula and instructional materials may offer limited viewpoints, and that the study of diverse perspectives can deepen their students' content knowledge while enriching their global understandings. They enable students to explore the value, meaning, and significance of different viewpoints as students analyze subject information. When studying historical events, for example, accomplished teachers might have students write letters from the viewpoints of different participants. During a unit on issues associated with the Gold Rush, students may write personal narratives from the vantage point of those affected, such as miners, ranchers, or native tribes. Teachers understand that the



study of diverse viewpoints encourages students to think flexibly as they draw on and apply multiple sources of information to analyze global concerns.

Accomplished teachers actively seek ways for students to bring meaning to their learning. They plan lessons and employ instructional strategies that take into account their students' knowledge, skills, interests, and dispositions. Teachers differentiate instruction and assessment based on these factors, using knowledge of their students as a platform for inquiry. They provide students with opportunities to share information about themselves, and they integrate activities that honor students' cultural practices and beliefs in responsive and innovative ways. When structuring these activities, teachers strive to represent the uniqueness of students' cultural backgrounds while respecting the norms of each culture. For example, because some artifacts may be sacred to a particular population, teachers will choose not to reproduce them in the classroom. Cultural activities provide teachers with insights into the individuality of their students while encouraging the development of empathy, understanding, and personal connections among classmates.

Accomplished teachers also ensure that classroom displays and visual resources such as posters and other instructional materials reflect the diversity of their students and extend their awareness of others. They challenge students to think critically and creatively about these sources of information, asking students to consider how displays may or may not accurately portray students and who they aspire to become. Accomplished teachers encourage students to express their personal feelings and ideas in a sensitive manner that conveys respect for themselves and other individuals.

Recognizing the interconnectedness of the global community, accomplished teachers identify resources available within their communities or through technology to expand their students' understandings of diversity. They may reach out to area colleges, universities, and private agencies for current research and expertise. For example, during a unit on immigration, teachers might contact outside experts as well as local or regional cultural centers. Alternatively, when studying conflict, they might use technology to connect students with primary sources such as civil rights leaders not present in the local community. Accomplished teachers use various sources to provide a more comprehensive perspective on cultural studies in the classroom.

By addressing issues of diversity proactively, accomplished teachers create supportive learning environments in which all students feel safe as individuals. They help students participate in curricular and extra-curricular experiences that nurture positive attitudes and foster productive relationships. Middle childhood generalists know that improving the quality and consistency of student participation in school improves academic performance and increases student engagement in the classroom and the world at large.



# Standard III

## Establishing an Environment for Learning

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Accomplished teachers establish and maintain safe and respectful learning communities that nurture relationships and create climates that promote student engagement in learning.

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### Introduction

Accomplished middle childhood generalists create learning environments that foster a sense of community by safeguarding each student’s dignity and emotional wellbeing. Teachers nurture student participation in collaborative learning activities and encourage risk taking within caring, inclusive, and supportive environments. They facilitate the development of communication skills that allow their students to solve problems together and affirm the contributions of individual classmates. In a vibrant community of learners, accomplished teachers support the welfare of the community by valuing the unique perspectives of students and their families.

Careful management of a well-designed classroom sets the foundation for this type of learning environment. Accomplished teachers involve their students in the establishment of clear expectations for classroom behavior. They model, teach, and monitor class rules and routines to uphold these expectations consistently. To maintain their students’ focus on learning, teachers create smooth transitions between activities. Whether the environment is physical or virtual, middle childhood generalists establish safe and productive parameters for learning. Well-organized, efficient, yet flexible managers of time, accomplished teachers make classroom management seem nearly effortless so that learning can occur.

### Building a Community

Accomplished teachers are attuned to the diversity of their students. They consider distinctions in educational and cultural backgrounds as well as individual personalities and dispositions toward schoolwork. They use this understanding to design a variety of approaches for maintaining the well-being of the class while acknowledging the uniqueness of its members and promoting fairness and equity for all. Teachers hold high expectations for students and consistently communicate the belief that all students can participate and learn in an inclusive environment. (See [Standard II—Respect for Diversity](#).)

Accomplished teachers model and provide opportunities for students to work collaboratively by having students communicate through discourse with their peers. This type of communication might include cooperative learning techniques, partner-conversations, or Socratic seminars during scientific experiments or while solving mathematical problems. Middle childhood generalists understand that these types of interactions can help groups appreciate the value of individual contributions while embracing the diverse perspectives of all students. Teachers consistently provide students with challenging opportunities in which risk taking is essential to reaching their potential. In the learning communities created by these teachers, students feel a sense of ownership and purpose. By guiding their students to contribute productively in the classroom, teachers help their students build character and become productive members of society as well.

Accomplished teachers create culturally responsive environments that include family members. They demonstrate a fundamental interest in their students' lives by building a bridge between home and school and establishing an atmosphere in which families feel welcomed, valued, and respected. Communicating regularly with families helps teachers learn more about their students' backgrounds and cultures. These conversations show teachers what families expect and hope for their children while providing meaningful opportunities to involve families in school activities.

Accomplished teachers know that, to be most helpful to their students, conversations with families may include students, interpreters, or translators as needed to accommodate a mutual exchange of information. Teachers work with families to create goals for students and establish ways that they can partner to reach these goals. By communicating thoughtfully with parents, teachers can gain a better understanding of students and establish a positive working relationship with their families. (See [Standard VI—Partnership and Outreach](#).)

## Organizing and Managing the Classroom

Accomplished teachers establish procedures and expectations with their classes at the beginning of the school year. Teachers reflect on these procedures throughout the year to maintain efficient classrooms, adapting them as appropriate to meet the needs of individual students and classroom communities. They design activities to help students know and respect each other and build productive environments. They know that modeling respectful behavior encourages students to exhibit positive behavior toward their peers as they provide constructive feedback. When students understand that it is important to respect themselves and others, they are better able to take personal responsibility, consider other perspectives, disagree appropriately, and advocate for themselves.

To support the development of respectful and productive educational environments, accomplished teachers use class discussions and student feedback to include students in the development of mutually determined routines and expectations. Teachers facilitate student-centered discussions to establish norms for decision making in the classroom. Students then help define the rules they live by,

to create communities for which they feel responsible. Accomplished teachers know that students' input encourages positive interactions, nurtures constructive peer relationships, and facilitates individual and collective problem solving.

Accomplished teachers recognize that a willingness to accept input from students regarding procedures is essential. For example, a student might propose an efficient way to move from one activity to another that minimizes the time spent transitioning; an accomplished teacher might then incorporate this improvement in class procedures and review it later with students to see if it is working. Throughout the school year, teachers monitor the procedures established for their classes and assess their effectiveness in supporting learning activities and the development of their students' concepts and skills.

Accomplished teachers demonstrate their respect and concern for students by celebrating students' successes and addressing inappropriate behavior constructively. They find ways to acknowledge students who act appropriately and compliment their academic or social behavior. When students begin acting in negative or unproductive ways, accomplished teachers may recognize factors aggravating a situation and prevent or mitigate the effects of a conflict. If not, they manage and resolve the conflict another way. For example, knowing that clear expectations and established consequences can minimize conflict, teachers may assert that the learning environment is a bully-free zone and stress that there is no tolerance for disrespectful or unsafe behavior within that community. Accomplished teachers act promptly and equitably when disciplinary action is required. They refrain from causing students embarrassment and provide them, instead, with opportunities to re-establish themselves as positive members of the classroom.

Accomplished teachers recognize the importance of instilling within their students the idea that learning can be enjoyable yet challenging, that experimenting is essential, and that recognizing and correcting mistakes is as critical and worthwhile as enjoying successes. Teachers encourage their students to state their ideas and support their opinions to promote inquiry and inspire them to embrace the independent pursuit of learning. In this kind of environment, students can learn from peers, learn from mistakes, and acquire the persistence needed to strive for success.

Accomplished teachers optimize the use of classroom space and plan all aspects of classroom design to maximize learning. The physical setting, including the placement of furniture, equipment, and materials, can facilitate the learning process by stimulating student engagement and motivation while supporting a harmonious class dynamic. Teachers are aware, for example, that exhibits of student work, arrangements of works of art, as well as color and lighting, can contribute to a positive classroom climate while creating a sense of belonging and ownership in the class. They also know that they can plan the flow of student traffic to promote function, safety, and responsibility. They may therefore consider the best way of organizing supplies so that all students can readily access and return them without delay or disturbance.

Accomplished teachers also arrange classroom furniture to adapt their use of space based on planned learning activities. For example, students might move their desks to one side of the classroom so that they have room to act out a scene from a play, take part in a simulation, or participate in an activity where students estimate and then measure the area or perimeter of the classroom floor. Teachers use their classrooms to help coordinate student activities throughout the instructional day; for example, they may have students take gallery walks to observe student work posted on the walls. They group students for a variety of reasons, to organize them based on student interest, content area, or ability level, for instance.

Accomplished teachers help students participate fully in the life of the class by adapting the physical setting to meet the needs of all students. Middle childhood generalists advocate for and negotiate to address their students' physical requirements by coordinating with school administrators and district professionals to obtain necessary equipment and building modifications for students with exceptional needs. For example, one teacher may request an FM device to help a student who is hard of hearing, while another may request a sidewalk cut on a curb near the classroom to provide wheelchair access. If a student continually squints, a third teacher may write a referral for evaluation by the district vision specialist. Accomplished teachers know the service providers for students with exceptional needs and facilitate the support these providers give their students.

Accomplished teachers always think proactively to meet their students' social, physical, emotional, and intellectual needs. They consider all aspects of their learning environments to achieve this goal. Teachers understand that their learning communities extend beyond the four walls of their classrooms to include any setting, physical or virtual, in which their students interact. They therefore build communities, organize and manage classes, and make adaptations as needed to maximize their students' engagement with learning in each of these settings.

# Standard IV

## Knowledge of Content and Curriculum

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Accomplished teachers draw on and expand their knowledge of content and curriculum to determine what is important for students to learn and experience within and across the subject areas of the middle childhood years.

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### Introduction

Accomplished middle childhood generalists have a strong understanding of content and a disposition that compels them to deepen and extend their subject area knowledge while refining their pedagogy. Teachers know that essential to the development of a sound teaching practice is the firm foundation of the major concepts, methods, and modes of inquiry in the subject areas that constitute a common curriculum: English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, the arts, and health and wellness. Although generalists cannot be expected to have a specialist's in-depth focus on subject knowledge in every aspect of the curriculum, they do possess a solid base of understanding, as well as the interest and desire to expand their knowledge on their own and in the company of their colleagues and students. Such teachers routinely make connections among topics, concepts, and understandings within and across disciplines. They model the use of content-specific language, vocabulary, and skills and provide real-world applications which relate academic contexts to college- or career-related situations.

Accomplished teachers are passionate about engaging students in learning. They strive to meet and exceed curricular standards and expectations, using varied assessments to monitor their students' growth. They employ creativity and imagination to explore new and intriguing learning paths that extend their students' pursuit of knowledge even further. It is precisely this type of excitement for learning that helps accomplished teachers establish high standards for student investigation. They adopt inquiry- and problem-based approaches and use technological tools as appropriate to help students construct meaning in context and apply critical thinking skills. Middle childhood teachers involve their students in determining the direction of their education. To make instruction relevant and foster students' natural curiosity to learn, teachers select instructional resources that relate to their students' interests, cultural identities, and social contexts in meaningful ways. Accomplished teachers take advantage of new opportunities for learning that emerge during instruction,

exploring questions and topics based on class interest. (See [Standard V—Instructional Decision Making](#).)

Careful reflection helps accomplished teachers contemplate how skilled instructional decision making can better prepare them to capitalize on spontaneous opportunities that may positively transform students' learning and involvement. They consider how to manage, address, or avoid situations that have a negative impact on teaching and learning and how to embrace situations that lead to deeper understandings. Teachers know that unscheduled events and unexpected opportunities can arise during planned learning experiences and that these situations may provide valuable sources of information about teachers and their students as well as chances to promote student engagement, growth, and understanding. Accomplished teachers analyze their teaching systematically to evaluate the unanticipated decisions they make and the impact that these decisions have on their students' ability to achieve curricular expectations and fully participate in the life of the class.

Using a wide variety of strategies and techniques, accomplished teachers design instruction characterized at once by its structure and flexibility, planning, articulating, and coordinating activities to meet their goals. Middle childhood generalists adapt their instruction of subject matter as informed by contexts and student needs.

## English Language Arts

Student mastery of the language arts is essential to success in all subject areas as well as inquiry learning, critical thinking, and problem solving. Accomplished teachers know effective strategies and skills that support reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and multimodal representation. They understand how children acquire and become adept at using oral and written language. Teachers recognize that language is socially, politically, historically, and culturally defined and that its use can vary by ability, gender, region, socioeconomic status, education, and culture. They therefore provide instruction that includes a wide variety of textual materials to appeal to their students' interests while furnishing them with access to information that will help them navigate the world in which they live.

Accomplished teachers draw on students' cultural and linguistic experiences as resources for enhancing their communication skills. They employ strategies, adaptations, and resources designed to aid language and literacy development based on students' specific strengths and needs. With students for whom English is a new language, teachers are aware of second language acquisition techniques and thus recognize that a student's first language can be used to support the transference of English communication skills. Accomplished teachers advocate for these students and work to obtain the necessary resources for their acquisition of language.

Accomplished teachers provide research-based reading and language instruction that includes opportunities for students to engage deliberately and systematically with a variety of text types and genres. Whether students are emergent, early, or fluent



readers, teachers incorporate reading strategies that build on students' strengths and meet their needs to construct meaning. These programs may include careful use of skills and strategies for word identification, vocabulary building, comprehension, critical thinking, and fluency. Teachers also provide a number of real and significant opportunities before, during, and after reading for students to express themselves orally and in writing. These processes help students become articulate about the content being studied while developing their analytical skills and building a curiosity that motivates independent exploration.

Accomplished teachers advance their students' development of communication skills through the mutual reinforcement of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Teachers regard these communication skills as reciprocal processes that result in the construction of meaning. They understand the vital role that oral language plays in learning and know that oral and written language are best learned in language-rich environments that provide opportunities to vary language use depending on audience, situation, and purpose. Accomplished teachers employ a variety of methods for students to explore written and oral language so they can communicate effectively in society and achieve personal goals. Teachers also emphasize the importance of critical listening so that students understand that listening well contributes to effective communication and thorough understanding. They are adept at teaching their students how speaking relates to writing and how to recognize and use the conventions of written English. Developing these skills contributes to the proficiency of students as readers, writers, speakers, and viewers.

Accomplished teachers instruct students to approach writing as a means of communicating with others as well as a means of self-expression. They scaffold students' learning through strategies such as modeling, teacher-guided and group-assisted writing activities, and individual student conferences to advance student facility with different steps of the writing process: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. They understand that writing can help develop thinking skills, facilitate personal expression, and enable students to explore the use of different voices and purposes for different audiences. Making use of available instructional tools, they provide students with many opportunities to apply written language skills across curricula using traditional or electronic means—writing explanations of solutions to mathematical problems; writing a research report for science; writing an editorial about a social studies issue; critiquing art; creating stories, poems, or plays; or submitting queries or comments to websites. They employ a number of ways to involve their students in meaningful representations of ideas and concepts.

Accomplished teachers facilitate meaningful communication and provide opportunities for students to express themselves orally as individuals, group members, and leaders through activities such as presentations, speeches, debates, and panel discussions, as well as through the use of digital media. They help students understand and appreciate diversity in language and communicative styles, and they model the fluent use of spoken English. Teachers know and stress to their students when to use formal or academic English to promote greater access to personal success, civic influence, and financial independence. They are also aware that

having a shared form of English facilitates communication across societal divisions. However, they respect that dialects or languages may be important to students' home and community lives and understand that these contribute to students' learning and feelings of belonging. Consequently, while protecting the integrity of their students' primary dialect or language, they help every student gain command of academic English.

Accomplished teachers are extensive readers, and they know a wide range of children's and young adult literature that includes both fiction and non-fiction texts. They provide students with access to a variety of classic and contemporary texts in various genres, including fables, folktales, myths, biographies, and works from varied perspectives and different ethnic and cultural traditions. These texts represent a range of subject-matter areas, styles, and communicative purposes. Teachers might challenge any prejudices that students hold with a study of texts that counter stereotypes. Teachers use a broad base of texts to develop students' analytical skills and strategies as well as their aesthetic capabilities. For instance, students might study advertisements to analyze media critically and understand the persuasive properties of advertising. The students of accomplished teachers learn to read for different purposes, such as deriving factual knowledge, attaining critical understanding, and seeking personal enjoyment.

Accomplished teachers introduce students to the interpretation of a wide variety of fiction and nonfiction, thereby helping them understand how authors organize and express ideas for different purposes using various forms and text structures. Teachers help their students employ text structures to aid their comprehension of dense, disciplinary texts. They provide opportunities for students to generate written texts, such as experimental reports that include content vocabulary, symbols, charts, graphs, and visualizations. These teachers enrich their curricula by supplementing printed texts with various media and the arts, which reinforce the need to read, view, and listen critically. Teachers encourage students to generate multiple interpretations and provide rationales for their conclusions. They also act on students' interests to design meaningful projects and provide choices for independent reading. Consequently, teachers foster students' abilities to understand multiple perspectives while instilling within them a lasting love of reading.

Accomplished teachers are adept at implementing multiple assessments and opportunities to observe students' progress in reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and multimodal representation. They evaluate their students' current strengths and determine what they need to learn next. Teachers know that language is learned through approximation and that making mistakes is an integral part of learning. They provide students with multiple opportunities to demonstrate what they know, what interests them, and how they interpret texts. They provide students with chances to engage in self-assessment while receiving constructive feedback from their peers and teachers. Accomplished teachers excel at using a wide range of response activities, such as journals, dramatic productions, informal presentations, and report writing for the purpose of ongoing assessment. These and other activities provide teachers numerous opportunities to differentiate processes as they measure



student understanding and determine the extent to which students are reaching immediate and long-term instructional objectives.

Accomplished teachers incorporate their students' language skills and strategies into other areas of their curricula. They understand that reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and multimodal representation are employed throughout school curricula, and they emphasize their usefulness in all subject areas as well as nonschool settings. Teachers also understand and communicate to their students the importance of multimedia literacy in an information-rich, global society. They design significant tasks across curricula that help students appreciate the usefulness of reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and multimodal representation as tools for learning, as ways of acquiring and organizing new information, and as a means of enjoyment.

## Mathematics

Accomplished teachers have a command of the mathematical content knowledge required to teach students ages 7–12 and beyond. They know and understand the major concepts and procedures that define number, including operations and the problems they solve, geometry, measurement, and statistics and probability. They are also cognizant of algebraic thinking topics that include work with patterns, expressions and equations, functions, and ratio and proportion. Teachers are well versed in important mathematical practices, particularly the critical role of problem solving and reasoning in mathematics teaching and learning. They routinely stress the importance of problem solving and encourage their students to make sense of the problems they are solving and to persevere in solving them.

Accomplished teachers recognize that an important, albeit sometimes unwritten, expectation of mathematics learning at these levels is the development of number sense. This instructional trajectory begins with counting and advances to include place value, operations, mental mathematics, and estimation, all directed toward computational fluency with whole numbers and fractions (defined here as  $a/b$  fractions, decimals, and common percents). Mathematics at these levels includes important geometric concepts and vocabulary involving shape, as well as applications involving measurement, such as perimeter, area, and volume. Problem-based contexts provide students with opportunities to gather and analyze data. Teachers at these levels also know that much of their work with early algebra, including expressions, equations, and functions, serve as foundational building blocks to more formal experiences in algebra at the middle and high school levels.

Accomplished teachers comprehend how knowledge in mathematics is organized and sequenced and how it is connected to other subject areas. Teachers recognize that how children learn mathematics and which mathematics children should learn are topics of ongoing research. They know how to build on children's informal understandings as a link to more formal mathematics. For example, they may share eight objects among three students to have them think about how to use division and to help them understand fractions and mixed numbers. Accomplished teachers

know that mathematics learning is critical. They serve as advocates to ensure that all students have access to meaningful mathematics instruction, which is instrumental for achieving success in other subject areas.

In the classrooms of accomplished teachers, students are engaged through a variety of activities that reinforce the concepts and skills they are learning. For example, a teacher may provide student groups with 3 meters of yarn and ask them to create shapes and determine the shape with the greatest area. Another activity would be to have students determine the best bargain for buying a beverage: five bottles for \$12 or two bottles for \$5. Teachers encourage students to explain their thinking by discussing their reasoning. Students thereby construct viable arguments by collaborating and interacting with one another as they solve problems and discover the impact of mathematics on their lives. Accomplished teachers help students recognize that there are multiple ways to solve many problems and that thinking through and explaining a problem is as critical as providing the correct solution.

Recognizing the significance of mathematical language, accomplished teachers provide students with ways to link mathematical vocabulary to important expectations. For example, teachers may have students use journals to record mathematical vocabulary using words, pictured representations, or equations. An entry for the distributive property might appear as follows:  $23 \times 8 = (20 \times 8) + (3 \times 8) = 160 + 24$ , and could also include a visual representation using a bar or box diagram.

Accomplished teachers use classroom resources in an effective manner. These resources include, but are not limited to, textbooks, supplemental resources, manipulative models and materials—hands-on and virtual—and technological tools. They are comfortable using a variety of manipulative and pictorial representations to establish conceptual understandings and help students connect concepts to procedures. For instance, teachers might have students use base 10 blocks to represent tenths and hundredths when learning about decimals or use a number line or rectangular regions when comparing fractions. In addition, accomplished teachers can readily locate or create problem solving tasks that challenge their students and extend their mathematics learning to higher-level concepts or connect them to other mathematical topics and subject areas. Teachers are acutely aware of the need to prepare students for a more global and technologically-rich society. They understand and use emerging technological tools to expand and enhance their pedagogy accordingly. These tools may include websites, virtual models and manipulatives, online texts, or spreadsheet applications.

Adept at diagnosing learner needs in mathematics, accomplished teachers provide interventions and accommodations accordingly. They recognize and value the different ways that students think and interpret mathematics, and they take these differences into consideration when creating classroom learning environments. These environments support and encourage the development of mathematical practices that include making sense of problems, reasoning through mathematical situations, and constructing viable arguments. Importantly, accomplished teachers realize that an approach to mathematics learning that is engaging, challenging, and problem-

based is critical for their students to develop and maintain a positive disposition toward mathematics.

## Science

Accomplished teachers understand that an education in the sciences helps students develop scientific habits of mind while gaining the knowledge and skills necessary to become scientifically literate. They realize that scientists and children use inquiry-based processes to discover and construct meaning. They foster the innate curiosity that children possess to help them become inventive, reflective, and skeptical thinkers, open to new ideas and willing to experiment and take risks.

Accomplished teachers know the four domains of science and introduce their students to these domains based on their curricula: earth and space science, life science, physical science, and engineering and technology. They know that a synergy exists between these domains and that engineering is the application of scientific knowledge to solve problems. When designing activities to help students understand these domains, middle childhood generalists teach concepts that appear across them—pattern, similarity and diversity; cause and effect; scale, proportion and quantity; systems and system models; energy and matter; form and function; and stability and change. Teachers integrate domains and concepts to help students develop a comprehensive understanding of science.

Knowledge of science enables accomplished teachers to encourage students to observe, generate questions, predict, explore, experiment, discuss ideas, interpret data, and draw conclusions around fundamental scientific concepts. As students design and perform experiments, they may employ problem-solving, critical thinking, and mathematical and measurement skills; they may also use computation, graphing, data collection and recording skills, tools and technology, oral speaking, writing, collaboration, and research skills. For instance, to understand the concept that air contains water molecules, students might perform an investigation to discover why the outside of a cold container shows water droplets when placed in a warmer environment. These experiences allow teachers to address misconceptions and help students better understand natural phenomena.

Accomplished teachers capitalize on students' prior knowledge as they design a rich array of open-ended experiences that integrate knowledge and practice and allow students to engage in cognitive, social, and physical practices, to formulate critical questions, and to follow their interests. For example, an accomplished teacher might guide students in designing an experiment to discover if light refracts when moving from one medium to another. Through experimentation, the teacher facilitates student understanding of refraction and how to observe and record results. The teacher purposefully plans instruction that leads students to discover unifying concepts and generate questions for further experimentation. Accomplished teachers know that "doing science" is not limited to direct experimentation but also includes sharing ideas with peers through discourse, using content-specific vocabulary, and developing representations of phenomena.

Accomplished teachers understand that science is a collaborative exchange. Throughout classroom activities, teachers model how to use scientific and mathematical language appropriately and measure students' ability to do so. They facilitate the appropriate use of scientific vocabulary in discourse and argumentation. Students collaborate as they experiment and share problem statements, observations, and conclusions. They also learn to participate in scientific discussions, to adopt a critical stance while respecting the contributions of others, and to be willing to ask questions and revise opinions.

Accomplished teachers help students use texts to become scientifically literate, to increase scientific knowledge, and to improve language art skills. Teachers assess students' learning as they listen and participate in discussions between and among groups of students. They may also evaluate students' understanding of science and engineering as they review students' work such as journal entries, lab reports, physical models, and responses to assessments. Teachers recognize that providing prompt feedback is essential to fostering and expanding students' thinking and facilitating further investigation. They are aware of students' preconceptions and misconceptions. When these arise, teachers respond in a timely manner to guide students to experiences that will help them correct their misunderstandings. Teachers help students understand that scientific thinking has changed over time and that scientific knowledge will continue to change. (See [Standard V—Instructional Decision Making](#).)

Accomplished teachers provide a balance of factual information and hands-on experiences to nurture a greater understanding of science and engineering. They teach students to use tools such as microscopes, rulers, computers, and graduated cylinders in the process of doing science. Teachers know that creating representational models such as pictures, diagrams, physical models, mathematical models, or computer simulations can help students refine their mental models and thereby internalize scientific concepts and build meaning. For example, a teacher might help students understand scale better by relating familiar objects such as marbles, pinheads, and balls to objects in the solar system. The teacher could then have students pace the relative distance of each planet to the sun. Accomplished teachers know that the use of models allows students to participate in rich discourse, refine their thinking, and solve problems.

Accomplished teachers help students connect earth, life, and physical science concepts and processes to real-life applications. They may use technology to research connections between and among disciplines, recruit speakers, plan virtual or actual field trips, enlist the support of families and community members, or provide other experiences that allow science learning to come alive for their students. They look for opportunities to expose children to career options in science as well. For example, when students are designing experiments to discover how plants grow in different light conditions, an accomplished teacher might invite family or community members to share how they use their knowledge of plants as they experiment and create hybrid varieties.

Accomplished teachers understand the similarities and differences between engineering design and scientific inquiry. They show their students that technology and engineering employ scientific principles to create products and processes that meet human and environmental needs. For example, when discussing reliance on the limited supply of fossil fuels, students may employ the design process to develop innovative ways to address the problem. Accomplished teachers are resourceful and mindful of environmental issues. They are adept at creating learning experiences that show students their dependence on, and relationship with, their communities and the natural environment. For instance, they may have students investigate changing air and water quality and create solutions to problems based on inquiry and the use of critical thinking skills. Teachers help students investigate, understand, and learn about community and environmental stewardship.

Using their knowledge of child development as well as an understanding of content in all curriculum areas, middle childhood generalists employ many strategies and techniques to facilitate scientific learning. Experiences such as these not only tap into students' natural curiosity of the world and how it works, but also help these future stewards of the natural and technological world explore, understand, and contribute meaningful ideas and advancements.

## Social Studies

Accomplished teachers have a strong foundation in the many disciplines that comprise social studies, such as civics, economics, geography, and history. They understand that social studies interconnects these disciplines to provide students with a broad basis for critical investigation and that this foundation will later enable students to pursue specific disciplines in greater depth. Each discipline represents its own area of knowledge based on research, theories, methods, themes, and concepts. Accomplished teachers understand that social studies is a core content area that interweaves these disciplines and presents students with a common means of understanding the human and physical worlds. They demonstrate their ability and skill to teach social studies by designing lessons that incorporate and interweave the disciplines. These lessons challenge students to build their knowledge and engage in higher level thinking.

Accomplished teachers understand the major issues, concepts, and themes in social studies, such as culture, technology and society, and global connections. They are also aware of the current issues and events in their communities, nation, and world. Teachers design lessons that require students to employ critical thinking skills as they gain an appreciation of these topics. Using available technology helps to make global connections possible. An accomplished teacher might collaborate with an English language teacher from Germany to conduct videoconferences between classes, thus providing students with opportunities to engage in dialogue with a peer group from another culture. Local resources can also help social studies concepts come to life. Teaching the economic concept of scarcity becomes tangible, for example, when a teacher has five water bottles for a class of twenty. How should the water be divided among the students? What is the value of each bottle? Is it the same for



every student? These are the types of questions that students might pursue in small and large group discussions. Accomplished teachers use their content knowledge to structure meaningful lessons and simulations for their students. They make sound curricular choices and design compelling instructional activities so that students may become informed, critical, and questioning citizens engaged in a global society.

Accomplished teachers realize that lessons become powerful when students can make connections to their surroundings, world events, and cultural environment. Teachers connect abstract concepts with concrete, real-world experiences. For example, after discussing the United States Bill of Rights, students could develop a children's bill of rights. When participating in discussion groups to determine which rights should be addressed, students may share personal opinions and learn to listen respectfully to the opinions of others. Further inquiry might require students to use their research skills to find the published version of The Children's Bill of Rights and compare this document to the one they have created. Acknowledging the viewpoints of others and respecting their rights are crucial responsibilities for a democratic citizenry.

Accomplished teachers use secondary sources such as textbooks, political cartoons, online stories, and magazine articles for students to acquire new knowledge and information, draw conclusions, assess perspectives, and think critically. They also use primary sources such as autobiographies, memoirs, oral histories, diaries, photographs, cultural artifacts, and other creative work to engage students in learning. For example, an accomplished teacher might have students listen to audio-recorded slave narratives from the National Archives while studying the Civil War. After a unit on immigration, another teacher may ask students to choose countries or cultures with which they identify and share the reasons for their connections. A student might decide to share a story related to Japanese heritage and describe the journey that student's parents took to reach the United States; this student might also bring photographs and artifacts from home to help illustrate this culture's influence on the student's life. These activities demonstrate personal connections to humanity's ongoing challenges and conflicts.

As accomplished teachers guide students through tasks such as recognizing propaganda and bias or discerning fact from opinion, they have them integrate skills like organizing, interpreting, critiquing, analyzing, and synthesizing across curricula to promote strong social studies programs. When studying world cultures, teachers may choose to read non-fiction picture books aloud and have students take notes on newly learned facts before writing an expository essay that incorporates previously learned knowledge as well. To extend this activity, students could analyze websites for bias and present their findings by creating products such as editorial responses that use appropriate citations.

Recognizing that social studies relates the social sciences with the humanities, accomplished teachers often extend student inquiries into the arts, religion, philosophy, science, and technology. This interweaving of subjects creates a stimulating environment. Students may address current and future global challenges while examining the dynamic interaction of human beings and their ethical dilemmas and

choices. They may be asked to write essays discussing conservation efforts around the world and offer their opinions on the most economically effective measures, using their social studies, science, and mathematics knowledge. Accomplished teachers create opportunities for students to use their information processing skills across curricula to increase their students' social science vocabulary, ability to read, critical thinking skills, and effective use of technology.

Accomplished teachers create integrated lessons to help students build a foundation of facts and information for their exploration of social studies. With an acknowledgement of their biases and perspectives, teachers design activities that encourage respect for opposing points of view, appreciation of well-supported opinions, sensitivity to cultural differences, and commitment to the social welfare of communities. Teachers link new content with pre-existing knowledge and beliefs to help students make connections across curricula. They develop activities that encourage community involvement through which students may apply their knowledge to current, local issues. They provide experiences that feature active learning in small group settings to stimulate student interaction and collaboration. Accomplished teachers provide students with opportunities to develop a sense of belonging and heighten their awareness of the multicultural world in which they live so they may become engaged and empowered citizens.

## The Arts

Accomplished teachers understand the intrinsic value of the arts and their usefulness in gaining insight into other disciplines. Dance, music, theater, and the visual arts individually and collectively contribute to the stimulation of imagination and cognitive growth while providing vehicles for creative expression. Teachers understand that the arts represent a unique human endeavor that enriches students' artistic heritages, tastes, and creativity, while nurturing divergent thinking and an appreciation for various forms of expression. They know that teaching about and through the arts helps students develop knowledge and skill sets that can challenge, expand, and enhance their lives; teachers include the arts in their classrooms for the aesthetic, intellectual, and perceptual value they offer. By including the arts on their own, with the help of subject-area specialists, or through available community resources, middle childhood generalists foster a thoughtful and interactive learning environment. They know that involvement in the arts will develop their students' thought processes, deepen their understanding of other academic areas, and promote their understanding of different cultures.

Accomplished teachers are willing to take risks to create environments that nurture their students' individual expression of, and experimentation with, the arts. Teachers may share their personal artistic perspectives with students as they provide them with the opportunities, resources, and encouragement they need to explore their emerging tastes. Teachers recognize the value of the arts in bringing pleasure, enthusiasm, and heightened motivation to their students. They help students develop skills in the arts for their inherent creative value and as a means of communicating about interests and issues important to them. They guide students in forming an

appreciation of aesthetic values and the social and global uses of the arts by drawing attention to similarities and differences in major ideas and themes. For example, to enhance a comparative literature unit on Cinderella stories from various cultures, an accomplished teacher might ask students to develop and perform a play to demonstrate a version of the tale they have written themselves. Teachers understand that the arts can offer a helpful way of assessing students' academic skills and abilities.

Accomplished teachers help students extend their study of other subject areas in creative and critical manners. They relate content to the arts and have students engage in various learning modalities by interpreting subject matter using alternative forms of expression. For example, teachers may provide students with opportunities to create visual poetry from typographical word arrangements or perform a kinesthetic representation or pantomime of plant growth from seed to maturity. To emphasize their students' understanding of other content area concepts, teachers might examine the relationship between mathematics and music by comparing metric beats with fractions or the similarities of pattern development in tessellations and the architectural wall renderings of the Alhambra in Granada, Spain. Accomplished teachers know that creating, critiquing, and evaluating in and through the arts help students interconnect the world they live in with more clarity. They also know that these experiences bridge the transfer of knowledge and understanding from one content area to the other through the integration that is facilitated by the arts and their connections to the global community that surrounds them.

## Health and Wellness

Accomplished teachers understand that a comprehensive health education program encompasses the many components of wellness, taking into account students' social, physical, emotional, and intellectual well-being. These teachers advocate for and create safe and healthy learning environments, which may include access to water, hand washing before meals, healthy snacks, bully-free zones, and frequent physical activity breaks. Teachers create innovative opportunities for students to develop and practice health-enhancing skills through daily routines such as regular exercise, nutritious eating, conflict management, and the maintenance of positive interpersonal relationships. For example, they may have students move throughout the school environment in creative ways—instead of simply walking, they may hop or skip to use different muscle groups. Teachers may also show students how to manage conflict by using techniques such as “I-messages” to express feelings. They may have students manage their stress by learning strategies such as removing themselves from stressful situations, breathing deeply, taking walks, getting water, or speaking about their conflicts. Teachers also recognize that organizing time and resources can help students manage work-related stress.

Accomplished teachers are aware of the distinction between physical activity and physical education. They recognize that children need breaks from sedentary activities in the classroom. They plan activities that help develop students' motor skills so that students can enjoy physical activity and move toward health-enhancing



levels of physical fitness. For example, teachers may have students move around the learning environment throughout the school day, incorporating frequent activity breaks or transitions such as walking around desks, stretching to music, or running in place. Teachers may also integrate physical activity into subject content, for example, by having students use their bodies to demonstrate shapes or angles. Middle childhood generalists understand that children with physical challenges must work with specialists to address their specific needs. They also recognize that kinesthetic experiences and regular physical activity enhance academic achievement.

Accomplished teachers understand the foundations of good health, including the structure and function of the body and its systems and the importance of physical fitness and healthy eating habits. They know that the amount and type of physical activity that children require daily is critical to the maintenance of a healthy lifestyle. Based on this knowledge, they may have students wear pedometers or heart rate monitors to collect data regarding their physical activity; teachers may then have students record their physical activity minutes and create graphs, charts, or journal entries to track their performance and support discussion during mathematical or scientific activities. Similarly, accomplished teachers may have students talk about the number of fruits and vegetables they eat daily to think critically about whether their diet includes healthy foods. Teachers incorporate an awareness of healthy habits while engaging their students meaningfully in classroom activities across a range of subject areas.

Accomplished teachers help students understand that a healthy lifestyle is affected by the habits they develop and the personal choices they make. They may use children's fiction and nonfiction or other materials, such as stories, pamphlets, or nutritional labels, to discuss health issues such as friendship, bullying, or nutritional choices. Teachers are alert to major health issues affecting children and the social forces that influence them; they are particularly aware of the need to impart this type of information sensitively. Accomplished teachers establish safe learning environments for students to explore these health topics. They address issues in ways that help students understand internal and external influences, recognize potentially dangerous situations, clarify misconceptions, find reliable sources of information, make informed decisions, and set personal goals. Teachers may provide opportunities for positive peer pressure when role playing situations regarding the possible use of tobacco or alcohol—or when exploring the dynamics of bullying. Accomplished teachers present good health practices as an immediate and vital part of building lifelong habits they encourage students to adopt.

# Standard V

## Instructional Decision Making

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Accomplished teachers are effective instructional decision makers. They use a process of assessing, planning, implementing, and reflecting to guide teaching and learning.

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### Introduction

Accomplished middle childhood generalists engage students within their schools and communities to build an awareness of their learning needs and determine how instruction can support these needs. The more teachers learn about their students, the more they can tailor the social, emotional, and intellectual components of their instruction to inspire students. The broad knowledge of curricula and pedagogy that middle childhood generalists have provides them with a number of resources and research-based strategies. As they differentiate instruction and maximize students' learning, they ensure that they honor the ways students make meaning. Accomplished teachers motivate and empower students so they can become confident and independent thinkers using multiple pathways to success.

Accomplished teachers routinely use formal and informal assessments to gather information about what their students are learning and how they are learning it. They use data to evaluate the effectiveness of their instructional decisions and adjust their practice as needed for the success of all students. Teachers share feedback with students and their families to help students take ownership of their education and establish appropriate goals for learning. Accomplished teachers know that thoughtful reflection sets the stage for the advancement of their students' growth and their own professional growth.

### Engaging Students

Accomplished teachers engage students to construct meaning and build an understanding of subject matter. They help students realize that what they learn in one context may transfer to others and can extend beyond traditional subject, disciplinary, or classroom boundaries. Teachers achieve this goal by planning learning experiences that include multiple forms of representation, varied interpretation, critical reasoning, and personal reflection. These learning tasks broaden students' inquiry, questioning, and deliberation skills so that they consider the world they live in with a greater level of insight and engagement. This type of meaningful, student-centered learning occurs when teachers guide students through experiences that challenge their perspectives, knowledge, abilities, understandings, and dispositions.

Accomplished teachers are adept at using responsive instruction to address the diverse needs of students in their classrooms. They make purposeful efforts to become acquainted with students and their families. These teachers also share their own interests and motivations, modeling active involvement in learning while building trust and personal connections with their students. Attuned to each student's uniqueness, teachers design activities with careful consideration of students' strengths, interests, and individual learning preferences to support the learning needs of all students. (See [Standard I—Knowledge of Students](#).)

Accomplished teachers make learning interactive, challenging, and enjoyable by providing the accommodations and support systems that students need to be successful. They adapt their lessons to address unforeseen developments or to pursue the enriching, rewarding paths opened by class discussion. They vary their instructional approach based on students' dialogue, performances, or understandings and misconceptions; they adjust the pace, structure, and focus of instruction according to the needs of students. For example, an accomplished teacher may determine that a question posed by a student about a subject being discussed, while not directly related to the discussion, could present an opportunity to expand the topic in a meaningful way; that teacher may allow the discussion to shift in this new, unanticipated direction. An accomplished teacher purposefully incorporates learning activities that allow students to move around when they have been sitting for a lengthy period of time. The flexibility generated by varied approaches creates a classroom climate that empowers students to think about how they learn and what they can do to improve how they synthesize the knowledge that they gain. These experiences also help students take ownership of their learning and become independent thinkers who know what they must do to grow and thrive.

Accomplished teachers provide students with opportunities to confront and solve challenging instructional tasks. They foster problem solving, creative thinking, and open-mindedness to help students understand that finding the answer to a problem, correct or otherwise, is not always as important as the process of reaching the solution. These experiences stimulate thinking by requiring students to extend and expand their knowledge and reasoning.

Accomplished teachers make instructional decisions based on their assessment of the social, physical, emotional, and intellectual needs of their students. They gain knowledge and understanding of their students that informs the content they teach and the pedagogical approaches they use to motivate students. Teachers employ various approaches to topics, themes, concepts, and skills to change the pace of instruction and modify it in response to students' needs and performances. They continuously adjust their instruction to expand opportunities for students and establish learning that nurtures and supports students' individual strengths. By respecting the uniqueness of their students and establishing high expectations, accomplished teachers increase the engagement of all students in the learning process.

## Planning and Implementing Instruction

Accomplished teachers plan and implement instruction to meet the needs of all students, including students with exceptional needs or language learners. They consider learning goals; the use of appropriate instructional resources; the selection of worthwhile, engaging, and challenging topics; and the employment of effective instructional strategies to develop students' skills and dispositions.

Accomplished teachers are skilled at selecting instructional resources thoughtfully from the wide variety available. When choosing materials, they seek instructional contexts that reflect the diversity of their classrooms while making connections between their students' lives and those of people in local and global communities. Teachers select materials that vary in several ways, including form, style, content, and point of view, to appeal to students with different backgrounds, abilities, and interests. Teachers adapt these resources as needed or seek new ones to engage all their students. They explore current and available technology as well. For instance, a teacher might display a virtual manipulative to provide a visual representation of fractions as part of a region, set, array, area model, or number line. Teachers integrate technology to investigate topics with their students in a broad manner that extends instruction in exciting and interesting ways.

Accomplished teachers share their talents and resources as they collaborate with colleagues and stakeholders in instructional planning, design, and delivery. Other educators with specific areas of expertise may serve as consultants, sharing information about a particular content area or insights on the personal histories of students, or by providing suggestions for other types of resources and strategies. For example, a middle childhood generalist may work with an exceptional needs teacher to determine the most effective teaching strategies and text modifications for a child with a learning disability. Accomplished teachers are adept at managing additional classroom personnel, such as instructional assistants and volunteers, to provide students with more individualized attention and meet the needs of all learners. Viewing the local community as an extension of the classroom, teachers may invite families and community members, agencies, colleges and universities, or businesses to help enrich curricula and enhance student learning. For example, a teacher may collaborate with the school library/media specialist or community librarian to instruct students in the use of primary sources during research; the teacher may also invite local veterans or senior citizens to share their experiences so that students can conduct interviews and create digital artifacts for future projects. Teachers understand the power of collaboration to extend teaching and learning beyond their classrooms and to build capacity in their colleagues as well as in their students. (See [Standard VI—Partnership and Outreach](#).)

Accomplished teachers select worthwhile topics for study based on their students' needs and interests, as well as curricular expectations. Teachers do not view curricula as limiting to their practice; they instead incorporate related topics and issues to extend their students' thinking, knowledge, and understanding of how the curricular goal or expectation relates to the world beyond the classroom. Middle childhood generalists understand that meaningful learning occurs when students

delve deeply into relevant topics that draw on their conceptual understandings, skills, and experiences with different content areas. They plan cross-curricular learning experiences that help students understand the interconnectedness of various disciplines. Teachers may present authentic opportunities for students to experience working as, and with, artists, scientists, or other experts. For example, a teacher might link a scientist's study of current environmental challenges to particular concepts, skills, and understandings in science, mathematics and social studies. This type of curricular integration develops students' capacities to think critically and analytically while extending their knowledge and understanding of the world. Accomplished teachers consider the needs and abilities of students so that the topic of study becomes meaningful for each student. For instance, during a unit on woodland forests, a teacher recognizing the differing interests and abilities of students in the classroom may have the class identify and describe plant life in the forest while allowing one student to research the impact of acid rain on the forest ecosystem and share this study with the class. Accomplished teachers recognize the enriching opportunities that this type of differentiated instruction offers all students.

Accomplished teachers choose from a wide repertoire of pedagogical strategies to plan instruction that addresses a range of classroom needs. They provide learning activities that address the breadth, depth, novelty, and complexity of subject area content and become more challenging as students gain confidence, reach expected levels of proficiency, and mature. Further, teachers differentiate content, process, and product in ways that are appropriate to subject matter as well as to students' strengths and needs. Teachers may lead the class as a whole or encourage small groups and individuals to explore on their own at times. They alter their instructional approach based on their students' current progress toward their learning goals. For example, teachers may use demonstrations to inspire new ways of thinking; they may use direct instruction to facilitate skill learning; or they may use cooperative group work and discussion to foster creative thinking and open-mindedness.

Accomplished teachers plan for and structure learning tasks that encourage inquiry and require students to explain their thinking. They address students' confusion and misconceptions as they build their students' capacity to construct important ideas. To promote independence and help students gain confidence in their ability to solve problems, teachers encourage them to challenge assumptions, take risks, initiate projects and activities, share insights, explore the use of unfamiliar technologies, and persist in the exploration of new or challenging material. Teachers provide students with opportunities to reflect on their thinking and learning by giving them feedback gained from a number of sources, including rubrics, peer review, and personal commentaries from stakeholders and educators. These types of responses allow students to measure their work against established criteria in, and beyond, the classroom, helping them improve their future efforts. Accomplished teachers model learning as a life-long process and encourage students when they are on unfamiliar ground. They not only plan for and teach important concepts, skills, and ideas, but also demonstrate thinking processes, problem solving, and creative thinking.

## Using Assessment to Inform Instruction

Data and related information generated from formal and informal assessments represent an integral component of instructional decision making. Accomplished teachers use information from a variety of pre-assessments, as well as formative and summative assessments, to monitor students' learning and guide planning and instruction. They use assessments to analyze students' readiness, evaluate students' performances, interpret students' understandings, determine students' progress, and inform their professional practice in general. Knowing that each assessment provides different kinds of information about students, accomplished teachers carefully match the type of assessment to the knowledge and skills being assessed and to the purpose of the assessment, bearing in mind the abilities and developmental needs of their students.

Accomplished teachers analyze the assessment data they collect based on the instructional needs of their students and classes. They study assessment results and related data independently and collaboratively within and across grade levels, with students, teaching colleagues, team leaders, school administrators, and, where appropriate, with family members. This layered analysis helps teachers identify issues for individuals and groups of students to recognize trends in the data and support the educational choices they make in the classroom. They also may use assessment results to identify students with previously unrecognized learning or language problems or students with a high aptitude for learning while simultaneously monitoring the progress of all students. They develop instructional plans to improve student learning and modify those plans as needed. Accomplished teachers know the benefits and limitations of different methods of assessment and can justify the assessments and assessment procedures they select for their classes, including those employed for students with exceptional needs.

Accomplished teachers recognize the important role of formative assessment in their daily instruction, carefully monitoring students' progress and modifying instruction as needed. For example, a teacher may pre-assess students' knowledge and skills at the beginning of a unit of study or instructional period when making instructional decisions appropriate for the class. Observation of students as they engage in the learning process constitutes another critical opportunity for formative assessment. Accomplished teachers use observation to determine students' involvement in lessons, the level of success they attain, and whether an intervention should be employed to address misconceptions or lack of prerequisite skills. Classroom conversations and interviews in which individual students or groups of students discuss their thinking also offer valuable forms of formative assessment. Accomplished teachers recognize that formal and informal conversations with families are significant components of the assessment process, while routine classroom activities such as homework, student notebooks and journals, quizzes, portfolios, projects, and digitally-created artifacts provide other options for assessing students' understanding, expressiveness, and progress in relation to learning behaviors and curricular expectations.

Accomplished teachers assess as they teach. They observe students and ask different types of questions, noting when some children are more engaged than



others. Teachers analyze multiple indicators of their students' behavior to track the success of lessons and modify instruction as needed. Teachers know students, content, and pedagogy well enough to appreciate when a lesson is not working or when students do not understand a concept; these teachers will modify or adjust instruction and approach concepts in a different manner to generate greater student success. Middle childhood generalists also show students how to use evidence generated from each learning experience to determine what they need or how they might adjust their own approaches to learning to experience greater success. In short, accomplished teachers know that formative assessment generates evidence that guides their instructional paths and their students' learning daily. The data and related information they gather on the progress of individuals, groups of students, and the class as a whole allows them to evaluate the relative success of their students and their instructional strategies and serves as a guide for improving their practice.

Accomplished teachers know, understand, and appreciate the benefits and limitations of using formative and summative assessment to assist in planning and instruction. This knowledge allows them to engage in informed discussions with students, colleagues, and families. Teachers know the importance of providing prompt constructive feedback and explicit evaluation criteria so that students can learn about their growth, development, and progress. For example, an accomplished teacher may involve students in developing the criteria for a scoring guide and review assessment data with them as well to help students establish learning goals. Teachers recognize that students who reflect on their own learning are better able to set manageable goals and develop habits that help them become more successful learners.

Formative and summative data can support an understanding of individual student performance and curricular decision making, as well as careful reflection on instructional practice. If, for example, over half the students in a grade level were unsuccessful on a state summative assessment item measuring the comparison of fractions using a number line, it would be helpful to discuss the types and amount of instruction that students received on using the number line, what changes might be needed, and the extent to which they were, and may currently be, comfortable using this representation to compare fractions. Accomplished teachers analyze data by examining how their students, schools, or districts fare from a comparative perspective; by identifying targets for improving students' progress; and by determining strategies that can be implemented to assist students. They use the analysis of assessment data to gauge students' achievement, recognizing that assessments are tools created not only for measuring students' learning, but also for guiding and supporting instruction.

Accomplished teachers help develop and implement individualized education and Section 504 plans, working cooperatively with various staff members to provide accommodations and modifications for students with exceptional needs. Teachers realize that students' needs differ and that accommodations for assessments are essential, though standardized and modified tests may be assessing similar skills. For example, an accomplished teacher may create a mathematics word problem for



use as a formative assessment, then realize that a student with a reading disability may encounter difficulties demonstrating proficiency in the mathematical skill being measured. The teacher would then modify the mathematical problem by lowering its readability to the student's instructional level so that the question measures the student's mathematical skills rather than reading skills. When modifying assessments or providing additional accommodations to meet students' needs, accomplished teachers may seek additional resources from other staff members.

## Reflecting on Instructional Decision Making

Accomplished teachers appreciate the value of reflection, recognizing that a deliberate study of their practice optimizes their instructional decision making. These teachers know that by undertaking this purposeful and highly individual process of self-analysis, they gain greater insight into the significance of their choices and the impact that these choices have on students' learning. Teachers recognize that their in-depth and focused efforts to review and refine their practice before, during, and after instruction help them make informed decisions about their teaching. These decisions take into consideration the engagement of students, the planning and delivery of instruction, and the utility of different assessments. Careful reflection helps accomplished teachers improve students' performances and the quality of learning experiences.

Accomplished teachers are adept at analyzing and evaluating how well-selected events and planned interactions meet their intended purposes. They are skilled at determining the degree to which their decisions sustain and support progress in students' learning by creating rich and effective educational experiences. Middle childhood generalists contemplate methods to improve upon their successes, continually considering how additional resources, knowledge, or support could further enhance each student's learning experience and each lesson's usefulness. They reflect with purpose to determine the effectiveness of their instructional decision making and to identify steps they might take to maintain success and promote their students' development. Through reflection, teachers identify, analyze, and evaluate decisions they make about learning experiences. Accomplished teachers know that their actions, whether implicit or explicit, influence their students' classroom experiences and ability to learn.

# Standard VI

## Partnership and Outreach

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Accomplished teachers establish and maintain partnerships with families and the greater community to enhance teaching and support student learning.

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### Introduction

Accomplished middle childhood generalists actively seek to involve families and community members in the educational process. When necessary and as appropriate, teachers assist families by serving as advocates and promoting their interests within schools. They keep families informed regarding their children's progress and collaborate with families purposefully to build relationships that will support, motivate, and improve students' learning. In addition, teachers understand the importance of working with members of their local and larger communities to enrich curricula and classroom learning by presenting students with various viewpoints and experiences. They know the significance of providing meaningful opportunities for students to contribute to their communities.

### Partnerships with Families

Accomplished teachers realize that gaining an understanding of their students' lives outside the school is critical to planning instruction and implementing curricula within the school. Through ongoing and varied interactions with parents, teachers learn about students' backgrounds and cultures while establishing a rapport with their families. Teachers may assist families in finding additional resources, specialists, and services inside and outside the school, such as health care, English-language classes, or counseling. They realize that this type of guidance can be invaluable when one or more family members need professional help. Middle childhood generalists strive to become allies and advocates for families as they acclimate to schools and communities.

Accomplished teachers recognize that effective communication is integral to the creation of positive working relationships between parents and teachers. Sensitive to different family structures and changing dynamics, teachers carefully employ varying methods of communication, using translations or interpreters as needed, to impart, exchange, and receive information that is meaningful for teachers and for families. Middle childhood generalists establish and maintain open lines of communication using multiple strategies to help parents feel welcomed. They work to develop trusting

relationships in which parents see themselves as equal partners in their children's education.

Accomplished teachers make good use of opportunities to gather and share information about their students. For instance, teachers may lead school events such as math nights or fund-raising fairs to have parents and students actively participate in common activities. Teachers may also schedule parent meetings or evening workshops to explain school objectives and gain feedback on parents' expectations. When discussing students' work, accomplished teachers help parents understand curricular expectations and assessment data, providing parents with snapshots of their children's social, emotional, and academic progress. Teachers invite parents to be volunteers in the classroom and provide strategies for working with students at home. They see collaboration with families as an essential way of providing the support, motivation, and understanding that will enhance students' education. (See [Standard III—Establishing an Environment for Learning](#).)

Accomplished teachers recognize that parents have expertise and insights that can enrich the quality of students' learning. Parents are often keen observers and accurate reporters of their children's strengths and needs. They have a continuing and critical influence on their children's development and attitudes toward school and learning. Teachers treat parents with respect and understanding as they elicit perspectives on students' development. While so doing, accomplished teachers recognize that families often have differing views about the goals and public purposes of schooling and the essentials of good practice. Teachers seek common ground with all parents, attempting to build relationships that will best serve students' interests. Accomplished teachers know how to learn from parents and help them promote their children's growth. If the participation of families has diminished, teachers find respectful ways to reengage these families. They invite parents to the school and ensure that families feel included within school outreach. Teachers help students and families understand that student effort and family support are directly related to student performance at all levels. The actions of middle childhood generalists clearly indicate that teachers and families share a mutual interest in seeing their children succeed.

## Partnerships with the Greater Community

Accomplished teachers understand that the knowledge, skills, and strategies that students learn in school help prepare them for their roles in the world at large. Teachers therefore emphasize the significance of building their students' capacity to identify and address the needs evident within their communities. They work with students to apply strategies such as collaboration, conflict resolution, and productive debate to community issues. They show students how to maintain sensitivity to multiple perspectives and viewpoints, as well as various cultures, while communicating in a variety of ways, such as by writing letters or meeting virtually via satellite links. Middle childhood generalists are adept at connecting students with the greater community, present or virtual.

Accomplished teachers know that when students have an opportunity to give back to their communities, they gain a new appreciation for the skills they learn and the knowledge they acquire. Students come to value partnership and outreach and may seek similar opportunities on their own or in the future. Through activities such as service learning and volunteering, teachers provide real-world experiences that allow students to see and understand the roles they can play in sustaining and improving local and global communities. For example, a teacher might engage students in research on people without permanent housing before having them organize a food drive in partnership with a local soup kitchen. Outreach experiences like this not only offer students the opportunity to exercise their problem-solving skills, but also show them the significance of becoming involved within their communities.

Accomplished teachers know that students and their families are part of the larger communities in which they live. Teachers see these communities as extensions of schools and classrooms, and they recognize the importance of using community resources that students value. Teachers take advantage of cultural, economic, and physical assets by actively recruiting parents and community members, agencies, universities, or businesses to become involved in classroom or school programs. By partnering with these groups, teachers enhance curricula and extend students' learning and development. These opportunities enrich students' knowledge with the benefit of exposure to multiple perspectives and help teachers develop strong connections between schools, families, and communities.

# Standard VII

## Professionalism, Leadership, and Advocacy

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Accomplished teachers are leaders who advocate for the teaching profession and student learning.

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### Introduction

Accomplished middle childhood generalists possess a positive outlook; a strong work ethic; and a willingness to change, learn, and grow. They lead by example, understanding that continued reflection and perseverance represents an integral component of professional teaching behavior. Their advocacy for students and the profession is evident from their leadership within the classroom and throughout larger communities.

Accomplished teachers are critical and creative thinkers with the discipline to put ideas into practice. They stay current, read journals, attend professional presentations, and integrate life experiences in classroom learning. These teachers may write articles or review manuscripts for journals, present at conferences, network professionally, write grants for innovative ways to facilitate students' learning, lead grade-level or curriculum meetings, or hold offices in professional organizations while actively participating in the improvement of teaching and learning.

Accomplished teachers accept responsibility for improving their practice and the teaching profession on a continual basis. They are open to considering new and creative ideas related to their profession and reflect on these ideas, refining their practice as needed. They share content and pedagogical knowledge with their peers. Accomplished teachers care deeply about their students, their colleagues, and their profession.

### Demonstrating Professional Responsibility

Accomplished teachers are leaders in their profession and community and see themselves as positive forces for meaningful change. They engage with, and invite critique from, the broader educational community, working with educators from colleges, universities, and other institutions or agencies. To advance their profession, these teachers may pilot programs, pursue their own research initiatives, conduct action research projects, teach postsecondary courses, or mentor student teachers and interns to promote best practices. They serve as peer coaches to student

teachers, new teachers, or experienced colleagues, and seek opportunities to receive similar feedback on their own teaching. They may work with virtual coaches to improve their practice or extend their content knowledge. These teachers collaborate with colleagues to design, improve, or evaluate staff development plans and practices. To improve school policies, organization, or procedures, they may work on projects with other educators or community members; they may also search for, or even create, opportunities to serve on local, regional, or national committees. Middle childhood generalists encourage and promote a variety of learning initiatives to improve instruction and influence school reform in their communities and beyond.

Accomplished teachers solve problems in a creative and proactive manner. When resources to develop and maintain initiatives are unavailable, they look for alternative paths to acquire materials and financial support through grant-writing or other sponsorship opportunities. They understand that conflict and debate frequently represent necessary components of instructional and institutional improvement. Undaunted, they engage in these processes in a positive manner, conducting themselves professionally while putting students' needs at the forefront. Whether they are working alone or in groups, accomplished teachers may promote change in innovative or divergent ways, thinking outside traditional boundaries to achieve the best possible results for their students and colleagues.

Accomplished teachers are reflective practitioners who demonstrate integrity and strive for excellence. They know their practice and possess the skills and abilities to demonstrate their expertise, seeing themselves as members of larger learning communities with responsibilities that extend beyond their classrooms. Because they are actively involved in their professional culture, they are committed to the continued growth and development of their schools, colleagues, and profession, as well as themselves. Their use of appropriate technology in teaching and learning expands their professional knowledge and outreach to education professionals, parents, and other stakeholders as they endeavor to improve the educational experiences of all students. For example, when accomplished teachers become aware of innovative practices in their schools or districts, they may seek professional development experiences, virtual or face-to-face, to understand better the complexity of these practices as well as the current and potential connections the practices may hold for their schools and communities. These teachers skillfully collaborate and coordinate their activities with those of other faculty members such as counselors, library media specialists, and resource teachers to ensure that all students' needs are met. When encountering abused or neglected children, they seek the help of their colleagues and the community to act constructively to protect their students. Accomplished teachers seek out other educators to understand and improve the scope and sequence of instruction so that middle childhood students experience a successful transition to the early adolescent level. In so doing, these teachers help ensure their students' greatest possible chance for success.

## Advocating for the Teaching Profession

For accomplished teachers, advocacy entails raising awareness of the importance of education as well as improving the teaching and learning resources and opportunities for students in their classroom, their school, and beyond. By reading professional journals, networking with teaching colleagues, and becoming members of professional organizations, teachers stay informed of policy initiatives that impact their profession. This knowledge includes an awareness of proposed changes at the school, district, state, regional, and federal levels. Teachers are aware of important contacts within their school systems as well as political contacts locally, regionally, and nationally; they use these contacts, when appropriate, to improve teaching and learning.

Accomplished teachers highlight issues articulately and take action accordingly, changing ideas into reality through inclusive engagement that proposes solutions. For example, they might offer forums in which students, parents, community members, teachers, and administrators use creative problem solving and discourse to address current school or community issues. The advocacy of accomplished teachers is respected because of their knowledge of the field, as well as current and proposed initiatives related to their work. They recognize the importance of their role as advocates for children, learning, curricula, and their profession. They know that when they take action, their voices can lead to the development of practices and policies that benefit other teachers, students, and society. They actively influence professional norms in their schools, encouraging an attitude of exploration, innovation, and collaboration with their colleagues.



# Standard VIII

## Responsiveness to Change

Accomplished teachers are cognizant of the changes that occur in society and in education. They thoughtfully and proactively analyze and respond to change as it affects their students and their profession.

### Introduction

In a dynamic world, the survival and success of individuals depends on their ability to monitor changes and adjust their responses strategically. Accomplished middle childhood generalists respond to this challenge by adapting their teaching practices to meet changes in content and curricula, technological innovations, school environments, and educational policies, as well as in students and communities. These teachers understand that change takes place on a continual basis, and they address change proactively and responsibly. Teachers do so not only to fulfill professional goals and obligations, but also to meet the imperative of creating successful, adaptive life-long learners. Accomplished teachers model positive dispositions as they anticipate, accept, and address change.

### Content and Curricula

Accomplished teachers understand that content and curricula are continually evolving, and they incorporate changes into their planning and instruction appropriately. For instance, changes in mathematics curricula during middle childhood have resulted in the introduction of rational number and algebra concepts formerly introduced during early adolescence. Teachers modify their instructional strategies to meet the current needs of their students as well, aware that students' interests and perceptiveness, technology use, and cultural environments are ever-changing. These teachers study prevailing theories, emerging practices, and current research findings, selecting ideas and techniques that could improve their practice before implementing these resources through action plans, professional development, and research projects. By so doing, they explore topics in which they may have previously had limited expertise. (See [Standard IV—Knowledge of Content and Curriculum](#).)

Accomplished teachers recognize that as content and curricula change, so must assessment strategies. They know that the primary purpose of formative and summative assessments is to measure students' knowledge of content and inform pedagogy. They use a variety of assessments because they know that learning must be supported using varied content and pedagogical approaches. Teachers provide

multiple avenues and opportunities for students to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding that students' performances can be influenced by a number of factors, such as testing environment or assessment format. Teachers are willing to create and incorporate new methods of assessment in their repertoires to maintain a valid and reliable correlation between content and assessment. (See [Standard V—Instructional Decision Making](#).)

## Technology

Accomplished teachers recognize that the increasing availability of digital information and the steady shift toward a global society have increased the pace at which information and knowledge are transmitted and received. Teachers utilize online learning environments as a resource for enhancing their professional development. They strive to advance their technological skills as they remain attuned to the use of technology by their students, the profession, and the surrounding world. Teachers might employ technology, for example, to support student investigation of renewable resources by having students study how people protect the environment in other states or countries; in this instance, Web-based meetings might create opportunities for students to collaborate with their peers in other parts of the state, country, or world. Teachers view technological skills as an asset to enhance learning and a means of connecting with students and others using real-world applications and experiences.

Accomplished teachers show students how to use technology critically and effectively because their interaction with it influences how they process information and communicate with others. Voice, demeanor, and their relationship to other individuals change based on the means and modes of communication that students employ. Teachers might have students engage in different interpersonal exchanges so they become as adept communicating face-to-face as they are in virtual spaces. Each setting offers students a form of immediacy they need to negotiate, be it the rapid relay of information during text messaging or the changing expression of body language during personal conversations.

Accomplished teachers address the responsibilities as well as the advantages of technological literacy by discussing the ramifications of sharing and exchanging information digitally. They consistently advocate safe and ethical ways of using technological resources. Throughout instruction, teachers remain sensitive to their students' varying levels of technological proficiency, understanding that their experiences and opportunities to engage with technology may differ. Teachers take these differences into consideration when planning lessons that involve the use of existing or emerging digital tools. They may vary the technologies they employ during different activities. For example, to share school news, students might create a digital newsletter, deliver the news over an electronic broadcast, or create videos to document school and community events. The method used would reflect students' needs as well as school resources.

Accomplished teachers act as positive role models for their students and for their colleagues by sharing their knowledge of emerging technologies. They know that the effective use of tools such as interactive white boards, student response systems, document cameras, and personal electronic devices has the potential to engage students and augment instruction. Similarly, they understand that assistive technologies such as voice recognition software and sound amplification systems can be used to adapt materials and activities to meet the needs of individual students. Accomplished teachers learn from, and teach their colleagues about, the ways that these technologies can help differentiate instruction and maximize student learning.

## School Environments

Accomplished teachers adapt to changes throughout the school environment. They adjust to alterations in school personnel, organization, and policies to provide continuity to the educational services offered in the classroom. These modifications may include changes in procedures, funding levels, curriculum, teaching and assessment tools, data collection, the student population, and the physical environment. Teachers recognize that they must sometimes work with personnel who possess different attitudes and perspectives to reach a common goal, as when an accomplished teacher meets with a vertical team to ensure cross-grade alignment of curricula. In these situations, as in all others, teachers remain positive and productive.

Accomplished teachers are aware that maintaining an inclusive classroom poses a particularly critical challenge. Within their classrooms, they have increasing responsibility for addressing the multiple, varied needs of all students.

Accomplished teachers realize that they may not have all the needed strategies and solutions immediately available. They not only use their repertoire of knowledge and skills to advocate for all students and solve problems within their classrooms, but also work with colleagues to access various resources and to brainstorm possible solutions. (See [Standard VI—Partnership and Outreach](#).)

## Educational Policy

Accomplished teachers carefully review prevailing research on all aspects of their practice, remaining knowledgeable about the political contexts surrounding current policy debates in the disciplines and the profession. They develop an informed perspective on these issues, and they articulate their positions while keeping the best interests of students and the profession in mind. As new policies emerge, teachers advocate for policies that support educational excellence, and they think critically about the impact that these policies have on their classrooms.

Accomplished teachers use various informational sources to remain informed and aware of current issues related to local, state, and federal educational policies and laws. They seek avenues to voice their perspectives and help promote meaningful change. Teachers may join professional organizations and participate in education-specific social networking groups. They may also become actively involved in

school, district, state, or national educational committees. These activities empower teachers by asking them to engage in critical thinking and to become leaders who can help influence policies that advance the profession and students' learning. (See [Standard VII—Professionalism, Leadership, and Advocacy](#).)

## Students and Communities

Accomplished teachers recognize that change arises in many facets of their lives as well as in those of their students. They are cognizant of relationships and events outside their schools that can affect students' social, physical, emotional, and intellectual well-being, all of which ultimately affect their ability to learn. Because teachers are also aware that students' interests and activities change over time, they incorporate contemporary culture within their lesson plans as appropriate to keep students motivated and engaged. They understand that in an increasingly pluralistic society, their students represent a wide variety of cultures and socioeconomic groups, with different languages, traditions, and beliefs. Teachers embrace the diversity of student perspectives when planning and implementing instruction and when interacting with students.

In the classroom, accomplished teachers attune themselves to the subtle changes in students' interests, behaviors, and preferences. They understand that these changes could indicate either a critical developmental breakthrough or a significant problem requiring action. If a sudden change in behavior occurs, teachers investigate the situation by engaging students in conversation or seeking additional information from other individuals. Teachers react sensitively while demonstrating positive attitudes toward change and modeling the qualities of empathy, perseverance, flexibility, and creative problem solving. When responding to change, middle childhood generalists address student needs by adjusting their strategies, curricular materials, and assessments as needed.

Students represent an increasing array of cultures and family structures; therefore, accomplished teachers make purposeful choices when interacting with their students' families. They adapt their modes of communication based on the message and the family, carefully taking the characteristics of each family into consideration, from their structure to their practices and beliefs. A teacher may choose to communicate information to families in various ways. A newsletter in a child's home language may be effective for some families, while the use of technology or face-to-face interaction may be more effective for others. For some families, it may be more suitable to call parents or visit the home, whereas other families may value privacy and prefer a formal letter. Knowing students and their families allows teachers to make informed judgments based on what is most appropriate.

Accomplished teachers realize that change may not always be desirable or address all students' needs, but they strive to create productive solutions within the professional parameters of a middle childhood generalist. The awareness that change can bring benefits and burdens helps them respond practically and thoughtfully. Teachers know that they can be advocates for their students and, in turn, serve as

catalysts for positive change. They also recognize the significance of balance and renewal when responding to the changing demands of the profession. This sense of renewal allows accomplished teachers to share their curiosity, enthusiasm, and passion for learning with their colleagues and students.

# Standard IX

## Reflective Practice

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Accomplished teachers reflect on their practice continually to improve the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning.

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Accomplished middle childhood generalists engage in a fluid process of reflection that is cyclical in nature. They know that reflection is a deliberate, purposeful, sustained process that helps them consider aspects of their practice in a careful, analytical manner to improve teaching and learning. The National Board's Architecture of Accomplished Teaching, embraced by National Board Certified Teachers, illustrates the interrelated components of teaching addressed by this process, which focuses on students, goal setting, implementation, evaluation, reflection, and the establishment of new goals. Teachers recognize reflection as an integral process that requires critical thinking, problem solving, and decision making. They reflect independently and collaboratively with stakeholders to strengthen their content and pedagogical knowledge.

Accomplished teachers consider the influence that biases, values, and personal experiences play in teacher instruction and student learning. They understand that students' and teachers' behaviors and interactions are influenced by the complexity of a learning environment that includes people of different ages, genders, sexual orientations, physical characteristics, races, ethnicities, cultures, primary languages, origins of birth, socioeconomic status, family configurations, religions, abilities, achievements, and exceptionalities. Based on this realization, they strive to ensure that all students have equitable opportunities to learn. Teachers take a nurturing approach and target their instructional focus to meet the specific needs and requirements that each student brings to the classroom. (See [Standard II—Respect for Diversity](#).)

For accomplished teachers, every learning situation and group of students provides an opportunity for reflection. Teachers remain flexible, willing to change their practice or approach as a result of their reflection. When they review their students' work, middle childhood generalists assess themselves as well. The conversations they have with students help accomplished teachers gain insight and direction on classroom climate and interactions. Once teachers have defined a specific outcome they would like to achieve, they think critically to improve instruction with a wide range of strategies and techniques. By considering what has been successful or by trying new ideas, teachers plan their next steps strategically. They know there are many ways to reach the same goal of strengthening students' learning and their own teaching practice.

Accomplished teachers consider a number of issues when evaluating their approach in the classroom. They analyze their practice based on their students' responses to instruction, completion of classroom tasks, assertion of feelings and thoughts, and connection to learning. Teachers determine what their students know and the instruction they need. Teachers reflect independently, with colleagues, with students, and with families as they analyze their students' performance. Middle childhood generalists use these conversations to help their students identify performance patterns, examine strengths and needs, address learning challenges, and modify and adjust goals. Involving students in this process empowers them as they take responsibility for their educational experiences.

Accomplished teachers grow continuously as a result of their reflection. They challenge assumptions, sharpen their judgment, affirm what they are doing well, expand their repertoire of teaching methods, deepen their knowledge, and increase the efficacy of their reflection. Middle childhood generalists are deeply invested in the ongoing growth and development of their students and themselves. They set professional goals that help them meet students' needs and improve their schools. They identify productive ways that prevailing theories, emerging practices, and promising research findings inform their work with students, families, and colleagues. They explore topics in which they may have limited expertise and experiment creatively with alternative materials, approaches, and instructional strategies. They may also conduct action research projects in their classrooms, collaborate with peers and educational researchers, or examine their teaching practices critically using various strategies. With open minds, accomplished teachers select ideas and techniques that can improve their practice and increase students' learning. A commitment to reflection and professional development provides teachers with avenues for self-renewal. The insights they acquire help them articulate for students, parents, and colleagues the rationales for what they do and why they do it; these insights also contribute to the artistry and knowledge that accomplished teachers need to make decisions in the classroom.

Accomplished middle childhood generalists analyze and evaluate experiences in ways that enhance the development of their students and their personal growth as professionals. They embrace the lifelong study of the art and science of teaching and respond constructively to the many demands of their profession while recognizing the importance of balance and self-renewal. As a result, teachers convey their curiosity, enthusiasm, and passion for learning to their students. Accomplished teachers exemplify the highest ethical and moral ideals and take responsibility for their growth as teachers, recognizing where they have been and where their next steps should take them.



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# Standards Committees

## Contemporary Relevance Check Committee, Fourth Edition

Mitchell Brookins, former NBCT  
Managing Director  
Science of Reading Network for Leading Educators  
New Orleans, LA

Rose Mary Bunag, NBCT  
Special Education Teacher  
Department Chair  
Prince George's County Public Schools  
Upper Marlboro, MD

JoMeka Gray, NBCT  
Lead Kindergarten Teacher  
Temple Independent School District  
Temple, TX

Leslee Milch, NBCT—Chair  
Transitional Kindergarten Teacher  
Buena Park School District  
Buena Park, CA

Noraa Ransey, NBCT  
Elementary Literacy Teacher  
Calloway County Schools  
Murray, KY

## Standards Committee, Third Edition

Angelique Acevedo-Barron, NBCT  
District Diversity Administrator  
Jeffco Public Schools  
Golden, CO

Janice Adair  
Health Education Methods  
Minnesota State University-Moorhead  
Moorhead, MN

Tracy Ajello, NBCT  
Fifth Grade Teacher  
Doolittle Elementary School  
Cheshire, CT

Jeri Carroll  
Professor of Curriculum and Instruction  
Wichita State University  
Wichita, KS

Jaime Cole, NBCT  
Fourth Grade Gifted/ELL Teacher  
Window Rock Elementary School  
Window Rock, AZ

Dawn Duke, NBCT  
Fourth & Fifth Grade Teacher  
Brookland-Cayce Grammar Number One  
West Columbia, SC

Francis “Skip” Fennell—Co-Chair  
L. Stanley Bowsbey Professor of Education and  
Graduate and Professional Studies  
McDaniel College  
Westminster, MD

Karen Giesler, NBCT  
3–5 Grade Mathematics Teacher  
Center for Creative Learning  
Ellisville, MO

Susan Klabunde, NBCT  
Sixth Grade Teacher  
Cheney Middle School  
West Fargo, ND

Suzanne Nakashima, NBCT—Co-Chair  
Fourth Grade Teacher  
Lincrest Elementary School  
Yuba City, CA

Kim O’Neil, NBCT  
Third Grade Teacher  
Liverpool Elementary School  
Liverpool, NY

Victoria Risko  
Professor of Language and Literacy  
Peabody College  
Vanderbilt University  
Nashville, TN

José Rodríguez  
Third Grade Bilingual Teacher  
U.S. Dept. of Ed. Teaching Ambassador Fellow  
Washington, DC

Onny Tabares, NBCT  
Fourth & Fifth Grade Teacher  
John Rogers Elementary School  
Seattle, WA

Susan Williams, NBCT  
Third Grade Teacher  
Mabel I. Wilson School  
Cumberland, ME

---

## Standards Committee, Second Edition

Kathleen A. Bearer, NBCT

Gerviece H. Brown

Elizabeth A Butler

Yoland D. Chapa

Sharon Feiman-Nemser

JoAnn Fox

Susan LaSpina

Toni Lofgren

Maria Martinez

David H. Millstone

Jane B. Moriarty

Marie E. Mullins, NBCT

Donna Richardson

Lonna Sanderson, NBCT

Dorothy Strickland—Vice Chair

Jay Sugarman—Chair

Mary Jo Thomas

Ruben Zepeda II

## Standards Committee, First Edition

Patsy T. Arrouet

Gerviece H. Brown—Chair

Yolanda D. Chapa

Sharon Feiman-Nemser

Marilyn Gore

Marcy Greenspan

Julia V. Heaton

Tarry L. Lindquist

Jacquelyn Ann Smith

M. Trika Smith-Burke

Susan S. Stodolsky

Jay Sugarman—Vice Chair

John Swang

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Middle Childhood Generalist Standards, Fourth Edition, derives its power to describe accomplished teaching from an amazing degree of collaboration and consensus among educators from the field. Through the expertise and input of four standards committees; numerous reviews by the NBPTS Board of Directors; three periods of public comment and a stakeholder review by educators, policymakers, parents, and the like; as well as through the intense study of candidates for National Board Certification who have immersed themselves in the first, second, and third editions, these fourth-edition standards emerge as a living testament to what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do. Middle Childhood Generalist Standards, Fourth Edition, represents the best thinking by teachers and for teachers about advanced teaching practice in the field.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) is deeply grateful to all those who contributed their time, wisdom, and professional vision to Middle Childhood Generalist Standards, Fourth Edition. Any field grows, shifts, and evolves over time. Standards, too, must remain dynamic and therefore are subject to revision. In 2024, NBPTS convened the Contemporary Relevance Check Committee to address exactly this issue. The committee was charged with achieving both continuity and change by replacing language used to describe practices no longer in general professional use or no longer supported by pedagogical research since the creation of the third edition in 2012. The Contemporary Relevance Check Committee exemplified the collegiality, expertise, and dedication to the improvement of student learning that are hallmarks of accomplished teachers. Special thanks go to committee chair Leslee Milch, NBCT, for her invaluable leadership in making the fourth edition a reality.

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