

Standard III: Knowledge of Culture and Diversity

Accomplished teachers systematically acquire knowledge of their students as individual learners.

Accomplished teachers of linguistically and culturally diverse learners are knowledgeable about and sensitive to the dynamics of culture in general, and to their students' cultures in particular, which enables them to understand their students and structure a successful academic experience for them.

Appreciation of cultural diversity, knowledge about the characteristics of particular cultures, and development of instructional strategies useful in teaching across cultures are all rooted in understanding culture. Teachers view culture as an ongoing process of adaptation. They know that learning a new language implies learning also to participate in a new culture.

Teachers both transmit and transform culture. Accomplished teachers of linguistically and culturally diverse learners appreciate the aspects of culture common to all human beings. These teachers know the manifestations of these elements in different cultures, particularly those of the students they serve.

Understanding Culture and Valuing Diversity

A general understanding of the nature of culture creates a framework for understanding the characteristics and dynamics of particular cultures. This understanding is necessary as a basis for the development of instructional strategies to teach English and other subjects. Thus, teachers devise strategies to learn about the cultures of their students.

They further understand that schools with students from culturally diverse backgrounds and experiences enjoy special opportunities to enrich instruction but face an array of distinctive challenges. Although the potential exists to enhance the learning experiences of all by capitalizing on these valuable resources, conflict and misunderstanding may arise as individuals from different backgrounds learn together to negotiate the demands and expectations of the school. Thus, teachers model and promote an appreciation of and a respect for diversity. They view the students and their communities as well as literature and media as resources to enlarge their knowledge about the social, historical, and political contexts of the students they teach. In doing so, they attempt to construct an understanding of these cultural contexts that transcends simplistic or stereotypical portrayals.

Culture and Schooling

Teachers understand that schools have cultures of their own. They know that newcomers may have expectations and behaviors based on prior experience of schooling in foreign settings that may facilitate or inhibit their academic experience in United States schools. They understand that students may bring values, beliefs, and behaviors that provide special support for the process of schooling. For example, students from cultural backgrounds that emphasize peer sociability tend to work well in small groups. Given these understandings, teachers capitalize on the cultural

• **Resources:**
**English as a New Language Certificate Area Standards,
National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, CONTINUED**

assets their students bring to school. Teachers also know that some students may have school experiences that differ markedly from schooling in the United States or have had no prior schooling. Such students require sensitive assistance and support. For example, a student schooled in China may be perplexed by the notion of choosing a project or by an active learning station. Teachers, therefore, assist such students in adjusting to school in ways that are culturally appropriate and facilitate a positive academic experience.

Teachers understand that the transformative process of schooling assigns teachers the unique function of culture mediation, which often presents complex ethical and moral dilemmas. For example, as students move and learn a new culture notably different from their own, they may face difficult choices between the values, beliefs, or behaviors of their home cultures and those of mainstream United States society or of the school. Teachers faced with such circumstances help their students navigate their way around such hazards and take account of such potential conflicts in designing assignments, in confronting important subject matter, and in engaging students in the intellectual and social life of the classroom. In doing so they give them the knowledge to participate in the mainstream of life in the United States.

http://www.nbpts.org/userfiles/File/emc_enl_standards.pdf