

**Iowa Department of Education  
Model Descriptors to Support the  
Iowa Teaching Standards and Criteria**

These model descriptors are intended to depict examples of behaviors of a regular second-year teacher that support the established criteria for the Iowa Teaching Standards. These descriptors are only examples and a guide to further conversation. Local districts will determine expectations that support the established Iowa Teaching Standards and Criteria and can use this model as a guide to that work.

**Standard 1: Demonstrates ability to enhance academic performance and support for implementation of the school district's student achievement goals.**

Criterion a: The teacher provides multiple forms of evidence of student learning and growth to students, families, and staff.

Descriptors: The teacher documents student learning with meaningful measures using data that is understandable and shares individual and classroom goals and results with students, families and staff members. The teacher uses multiple artifacts, including achievement trends for local standards and benchmarks, to document and provide evidence of student learning to students, families and staff members. The teacher plans parent conferences so his/her teacher and learning objectives have the greatest likelihood of serving the student's best interests.

Criterion b: The teacher implements strategies supporting student, building, and district goals.

Descriptors: The teacher knows the short and long-range building and district goals for student learning and implements classroom instructional strategies that clearly align with these established goals. The teacher effectively communicates these goals and accomplishments to various constituents including students, parents, and colleagues.

Criterion c: The teacher uses student performance data as a guide for decision making.

Descriptors: The teacher uses performance data such as achievement scores, individual products, writing samples, and teacher made tests to profile student learning. The teacher analyzes these and other data to make decisions regarding student progress and bases curricular and instructional decisions on student performance data. The teacher also uses individual student's performance data to make decisions about individual student needs.

Criterion d: The teacher accepts and demonstrates responsibility for creating a classroom culture that supports the learning of every student.

Descriptors: The teacher develops and communicates a clear "big picture" to motivate students to make positive choices regarding their own learning and acts in accordance with the belief that all students can learn. The teacher encourages students to work cooperatively as well as independently and includes students in decision making when appropriate.

Criterion e: The teacher creates an environment of mutual respect, rapport, and fairness.

Descriptors: The teacher demonstrates clear expectations of developing responsible, self-directed learners and models acceptance of all students based on awareness of individual student differences. The teacher facilitates ways to get students to cooperate with one another and take responsibility for their work.

Criterion f: The teacher participates in and contributes to a school culture that focuses on improved student learning.

Descriptors: The teacher develops strategies with colleagues who share responsibility for a student(s) to increase the likelihood of success and engages in active inquiry with colleagues about the school's fulfillment of instructional goals. The teacher provides opportunities for families and community members to take an active role in the classroom, the school, and the school district. The teacher accepts personal responsibility for nurturing the school as a community of learners.

Criterion g: The teacher communicates with students, families, colleagues, and communities effectively and accurately.

Descriptors: The teacher demonstrates professionalism and self-confidence in routine circumstances and eases stressful situations when they occur. The teacher uses appropriate spelling, grammar, mechanics and style and varies vocal cues, rate, and volume. The teacher demonstrates and leads quality discussions.

## **Standard 2: Demonstrates competence in content knowledge appropriate to the teaching position.**

Criterion a: The teacher understands and uses key concepts, underlying themes, relationship, and different perspectives related to the content area.

Descriptors: The teacher knows the content that supports district standards and benchmarks in the grade level courses that the teacher is assigned and uses an integrative approach for content that supports those local standards and benchmarks. There is incorporation of accurate content knowledge into instruction aligned with the local content standards and benchmarks. The teacher locates and uses multiple resources to expand subject matter beyond manuals, texts, and curriculum guides.

Criterion b: The teacher uses knowledge of student development to make learning experiences in the content area meaningful and accessible for every student.

Descriptors: The teacher knows the content appropriate to the learner needs and selects meaningful instructional objectives aligned with those students' learning needs. The teacher provides significant, challenging, varied, and appropriate learning goals designed to meet the learning needs of each student. The teacher knows when it is appropriate to use adaptations and accommodations to meet individual student needs, including curriculum compacting, enrichment, and acceleration. The teacher uses appropriate assessment techniques to assess the learning experiences provided in the classroom. Technology is integrated that is appropriate to student intellectual and physical development.

Criterion c: The teacher relates ideas and information within and across content areas.

Descriptors: The teacher organizes curricular materials to facilitate understanding of central themes, concepts, and skills. The teacher knows the content taught at grade levels below and above the current grade level taught and interrelates ideas and information within and across curricular areas to assist or facilitate student understanding. The teacher uses multiple questioning techniques for student inquiry within and across disciplines and knows when appropriate technology can be used to assist student application of knowledge and skills across content areas.

Criterion d: The teacher understands and uses instructional strategies that are appropriate to the content area.

Descriptors: The teacher knows when and how a variety of instructional strategies can be used in the content area to improve student learning and uses those strategies as appropriate. The teacher also knows which strategies are developmentally appropriate for various groups of students and applies that knowledge as needed. The teacher integrates the use of technology as an instructional strategy when it supports and enhances learning for the content area.

### **Standard 3: Demonstrates competence in planning and preparing for instruction.**

Criterion a: The teacher uses student achievement data, local standards, and the district curriculum in planning for instruction.

Descriptors: The teacher designs and uses a variety of instructional strategies and classroom materials that align with local content standards, benchmarks, and district curricular expectations. The teacher uses these local content standards and benchmarks to determine what students should know and be able to do. The teacher analyzes individual student and classroom achievement data to determine the sequencing of and adjustments to instruction.

Criterion b: The teacher sets and communicates high expectations for social, behavioral, and academic success of all students.

Descriptors: The teacher establishes classroom goals for social, behavioral and academic success and develops classroom routines to support these goals. The teacher provides feedback to students and routinely assesses their progress toward these goals.

Criterion c: The teacher uses student developmental needs, background, and interests in planning for instruction.

Descriptors: The teacher seeks and collects information to understand students' needs and interests for use in planning and designs and uses lessons/units that provide for varied student learning needs. The teacher incorporates multiple levels of thinking and conceptualization into planning for instruction and incorporates multiple mechanisms for students to attain knowledge and skills in varied modalities.

Criterion d: The teacher selects strategies to engage all students in learning.

Descriptors: The teacher knows or actively seeks instructional strategies that produce increased student learning. There is a plan for a variety of types of effective instructional strategies, facilitation techniques, and classroom activities that actively engage students in learning. The teacher organizes content in a manner that facilitates each student's construction of his/her learning and incorporates inquiry methods to encourage critical and creative thinking. The teacher plans for adjustments in instruction to meet student learning needs based on the assessment of student progress.

Criterion e: The teacher uses resources, including technologies, in the development and sequencing of instruction.

Descriptors: The teacher integrates resources in developing and sequencing instruction that are appropriate to the content, to curriculum alignment, and to students' prior learning. The teacher uses challenging resources that are mentally, visually, aurally, and kinesthetically stimulating and integrates the use of technology as a curricular support when appropriate. The teacher assesses students' use of technological resources before integrating into student expectations.

#### **Standard 4: Uses strategies to deliver instruction that meets the multiple learning needs of students.**

Criterion a: The teacher uses research-based instructional strategies that address the full range of cognitive levels.

Descriptors: The teacher uses instructional strategies that are effective for students at varied cognitive levels and is able to adjust strategies during instruction to meet student learning needs. The teacher uses questioning techniques that foster classroom discussion to increase student knowledge and skills and monitors students' learning.

Criterion b: The teacher aligns classroom instruction with local standards and district curriculum.

Descriptors: The teacher works collaboratively to develop and maintain standards, benchmarks, and performance assessments for student achievement. The teacher implements classroom instructional strategies that support the achievement of district standards and benchmarks.

Criterion c: The teacher demonstrates flexibility and responsiveness in adjusting instruction to meet student needs.

Descriptors: The teacher uses appropriate curriculum, instruction, and assessments to accommodate individual needs and uses analysis of student learning before and after instruction to make instructional decisions. The teacher adjusts instructional strategies as needed to meet student learning needs for remediation, differentiation, and extension for standards and benchmarks attainment. The instruction is paced to optimize effective learning by all students, provide clear directions, clarify when students are confused and use spontaneous events as a teaching and learning opportunity.

Criterion d: The teacher engages students in varied experiences that meet diverse needs and promote social, emotional, and academic growth.

Descriptors: The teacher uses individual, cooperative, and whole class instruction to promote maximum student participation and uses instructional materials that are mentally engaging to the student.

Criterion e: The teacher connects students' prior knowledge, life experiences, and interests in the instructional process.

Descriptors: The teacher draws on the prior knowledge, life experience, interest and language of students during instruction. They identify for learners the connections and potential applications of curriculum to real-life issues and problems. The teacher assigns in-class and homework tasks that provide students with links or transition to life experiences and interests.

Criterion f: The teacher uses available resources, including technologies, in the delivery of instruction.

Descriptors: The teacher provides classroom settings and activities that are mentally, visually, aurally, and kinesthetically stimulating and uses resources that are appropriate to the content, and to students' prior learning. The teacher encourages students' use of technological resources and integrates the use of technology as an instructional support when appropriate.

### **Standard 5: Uses a variety of methods to monitor student learning.**

Criterion a: The teacher aligns classroom assessment with instruction.

Descriptors: The teacher assesses what is taught. They use classroom assessments that reflect multiple ways by which students can demonstrate knowledge and skills and use multiple assessment strategies that are aligned to instructional goals. The teacher accepts the primary responsibility for ongoing classroom assessment of the local standards and benchmarks appropriate to his/her classroom. They use grading systems that reflect students' knowledge and skills and continually monitor student progress toward the attainment of instructional objectives.

Criterion b: The teacher communicates assessment criteria and standards to all students and parents.

Descriptors: The teacher establishes, with students, and parents, realistic goals for individual improvement on student achievement and tracks achievement data over time to clearly communicate student progress. The assessment information provided to students and parents is clear and makes sense and defines what "success" is. The teacher understands and communicates what performance levels or proficiency levels mean to all students and parents.

Criterion c: The teacher understands and uses the results of multiple assessments to guide planning and instruction.

Descriptors: The teacher uses student achievement information from a variety of sources for decision making. The teacher continually analyzes assessment information for alignment with student expectations and ongoing classroom observation to adjust instruction. They determine the types of student responses (essay, T/F, multiple choice, project, etc.) that best align with the goals for instruction and provide individual instruction and assistance to students in need.

Criterion d: The teacher guides students in goal setting and assessing their own learning.

Descriptors: The teacher involves students in establishing goals for learning and helps students to understand and monitor their own learning goals. The teacher works with student to gather and monitor information on their progress and assists student in analyzing their own learning progress through meaningful measures and conferencing with the student.

Criterion e: The teacher provides substantive, timely, and constructive feedback to students and parents.

Descriptors: Through the teacher maintaining accurate records about each student's progress, the teacher provides adequate feedback to students and parents so it is clear what students have learned and what still needs to be learned. The teacher celebrates increased student achievement with students and parents.

Criterion f: The teacher works with other staff and building and district leadership in analysis of student progress.

Descriptors: The teacher engages in collaborative study of student learning data and uses these data to design instruction on student learning needs. The teacher exchanges information about student learning with students, families, and school personnel who share the responsibility for the student.

## **Standard 6: Demonstrates competence in classroom management**

Criterion a: The teacher creates a learning community that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement, and self-regulation for every student.

Descriptors: The teacher creates and communicates clear expectations for individual student interaction, engagement, and self-regulation. Students are taught to become responsible and self-directed, consistent with students' developmental needs. The teacher encourages collaboration and self-reliance and interacts with students in a respectful and appropriate manner and creates a classroom with a climate of respect for all.

Criterion b: The teacher establishes, communicates, models, and maintains standards of responsible student behavior.

Descriptors: The teacher clearly communicates guidelines for responsible student behavior and instructs students about behavioral expectations and appropriate social skills. The teacher maintains consistent and clear expectations and accountability and models positive social skills to students while providing opportunities for students to practice those skills.

Criterion c: The teacher develops and implements classroom procedures and routines that support high expectations for learning.

Descriptors: The teacher consistently implements management techniques that create an engaging learning environment and make behavioral modifications in specific situations to support individual learning needs. The teacher develops and implements schedules, timelines, procedures, and routines to support high expectations for learning.

Criterion d: The teacher uses instructional time effectively to maximize student achievement.

Descriptors: The teacher develops and implements classroom procedures and routines that optimize learning time. Instructional time is used effectively and productively for maximum student engagement with tasks.

Criterion e: The teacher creates a safe and purposeful learning environment.

Descriptors: The teacher creates a classroom setting that is safe and provides an accessible learning environment for all students. They insist upon fairness and respect as elements in each interpersonal relationship and encourage each student to be self-reflective. The teacher provides learning opportunities for students to become responsible, self-reliant, and collaborative. They create opportunities for students to make decisions appropriate to students' developmental levels.

## **Standard 7: Engages in professional growth.**

Criterion a: The teacher demonstrates habits and skills of continuous inquiry and learning.

Descriptors: The teacher actively pursues opportunities for learning embedded in daily experiences and engages in formal learning opportunities to increase his/her repertoire of knowledge and skills. Responsibility is accepted for his/her mental, physical, and social well being. The teacher routinely reflects on his/her practices. There is a habit of reading current educational journals and other professional literature.

Criterion b: The teacher works collaboratively to improve professional practice and student learning.

Descriptors: The teacher collaborates with others to improve their teaching and their students' learning and supports joint efforts for the improvement of instruction. The teacher contributes experience and ideas toward the continuing development of the school/district as a learning community and builds relationships that enable them to become valuable members of the school community. The teacher plans lessons, rehearses strategies, demonstrates strategies, and observes with a mentor and/or peer coaching partner.

Criterion c: The teacher applies research, knowledge, and skills from professional development opportunities to improve practice.

Descriptors: The teacher integrates his/her working knowledge of psychology (human development and motivation), sociology (organizational membership), pedagogy (instructional strategies) and subject matter to construct a coherent educational philosophy. Research ideas, knowledge, and skills are tried in the context of best practices. The teacher monitors the implementation and effect of using new learning within the classroom.

Criterion d: The teacher establishes and implements professional development plans based upon the teacher needs aligned to the Iowa Teaching Standards and district/building student achievement goals.

Descriptors: The teacher collaborates in the development of their own professional development plan to meet district/building goals. Suggestions are elicited about their teaching and adapt their teaching to new ideas, findings, ideals, and theories. The teacher routinely participates/ contributes to collective study with colleagues in order to implement district career plans and uses data about student performance and his/her practice to design individual career development plans.

Criterion e: The teacher provides an analysis of student learning and growth based on teacher-created tests and authentic measures as well as any standardized and districtwide tests.

### **Standard 8: Fulfills professional responsibilities established by the school district.**

Criterion a: The teacher adheres to board policies, district procedures, and contractual obligations.

Descriptors: The teacher demonstrates professional commitment and respects the contractual requirements of his/her employment.

Criterion b: The teacher demonstrates professional and ethical conduct as defined by state law and individual district policy.

Descriptors: The teacher presents himself/herself to the school and community in a manner that elicits respect and complies with state laws defining the profession.

Criterion c: The teacher contributes to efforts to achieve district and building goals.

Descriptors: The teacher participates in professional development opportunities to improve achievement of district and building goals. They initiate sharing of ideas with colleagues and contribute to school-wide events and learning activities.

Criterion d: The teacher demonstrates an understanding of and respect for all learners and staff.

Descriptors: The teacher respects different values and beliefs other than one's own and works to ensure that all students are treated fairly. The teacher functions effectively in situations that require differing approaches and understanding of differing family and community contexts.

Criterion e: The teacher collaborates with students, families, colleagues, and communities to enhance student learning.

Descriptors: The teacher values and respects others' roles in student learning and welcomes their participation in the teaching process. They build acceptable and professional relationships with students, colleagues, and families that are student-centered and conducive to learning. The teacher reaches out to others to establish constructive relationships and rapport especially in challenging situations.