

Standard III **Element F**

LEVEL 3 PRACTICES

THE TEACHER:

5 ***Teaches students, with audience in mind, to articulate thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively.***

As teachers plan for how they will teach students to communicate effectively, they should refer to the Speaking and Listening standards referenced in the Colorado Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, and Communicating.

Students in the 21st century are seldom out of touch with their peers. They spend hours on their cell phones, texting or emailing each other. Even though they communicate frequently with one another informally, many lack the skills needed for formal or academic communication. The development of written, oral, and interpersonal communication skills necessary to succeed in college and career is dependent on teachers implementing strategies and activities that explicitly teach these skills and provide opportunities for student application. Teachers must model how to identify and analyze the audience with whom they will be communicating and have students think about the audience's expectations and interests when writing and/or developing presentations.

Academic language is the language used in textbooks and assessments. It is the language or vocabulary associated with concepts, skills, and content taught in classrooms. It is also the language of formal communication. For students to be able to comprehend the teacher's instruction, discuss what is being learned, communicate their ideas, read for different purposes, and write about their learning, they need to understand and be able to use academic language. (Scarcella, 2003)

Research shows that students' knowledge and use of academic language is directly related to their attainment of content knowledge and comprehension. Therefore, it is critical for students to possess a deep understanding of academic language in order to understand the concepts they are expected to master as outlined in the content standards. (Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986)

Examples of academic language:

- *Dance*: alignment, balance, choreography, dynamics, focus, energy, improvisation, motif, phrase, sequence,
- *Drama and Theatre Arts*: action, blackout, blocking, character, cast, center, cue, dialogue, plot, projection, rehearsal, scene, script, theme
- *Mathematics*: equation, fraction, exponent, and monomial. Often mathematical terms have multiple meanings leading to confusion (i.e., square, coordinate, degree)
- *Language arts*: text, main idea, inference, prediction, and comprehend
- *Assessments*: define, explain, describe, justify, and determine

Tips for teaching students to use academic language:

- Identify the structure and genre of the text that will be utilized and the vocabulary needed to comprehend the text. (e.g., a lab report for chemistry requires different academic structure and language than a newspaper article for social studies or a novel for language arts).
- Provide explicit instruction and analysis of the text to support students' comprehension of the text (e.g., teaching students how to deconstruct a word problem in algebra requires different academic language than deconstructing a poem in language arts or a proof in geometry).
- Provide scaffolded instruction on the use of academic language, both orally and visually (e.g., display vocabulary that students will need to understand and utilize; provide graphics to support vocabulary meaning; incorporate academic language during direct instruction; provide sentence stems that include the academic language of the concept or skill being taught).

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Once teachers have developed the skills to communicate effectively with students and planned and implemented strategies for modeling and teaching these skills, teachers must purposefully plan opportunities for students to practice these skills.

Students can practice communication skills in a variety of ways. For example, students may engage in activities such as role-playing, storytelling, or interviewing.

See also [Level 1](#) and [Level 2 Practices](#).

Refer to these external resources for additional information:

- Article: “Teaching Basic Communication Skills” by Edward Wilczynski
<http://www.seenmagazine.us/articles/article-detail/articleid/209/teaching-basic-communication-skills.aspx>.
Article explains the rationale for teaching communication skills and describes ways to do so.
- Article, “Content-Area Conversations” by Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey and Carol Rothenberg
<http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/108035/chapters/Procedures-for-Classroom-Talk.aspx>.
Article describes ways teachers can support ELL students’ communication skills and strategies for implementing group activities in the classroom.
- Article: “Comprehension Through Conversation the Power of Purposeful Talk in the Reading Workshop” by Maria Nichols
<http://www.heinemann.com/shared/onlineresources/E00793/chapter5.pdf>
Article describes how teachers can engage students in purposeful talk during a read aloud.

Planning/Coaching Questions

- How will you ensure that you are clearly and effectively articulating thoughts and ideas to all students?
- How will you teach students to consider their audience when articulating their thoughts and ideas with others?
- How will you plan for strategies that model and teach effective communication skills?
- What opportunities will you provide for students to communicate orally and/or in writing with others?
- What will be the academic language included in your model and instruction?
- How will you ensure students are able to utilize the academic language associated with the content and skill being taught?

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