

Exceptional Needs Standards

Second Edition

for teachers of students ages birth–21+

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*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 institution¹;
- 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.

¹ 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.

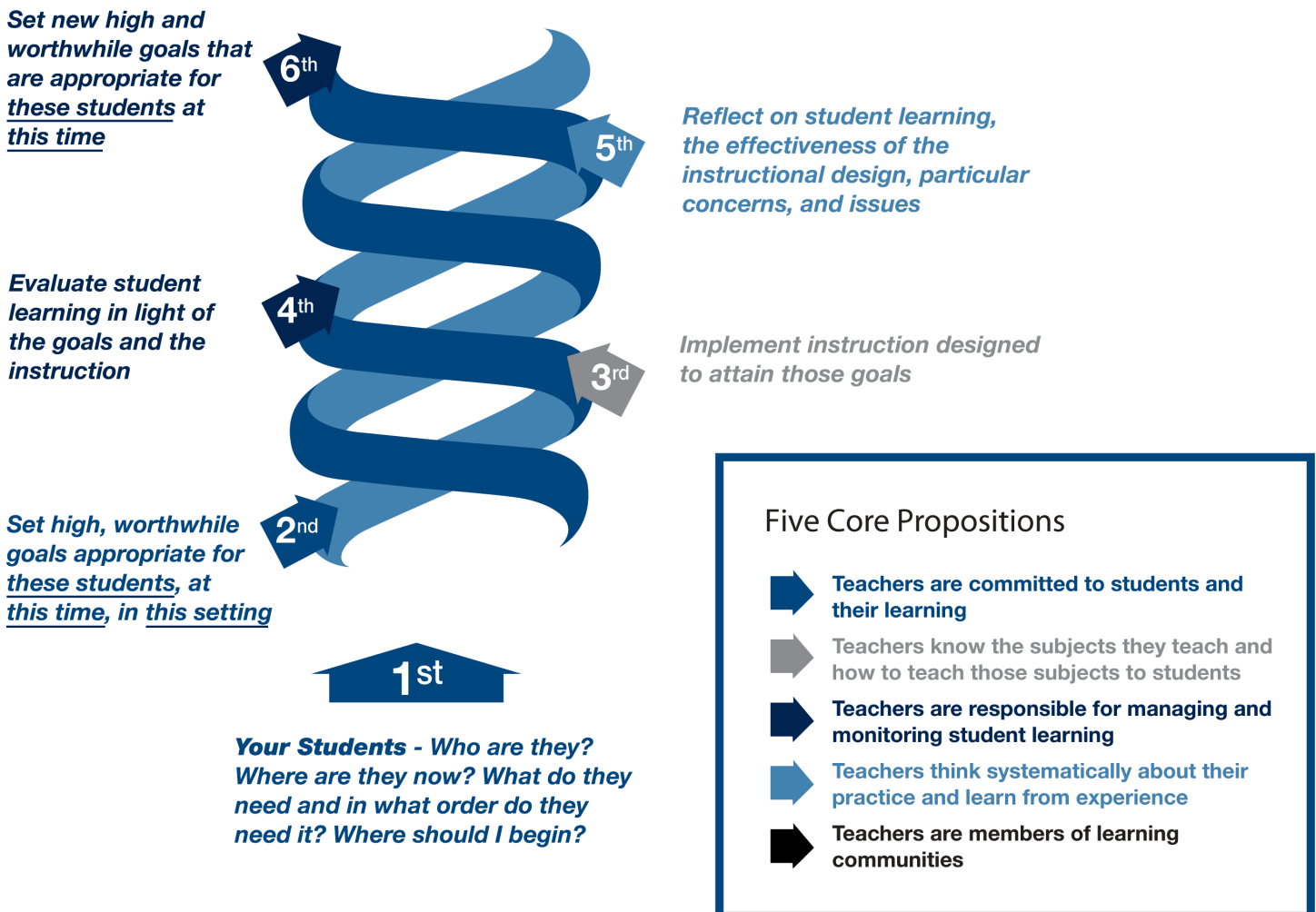
Accomplished teachers participate actively in their learning communities to promote progress and achievement. They contribute to the effectiveness of the school by working collaboratively with other professionals on policy decisions, curriculum development, professional learning, school instructional 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

The price of the democratic way of life is a growing appreciation of people's differences, not merely as tolerable, but as the essence of a rich and rewarding human experience. —Jerome Nathanson

Ensuring that all students develop their potential and become productive citizens is at the heart of the values and ideals of a democratic society. To that end, accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs are at the core of a complex network of professionals, services, and resources designed to help students achieve these ideals. Accomplished teachers advocate for access, equity, integration, and educational opportunities so that all students achieve meaningful, purposeful, and fulfilling lives and are valued for their contributions to enriching the human experience.

Accomplished teachers focus on the lifelong contributions all students can make to society. While calling upon their skills as diagnosticians and clinicians to identify the sometimes subtle signs of disabilities, gifts, and talents, accomplished teachers focus on what students can do, rather than on the labels that have been assigned. The accomplished teacher of students with exceptional needs works to develop each student's abilities, providing support systems to nurture development and independence toward becoming a productive citizen.

Teachers of students with exceptional needs create or establish a world of true collaboration where a conversation or meeting is followed by action and continued collaboration. Collaboration repeats itself multiple times a day, in multiple contexts, with multiple individuals, and is the defining characteristic of the work of accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs. Like their students, teachers also function in inclusive environments. Keeping the needs of students first and foremost, accomplished teachers involve all stakeholders in the success of children with exceptional needs, collaborating with the entire staff of the school, support personnel, members of the neighborhood community, members of the legal community, and the student's family. Teachers recognize the power of family engagement and that differences in family structures and in perceptions and expectations for participation in their children's education will require a repertoire of strategies for engaging families. Accomplished teachers are respectful and aware of each family's abilities and needs as they collaborate for the best interest of the student.

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs are adept at planning for, and teaching across, a broad spectrum of instructional arrangements. They may deliver all services required by students with exceptional needs in the general education classroom, establishing mutually beneficial relationships with fellow general education teachers. They may provide services in alternative settings such as homes; hospitals; special schools; or in the community, business, and industry sectors. They collaborate with curriculum specialists and related services personnel, such as mentors, counselors and occupational therapists, who work with students with exceptional needs. Working closely with their colleagues across multiple contexts, accomplished teachers help provide students with the depth and breadth of knowledge

and skills needed to function both independently and cooperatively and help students reach their full potential in becoming contributing members of society.

Accomplished teachers embody the philosophy that instruction is tailored to each student's distinct abilities. They draw on their firm grounding in the core curriculum, the academic disciplines, and content-specific pedagogy to design instruction that supports student learning. They are experts in the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills to students across the spectrum of abilities, from those with gifts and talents to those with multiple disabilities. But they are also experts in an expanded curriculum that addresses the diverse needs of students with exceptional needs in such areas as communication, social skills, independent performance, and transition and career development. For example, in addition to academic competence, accomplished teachers develop their students' social skills. They emphasize behavior, not as a problem requiring treatment, but as an opportunity to teach effective problem solving or socially acceptable strategies for resolving conflicts. Some teachers of students with exceptional needs specialize in curriculum, instruction, and technologies that address the unique needs of students who are deaf or hearing impaired, blind or visually impaired, or dually diagnosed. All accomplished teachers draw on a rich repertoire of skills, competencies, strategies and approaches to provide effective assessment, instruction, programs, and services. They hold high expectations for their students and work closely with all their colleagues to provide the depth and breadth of curriculum needed for their students to continue to progress toward independence and to become contributing members of society.

Teachers of students with exceptional needs recognize that transition means more than the passage from high school to post-secondary settings. Rather, students are involved in a variety of transitions that are continuous and evolving throughout their education, such as the transition from home to school, between grades from elementary to secondary school, from academic to career preparation, from school to work, or from school to college or other post-secondary preparation. These transitions require that teachers collaborate with school staff across disciplines and professional roles, community members, and representatives of legal and business communities as well as parents and families.

To tap the potential of all students, accomplished teachers must focus on the ability of students to effectively communicate and ultimately advocate for themselves. The importance of advocacy, both by the teacher and the student, is reinforced by the many challenges teachers and students face. Challenges that confound teachers of students with exceptional needs include inappropriate special education referrals; bias in assessment and eligibility decisions; over-representation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education, but under-identification in programs for students with gifts and talents; compliance with federal and state laws and policies; lack of access to effective programs and services; and teacher shortages. Accomplished teachers respond proactively to all these challenges. No matter the legislative or societal mood of the country, the teacher of students with exceptional needs always keeps the students' needs at the forefront of decision-making about curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Accomplished teachers engage in their own professional development, staying abreast of advances in teaching, learning, and technology that can complement and augment their work with students with exceptional needs. They contribute to the professional development of others, for example, by serving as mentors to novice teachers or by conducting workshops and providing technical assistance so that others can develop expertise specific to the education of students with exceptional needs. They contribute to policy analysis and development, to evaluation and refinement of professional practices, and they are active members of professional organizations, taking on leadership responsibilities and participating in education reforms at the local, state, or national levels.

The significant revisions to this document reflect trends and changes in the teaching of students with exceptional needs. There is a general movement away from exceptionality categories, recognizing that exceptionalities range from mild to severe and that students with gifts and talents also have special needs, while maintaining a focus on the unique concepts and assistive technologies used by educators serving students who are deaf or hard of hearing, or blind or visually impaired. The document emphasizes the tremendous power of effective communication and collaboration in the education of students with exceptional needs. In addition, the requirement that exceptional needs teachers prepare students to meet the demands of the core curriculum, as well as the expanded curriculum, has influenced a paradigm shift in the general education community, changing the way all teachers look at instruction for students with exceptional needs. This includes helping students meet high academic standards while also addressing important social skills, especially behavior, as a key factor in learning. There is also a continued focus on early intervening services and accurate identification, a greater focus on transition periods, and enhanced efforts to realize the power of family engagement. The importance of the accomplished teacher as a life-long learner is emphasized as the field expands and research brings new advances in helping students with exceptional needs realize their goals.

Also reflected in the pages of this document are the core beliefs of accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs—that there is always a new frontier in exceptional needs education; that the field is constantly evolving which affords a lifelong opportunity for professional growth; that students with exceptional needs work hard at everything and that even the smallest amount of progress is a victory; that teachers of students with exceptional needs are often the ones that make a difference in the lives of their students; that this field offers the greatest challenges, but also the greatest personal and professional rewards; and that the best gift accomplished teachers can give is to provide opportunities for a child with exceptional needs to gain the knowledge, skills, and confidence to be successful in life.

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs do many things, but above all: They listen. They learn. They teach. They collaborate. They advocate. They care. They act.

Developing High and Rigorous Standards for Accomplished Practice

Exceptional Needs 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 Exceptional Needs Standards Committee 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.

The report follows a two-part format for each of the standards:

- **Standard Statement**—This is a succinct statement of one vital aspect of the practice of the accomplished teacher of students with exceptional needs. 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 practices.

Exceptional Needs Standards Statements

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has organized the standards for accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs into the following 12 standards. The standards have been ordered to facilitate understanding, not to assign priorities. They each describe an important facet of accomplished teaching, and they often occur concurrently because of the seamless quality of accomplished practice. These standards serve as the basis for National Board Certification in this field.

Foundations for Effective Practice

Standard I: Knowledge of Students

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs use their knowledge of human development and learning and their skills as careful observers of students to help develop students' knowledge, aptitudes, skills, interests, aspirations, and values.

Standard II: Knowledge of Philosophy, History, and Law

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs understand how philosophical, historical, and legal foundations of their field inform the development of effective practice. They draw on this knowledge to organize and design appropriate practices and to ensure that students' rights are protected and respected.

Standard III: Diversity

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs create an environment in which equitable treatment, fairness, and respect for diversity are modeled, taught, and practiced by all, and they take steps to ensure access to quality learning opportunities for all students.

Standard IV: Family Partnerships

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs work collaboratively with parents, guardians, and other caregivers to promote understanding of the student and to achieve educational goals.

Student Learning and Development

Standard V: Assessment

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs design, select, and use a variety of assessments to obtain accurate, useful, and timely information about student learning and development and to help students reflect on their own progress.

Standard VI: Communication

Accomplished teachers recognize the critical nature of communication for students with exceptional needs. They develop and foster communication skills that enable students to access, comprehend, and apply information; acquire knowledge; and develop and maintain interpersonal relationships.

Standard VII: Social Development and Behavior

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs cultivate a sense of efficacy in their students as they develop each student's personal responsibility and independence, civic and social responsibility, respect for diverse individuals and groups, and ability to work constructively and collaboratively with others.

Standard VIII: Curriculum and Instruction

Accomplished teachers command a core body of knowledge of the disciplines and of specialized curriculum for students with exceptional needs. They draw on this knowledge to establish curricular goals, design instruction, facilitate student learning, and assess student progress.

Standard IX: Learning Environment

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs establish a caring, stimulating, and safe community for learning in which democratic values are fostered and students assume responsibility for learning, show willingness to take intellectual risks, develop self-confidence, and learn to work independently and collaboratively.

Standard X: Instructional Resources

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs select, adapt, create, and use rich, unique, and varied resources, both human and material, to promote individual student learning.

Roles and Practices in the Learning Community

Standard XI: Contributing to the Profession and to Education through Collaboration

Accomplished teachers provide leadership through collaboration to improve teaching and learning for students with exceptional needs and to advance knowledge, policy, and practice.

Standard XII: Reflective Practice

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs regularly analyze, evaluate, and synthesize their practice to strengthen its quality.

Foundations for Effective Practice

Standard I Knowledge of Students

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs use their knowledge of human development and learning and their skills as careful observers of students to help develop students' knowledge, aptitudes, skills, interests, aspirations, and values.

To provide students with a quality education, teachers¹ must understand the origins and nature of various types and manifestations of exceptionalities. They must know their students as individual, life-long learners, especially in terms of their exceptional needs. A broad knowledge of human development underlies their repertoire of teaching skills, coupled with a sound understanding of specific growth, developmental, linguistic, cultural, and medical issues associated with children and youth with exceptional needs.

Teachers constantly strive to understand what their students know and how their students approach tasks, interpersonal relationships, and learning. Teachers observe and listen to students as they learn, work, and play in a variety of settings. They challenge students to understand more about their own motivations and values. Teachers work closely with families² to learn about an individual student's strengths and needs, aspirations, and life outside school. The knowledge teachers gain from insightful observation and interaction allows them to tailor instruction to motivate and challenge students and meet their specific needs. Moreover, in concert with the inherent belief that all children can learn to their full potential, accomplished teachers set high, realistic expectations for students, recognizing the special circumstances an individual child's exceptionalities may present.

¹ All references to *teachers* in this document, whether stated explicitly or not, refer to accomplished Exceptional Needs Specialists.

² *Family* is used in this document to refer to the people who are the primary caregivers and guardians of children.

Teachers Know How Children Grow and Develop

Accomplished teachers are knowledgeable about the stages of human development and learning. They draw on this knowledge to create realistic, age- and developmentally appropriate activities and materials for individual learners that embody significant problem-solving and real-world applications. They regularly revise and rethink their instructional strategies to accommodate the range of abilities and developmental levels among their students and within individual students. Teachers might, for example, involve some students in decision-making processes, collaborating with them to determine how personal goals can be measured and encouraging them to set timelines and determine benchmarks for achievement. For other students, teachers may provide instruction in how to anticipate and plan for educational and social interactions that will occur during the day.

When teachers perceive significant variations in patterns of a student's physical, cognitive, and social development, they know how to design interventions that match each student's particular circumstances. Teachers of students who are blind and visually impaired, for example, understand the multitude of factors—and the complex interaction of these factors—that influence development and learning in students, including the age at onset of the visual impairment, how it is diagnosed, its cause, the prognosis, the level of visual functioning, and the presence of additional exceptionalities.

Teachers understand the connections among physical, social, emotional, communicative, and cognitive developmental stages that enhance or inhibit the development of a range of exceptionalities. They know that individual students may be more comfortable learning in particular ways and in particular settings. Some are more comfortable working by themselves, while others prefer small groups. Some enjoy instruction that incorporates vigorous physical activity, and others may be unable to perform in the presence of distractions. Some students like to participate in class discussions, but others find written responses a more advantageous form of communication. Some students articulate at higher levels than their peers, whereas others communicate with assistive devices. Teachers understand that such differences in learning can affect a student's knowledge, skills, interests, and aspirations, so they design instruction that gives each student opportunities to approach important issues, ideas, and concepts in several ways.

Because students participate differently in similar activities, teachers make multiple adaptations within the same lesson to offer varied representations of information and engage a range of student abilities. For example, teachers might provide access to written information through a variety of formats, such as reading with a partner, audio text, or text-to-voice technology. Some students require extra time to process information, whereas others need elaboration to help them understand concepts. Some students benefit from direct instruction, but others find success in independent or collaborative learning processes. Teachers know how to communicate concern and understanding regarding students' needs; adapt instruction to suit changing circumstances; and help individual students participate in the intellectual and social life of the school.

Accomplished teachers know that students differ from one another in the way they learn and think, the pattern and pace of their growth, and their language and social capacities. Teachers understand that some children learn quickly, while others learn incrementally, moving from basic concepts to mastery of increasingly complex ideas and tasks. Accordingly, they design developmentally appropriate cross-curricular and multisensory activities that promote independence, confidence, and motivation to learn. Teachers strengthen students' abilities to assimilate and integrate knowledge by creating opportunities in which students use abstract and higher-order skills in addition to basic skills such as memorization. Such efforts encourage students to expand their thinking and acknowledge perspectives other than their own. Teachers, for instance, may challenge their students to predict a story outcome and then ask them to incorporate the new ending when rewriting the story from the viewpoint of one of the main characters. Moreover, teachers vividly and concretely demonstrate that knowledge comes from a variety of sources. Inquiry-based learning, for example, provides opportunities for students to explain their thinking to peers, thereby enhancing students' perceptions of each other as viable sources of knowledge and important contributors to the community of learners.

These teachers comprehend the importance of play for students at all developmental levels to stimulate thinking and creativity while enhancing socialization and communication. Knowledge of peer relationships helps teachers facilitate interactions among students that support learning and development. Teachers therefore provide ample opportunities for fun activities that call on students to interact with each other and challenge students intellectually and imaginatively. Teachers might arrange activities in which students take turns, cooperate with team members, and encourage others to succeed. Because some children enjoy logic games and creative problem-solving competitions, their teachers might incorporate such intellectual playfulness in their planning and instruction. For students who enjoy learning meaningful facts, teachers might create an intellectual scavenger hunt in which teams compete to access and apply information. Teachers encourage creative expression to nurture students' inventiveness, organize their thinking, and prepare them to address new challenges.

Teachers Are Insightful Observers of Students

Teachers are skilled at learning about students by observing them at work and at play in a variety of settings and under a broad range of circumstances. They draw on daily interactions with students and frequent communication with students' families to identify the domains in which students are most knowledgeable and adept and those domains in which they need help. Teachers are alert to anything that contributes to a student's full participation. Understanding the importance of vision in the learning process, for example, through modifications to instruction and to instructional environments teachers compensate for the lack of incidental learning by students whose vision is impaired. Because students who are deaf rely on visual information to learn, teachers might vary instructional media to provide visual breaks. Teachers recognize subtle changes and differences in a student's attitude, tone, and enthusiasm and use that information to identify issues that require immediate attention.

Teachers prepare students for further education, entry into the world of work, independent living, and leadership—for future roles that place them meaningfully in society and to fulfill each student’s unique potential. To these ends, teachers work with students and families to identify students’ strengths and needs so that they may all make sound decisions about the future. For some students, therefore, instruction must focus on functional living skills, self-advocacy, and community life, with the aims of reducing students’ dependence on others and preparing them for independent living. Students who are blind or visually impaired, for example, frequently receive instruction in orientation and mobility skills within their communities, which enables them to travel with greater independence. For some students, instruction might guide them into leadership roles or develop their abilities to be producers of knowledge. A teacher might help a student pursue a particular interest or talent in music or the culinary arts. Students who face physical, emotional, or behavioral challenges are inspired to strive for future lives that permit them to accommodate specific needs while satisfying their intellectual potential. To meet the needs of these students, teachers might recommend complex technological equipment or simply endorse a work or living environment suitable for learning. Whatever strategies they adopt, teachers make certain that they have the tools necessary to assess students’ needs and to effect positive outcomes.

Accomplished teachers are aware of the effects in some students’ lives of factors such as poverty, crime, divorce, drug use, unsafe communities, and families in difficult circumstances. Teachers are sensitive to conditions students face, and they respond appropriately when students and families in such situations perceive a lack of opportunity for learning and success.

Teachers Recognize and Capitalize on Students’ Diversity, Commonalities, and Talents

Teachers appreciate students’ diverse cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic, and racial and ethnic backgrounds and understand and value the range of abilities they possess. They capitalize on student diversity¹ to enrich the pursuit of academic, social, and civic goals. Teachers also recognize that students come to them already competent along several key cognitive, behavioral, and physical dimensions, and they take advantage of each student’s knowledge and experience to enrich instruction. Teachers might, for instance, make use of multicultural activities in which students share their own experiences and customs, or arrange for students to participate in a community-sponsored cultural festival. Incorporating literacy skills while celebrating cultural identity, for example, a teacher might help students organize, illustrate, and publish a cookbook of family recipes to reflect the diversity of the classroom, school, or community.

At the same time, however, teachers know that students of a particular age, without regard to their background, share many of the same interests, have had similar successes, face common challenges, and enjoy many of the same kinds of

¹ *Diversity* in this document includes race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, language, culture, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, body image, and gender.

experiences and learning opportunities. Teachers know that most students respond well to hands-on instructional activities or activities that link instruction to aspects of the peer and community culture, and they take this into account in designing instruction. A teacher might sponsor a book club, for instance, that includes adults and learners of varying ability levels. Thus, although they capitalize on the diversity among their students as an opportunity for learning and keep those diverse learning needs in mind as they plan instruction, accomplished teachers also use students' similarities as a tool for promoting cohesiveness and engagement in learning activities.

Teachers know that students aspire to success and that students with exceptional needs, in particular, benefit from efforts to develop their self-confidence so that they can take their place in the larger school setting and in the community. Teachers create learning opportunities that highlight individual growth so that students recognize their potential and develop positive self-concepts. For example, a teacher might encourage a student who displays distinct social capabilities and ease in public speaking to seek election to a leadership position in student council, class, or club activities.

Teachers Advocate for Students

Accomplished teachers champion students' interests, helping them participate fully with their peers and helping them to learn self-advocacy. Teachers understand the special pressures and frustrations that some students with exceptional needs experience and the significant physical, emotional, and cognitive challenges unique to their exceptionalities. Teachers therefore enlist the expertise of colleagues, family members, and others in counseling and advising students on a wide range of issues, from academic progress to social relationships. Doing so enables teachers to identify students' strengths, interests, and talents and support students' learning and development. As advocates for students, accomplished teachers base decisions on students' needs, even when those decisions are difficult to implement or contrary to popular opinions. Teachers recognize that their professional responsibility includes defending students when students cannot defend themselves.

Teachers foster the growth of networks of support and self-help that make students' school experiences positive. Drawing from the varied settings that serve students, vital links in these support networks include school administrators, general education teachers, paraeducators, mentors, school counselors, therapists, psychologists, social workers, medical professionals, peers, and family members, as well as community agencies, leisure providers, universities, and local businesses.

Standard II

Knowledge of Philosophy, History, and Law

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs understand how philosophical, historical, and legal foundations of their field inform the development of effective practice. They draw on this knowledge to organize and design appropriate practices and to ensure that students' rights are protected and respected.

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs are grounded in the philosophy, history, and laws that provide the basis for effective practice. They know and appreciate the legal rights and responsibilities of students and their families and ensure that the rights of all students are recognized, respected, and protected. They can explain the reasons for instructional choices and the materials, equipment, and resources needed to teach students with exceptional needs.

As professionals, accomplished teachers not only know what is right to do but also do what is right. Teachers of students with exceptional needs understand the provisions of the laws pertaining to their students and how they apply to their practice. As their educational practices and philosophy have evolved, however, they have gained greater knowledge and experience, and have come to appreciate and demonstrate the true spirit of the law. Beyond simply knowing and understanding the law, they apply it to enrich their teaching and to enhance meaningful learning for their students. The philosophy guiding the practice of accomplished teachers extends beyond a certain set of educational standards and reflects a commitment to equity and access for all students. Teachers reflect deeply on what they believe, can articulate their personal philosophy, share it with others, and infuse it throughout their practice.

Accomplished teachers maintain a strong philosophical foundation grounded in their depth of knowledge about effective teaching practices and student learning and inspired by deep reflection about equity, human rights, and quality of life for students with exceptional needs. Teachers' beliefs derive from their professional preparation, their experience, and their analysis of contemporary research and professional materials.

Teachers have an understanding of the history of their field in the United States and of the federal, state, and local laws and significant court decisions that

eliminate discrimination and bias and entitle all students to a free, appropriate public education in learning environments that best serve students' needs. Additionally, teachers are knowledgeable about broad philosophical influences that arose in the twentieth century that promoted an acceptance of exceptionality within the human experience and specified the rights of individuals to participate in and contribute to society. Teachers know that special education laws are rooted in civil rights legislation designed to protect access, participation, and progress in education. They have an appreciation for how the historical struggle of children and adults against segregation and exclusion from mainstream society has formed the basis of their educational practices and has shaped the teacher's role in educating students with exceptional needs, including those who are members of racial and ethnic groups and language minorities.

Accomplished teachers understand that these historical, philosophical, and legal processes have contributed to new assumptions and principles about educating students with exceptional needs, including the idea that all children have the right to be educated in settings with their peers, receive an education appropriate for their educational and developmental needs, and maximize their potential for growth into productive adulthood. Drawing upon their knowledge of history, philosophy, and law, teachers also acknowledge how their individual beliefs about children with exceptionalities affect their practices and their commitment to educating all children in settings that best meet their needs.

These teachers have an understanding of federal, state, and local laws that has led to the development of their field as a discipline and a set of practices. They understand and appreciate the dynamic nature of lawmaking and recognize that changes in laws influence the roles and responsibilities of teachers. Further, they recognize the importance of related education and disability laws that influence educational environments and the range of service options, coordination of services across systems, collaboration among professionals and with families, and transition services. For example, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act have drawn national attention to the importance of high-quality teaching of children with exceptional needs and have redefined the standards for preparing and certifying highly qualified teachers. The Americans with Disabilities Act and related laws, for instance, protect the educational and employment rights of children and adults with exceptional needs. Such legislative decisions signal the need for teachers to be responsive in their practice, while at the same time recognizing the fundamental, enduring principles embedded in the laws. Teachers actively seek information to stay abreast of legal mandates and educational trends in their field. Teachers of students who are gifted, for example, familiarize themselves with district policies and state laws regarding the identification and education of students who are gifted, and advocate effectively for equitable access for and treatment of students. (See [Standard XII—Reflective Practice](#).)

Teachers Are Effective Advocates

Accomplished teachers comply with the laws and understand their advocacy role in safeguarding the due process rights of students and families in decisions about assessment, placement, instruction, and transition. Teachers recognize their responsibility to ensure to the best of their ability that everyone involved in educating students with exceptional needs is informed about legal mandates that protect student and family rights. Within their advocacy role, they may participate in or lead task forces on policies and practices in their field, working not only with colleagues and families but also with community representatives. They are articulate in explaining the specialized instruction for students with exceptional needs and the specialized materials, equipment, and financial resources required to provide instruction. When faced with challenges, teachers pursue creative options, such as collaborative partnerships within the school and with community organizations, universities, and businesses.

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs use their knowledge of law and foundations to enhance the understanding of their peers and related professionals about the philosophy and laws that shape their roles, practices, and collaboration. Teachers advocate for students to have meaningful access to the general curriculum, appropriate learning opportunities, and related activities. In some cases, these teachers challenge the philosophy and educational delivery system of the school, the district, or the service agency and advocate for changes to meet the needs of students and their families. Teachers may collaborate with other professionals within the school, such as the psychologist, counselor, or social worker, to implement positive behavioral and learning interventions. A teacher may need to consider the full impact of a child with intensive needs in the general education setting and advocate for appropriate supports and resources within that setting or for a review of the appropriateness of the placement. Teachers might collaborate with general and special education teachers and career-vocational educators to develop combined academic and career-vocational programs to prepare students for post-secondary transition. In such situations, teachers consistently and effectively work to resolve disagreements, bring about necessary changes, and maintain or expand productive and essential programs and services. (See [Standard XI—Contributing to the Profession and to Education through Collaboration](#).)

Teachers Exemplify High Ethical Ideals

The practice of accomplished teachers is consistent with the codes of ethics and standards of their profession, including reflecting on the ethical dimensions of decisions regarding confidentiality; placement; distribution of resources; instructional practices; and relationships with students, families, and other professionals. They are fully conversant with laws, regulations, and policies protecting students' and families' rights of privacy, and they are meticulous in controlling access to confidential information. Furthermore, they ensure that colleagues and families understand and observe protocols of confidentiality. Teachers verify that services designed to benefit students and families adhere to ethical standards.

Standard III Diversity

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs create an environment in which equitable treatment, fairness, and respect for diversity are modeled, taught, and practiced by all, and they take steps to ensure access to quality learning opportunities for all students.

The populations served by teachers of students with exceptional needs are diverse across many dimensions. Accomplished teachers ensure that all students—regardless of their exceptionality, race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, language, culture, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, body image, or gender—receive equal opportunities to participate in, enjoy, and benefit from needed services, instructional activities, learning experiences, and resources. In all settings where students receive services, teachers insist that all individuals are treated with fairness and respect. These teachers comprehend the challenges faced by many of their students who, because of their exceptionalities, may be excluded from opportunities available to other students. Accomplished teachers know the range of inequities that keep students from meaningful access to quality programs and services and are committed to making such programs available to all.

Teachers Create Environments in which Equity, Fairness, and Diversity Are Modeled, Taught, and Practiced

By showing respect for and valuing all members of their communities and having high expectations that their students will treat one another fairly and with dignity, exceptional needs teachers model and promote the behavior necessary for a diverse society. They know that the attitudes they display as they work with students, families, colleagues, community members, and others who support the learning process provide powerful models for students. As a result, they conscientiously demonstrate in their own behaviors the kind of behavior they expect from students and others.

Accomplished teachers create learning environments that value the dignity and worth of each individual. To help all students feel welcome as active contributors, teachers design instruction, materials, and curricula that reflect the diversity of learners and illuminate their significance in teaching and learning experiences. Native language and multicultural materials, for example, allow English language learners to see themselves represented culturally and linguistically. Sensitive to the complexities involved in treating each student equitably, teachers make sure that all pupils

receive appropriate attention and that their assessments of student progress offer multiple avenues for success. The broad range of characteristics, backgrounds, and developmental levels among students with exceptionalities provides accomplished teachers the opportunity to raise awareness among their students of how to respond to others different from themselves and how to honor others' strengths and abilities. Teachers actively and positively challenge those who express inappropriate perspectives on others, teaching the importance of equality, fairness, and respect. (See [Standard VIII—Curriculum and Instruction](#) and [Standard IX—Learning Environment](#).)

Within all contexts where students are served, teachers appreciate the importance of helping others understand the nature and complexity of students with exceptionalities. Certain students, for instance, might be presumed to choose not to work to their potential, when in fact their behavior reflects their particular exceptionality. Teachers work proactively with colleagues who serve these students to communicate a clear understanding of each student's strengths and needs, and to eliminate potential misunderstanding, stereotyping, biases, and discrimination. Teachers have a repertoire of strategies to build others' awareness, sensitivity, acceptance, and appreciation for students with exceptionalities who are members of their classrooms, schools, and communities, and they collaborate with general education teachers and others to implement these strategies. They encourage the selection of instructional materials that depict diverse groups of children and adults with exceptionalities. They seek opportunities to share experiences and deepen mutual understandings of the nature of exceptionalities.

Teachers Respect the Diversity of Families

Accomplished teachers are aware of and responsive to family and cultural issues that affect beliefs, expectations, and norms for behaviors. Teachers understand, for example, that in some families having the student lead an individualized education program meeting may be interpreted as disrespectful or inappropriate by the family because of differences in roles and responsibilities assumed by children from that particular cultural group. Respecting the family's autonomy, teachers use culturally accepted ways of seeking information from families to help determine how to meet students' needs. To provide families access to information useful in designating appropriate services for students and in identifying their rights and responsibilities under the law, teachers secure materials in families' native languages or otherwise ensure that families understand the information being conveyed. Teachers, for example, might use interpreters to assist communication with students and families who are deaf or hard of hearing. (See [Standard IV—Family Partnerships](#).)

Teachers Ensure Access to Quality Learning Experiences

Accomplished teachers ensure that all students are appropriately and fairly given access to the high-quality programs and opportunities they need. They make sure that accountability systems incorporate diverse learners with exceptionalities and include appropriate assessments, modifications, and accommodations. A

multi-tiered assessment, for example, might enable a teacher to identify students with gifts and talents. Teachers work against barriers that inhibit understanding the whole child. They understand and are sensitive to cultural, ethnic, gender, economic, and linguistic differences that may be misinterpreted. They know that lack of attention to these factors can lead to inappropriate assessment of students, over- and under-identification of students for special services, and inappropriate placement and instruction. The over-representation of certain groups, for instance, may result in their isolation in restrictive environments. Teachers ask questions, seek the assistance of other professionals, and take actions to ensure the appropriate assessment and identification of students and to improve instructional services for them.

Standard IV

Family Partnerships

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs work collaboratively with parents, guardians, and other caregivers to promote understanding of the student and to achieve educational goals.

Teachers view parents, guardians, and other caregivers as partners in a productive dialogue to benefit students. They regard collaboration with families as essential in providing the support, motivation, and understanding students desire and need to advance their own learning. Through such relationships, teachers gain knowledge about their students. In turn, with families they celebrate successes and address challenges that often accompany educating and providing care for students with exceptional needs. Teachers serve as a resource for families and provide them with a wide range of information and support to help them become significant partners in educating their children.

Teachers Gain Insight about Students through Partnerships with Families

Accomplished teachers recognize that families are insightful observers and reporters of their children's strengths and needs. They understand that families have a crucial and continuing influence on their children's development and on their attitudes toward school, learning, and work. Teachers know how to engage families appropriately and effectively in their children's educational programs and collaborate with them to promote their children's growth. Thus, teachers signal clearly through words and deeds the importance of families as partners, striving to keep communication open in an amicable dialogue and involving families in the student's instructional progress.

Teachers know that significant benefits accrue from regular interactions with families: families gain confidence and competence in participating as partners in their children's education, and teachers gain understanding about students that assists them in addressing students' needs. Through open communication teachers can obtain information about changes or events in the home environment, such as adjustments to a student's medication, which affect learning and behavior. Effective communication with families helps teachers learn about students' backgrounds, such as their home languages, that may have an impact on instruction. To further students' development, teachers actively seek to learn about the cultures of which

their students are a part, respecting cultural identities and acknowledging cultural factors and traditions that may influence students' learning.

Accomplished teachers treat families with sensitivity and respect, and they respond thoughtfully and thoroughly to families' concerns and needs. Teachers understand that families vary in how they view exceptionalities and in how they participate with professionals and schools. Teachers who recognize differences in values, relationships, and routines between home and school environments promote positive, constructive interactions. Communicating with and involving families is complex, even when families and professionals speak the same language and share opinions and values; when they differ, effective communication is even more important. Teachers are empathetic listeners as they inquire about family perspectives on education, behavior, and expectations for student progress. They seek to achieve mutual understanding in support of the best interests of students. In searching for common ground that respects family and community values, however, teachers do not sacrifice important instructional goals.

Teachers Collaborate with Families to Support Students' Education

Teachers seek family input to complement, enrich, and expand student learning. They are adept at exchanging information and ideas with families so parents and other caregivers understand how their children are progressing with educational goals and so teachers can respond appropriately to family concerns. Together, teachers and families discuss expectations and priorities. As necessary, teachers interpret assessment results, portfolio entries, and school rules for families and discuss student work in a manner that provides families with an accurate and understandable explanation of their children's progress. In some cases, an accomplished teacher may be the first person to work with families to identify what students can do instead of what they cannot do. Teachers collaborate with families to help students set goals, develop effective learning habits and study skills, complete assignments, build positive social relationships with peers and others, and improve performance. For example, a teacher of a student with severe or multiple disabilities might need to explain to a family the cognitive delays of their middle school-aged child who is being instructed at a preschool level, whereas a teacher of a student who is gifted may initiate a discussion on the appropriateness of subject or grade acceleration. Additionally, teachers take steps to ensure that parents have opportunities to share information about their language and culture and discuss their concerns about how these factors may influence a student's performance or the interpretation of that performance.

Teachers are sensitive to varied family roles and structures, and understand the diverse circumstances in which students live. Accomplished teachers support students by recognizing their situations, acknowledging the differing levels of involvement parents may have—absent, challenging, knowledgeable, highly engaged—and adjusting their interactions to match family needs. Whatever the extent of family involvement, however, teachers recognize that they are responsible for ensuring the

educational progress of each student by accommodating the student's needs and the goals of individualized education and transition plans.

Teachers Serve as Links in Family Resource Networks

Accomplished teachers are knowledgeable about programs and materials for parent education and support that provide resources families can use to extend and complement school-based learning activities, such as family support groups, vocational rehabilitation, counseling, and mental health services. As advocates for their students in a range of instructional environments, teachers collaborate with families and with professional colleagues to foster success for students in all settings. Teachers therefore are alert to students' and families' special needs, and they help families identify and access community services and programs that can meet those needs. Teachers, for instance, might acquaint some families with opportunities for academic enrichment. Some families might request information about community organizations that teach sign language. Teachers know that strengthening the family's ability to be self-sustaining and independent is crucial to their success in supporting student achievement.

Student Learning and Development

Standard V Assessment

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs design, select, and use a variety of assessments to obtain accurate, useful, and timely information about student learning and development and to help students reflect on their own progress.

Accomplished teachers recognize that the assessment and evaluation of student progress must be a continuous process, not an occasional event. They have a comprehensive view of assessment that encompasses a range of formal and informal evaluation methods, such as screening and pre-assessment services, progress monitoring, observation, and remediation and outcome assessments.

Teachers Use Diverse Assessment Methods for a Variety of Purposes

Accomplished teachers view assessment as a tool for measuring progress, defining realistic goals, determining appropriate placement options, and helping students understand their strengths and needs. Their emphasis on student growth requires the knowledge and use of a wide range of assessments, such as norm- and criterion-referenced assessments, formative and summative assessments, and formal and informal assessments. Through such assessments, teachers establish the student's baseline performance by which progress can be monitored over time. As part of a team, teachers determine student eligibility for special services and evaluate student access to and participation in the general education curriculum. Teachers draw conclusions about student needs as they interpret assessment results and align the student's individual goals and learning objectives with the data collected. Teachers recognize that assessment instruments and procedures serve different purposes and are careful to use the appropriate data when making decisions regarding students. Teachers adeptly use multiple evaluation methods, both formal and informal. Where appropriate, teachers select and use standardized assessment instruments and interpret the results clearly and accurately. Teachers also evaluate student progress through observation and questioning and frequently

develop their own informal assessment tools, which might include journals, portfolios, demonstrations, exhibitions, or oral presentations. For students in early childhood, for example, a playtime assessment might be effective. To measure learning for some students, performance-based assessments, such as writing a play or creating a piece of music might be appropriate. In using assessment data as a basis for decisions about instruction, teachers view their findings not only as indicators of student understanding and progress, but also as a means of reflecting on their own practice.

Teachers establish clear and succinct criteria for instructional goals, thus enabling students to understand assessment norms. They help students learn to judge their own work, and in some cases, the work of others. Where appropriate, teachers allow students to participate in the process of choosing assessments that best display the students' skills and accomplishments. They encourage students to set high and attainable goals for themselves, and they select strategies that help students reach those goals, teaching them to develop the habit of self-assessment as they evaluate their own progress and practice making decisions on the basis of their conclusions. Teachers, for instance, might instruct students to transfer rubrics used to guide their writing in an English course to writing assignments in other disciplines.

Teachers support student achievement in a range of assessments, including those for classroom, school, district, and state accountability purposes, as well as post-secondary training and college entrance examinations. When possible, teachers encourage students to advocate for themselves in identifying and securing modifications and accommodations that fit their needs. A teacher might encourage a student who has oral articulation problems but strong writing skills, for example, to use technology that permits communication with others in writing while the student works to develop clearer articulation. To ensure that students who have exceptional needs access high-stakes assessments, teachers evaluate students to recommend appropriate accommodations, carefully following guidelines that uphold a test's validity. By doing so, teachers enhance opportunities for student success in the face of heightened academic accountability. Affirming that assessments must reflect the high standards they set for students, teachers encourage the implementation of appropriate, unbiased, and necessary tests and testing programs.

Teachers acknowledge the limitations of certain evaluative instruments that may reflect linguistic, cultural, or economic bias and therefore make appropriate choices for accurate and realistic assessments. Students who are learning English as a new language may need diagnostic materials in their native language. For students whose exceptionality dictates a mode of communication other than spoken English, assessment strategies may require modification or the use of alternative instruments, and results may require special interpretation. A student who is deaf, for example, might need assistance in clarifying the meaning of a written response structured in the phraseology of American Sign Language. A student who is visually impaired might require environmental accommodations and modifications. A student with limited verbal communication skills may need to be assessed using a nonverbal instrument.

When appropriate tests or other assessment instruments are not available, teachers employ creative strategies to derive valid measurements of student achievement.

Accomplished teachers measure student progress when students move from one instructional environment to another to determine whether the settings support student achievement. Assessments over diverse learning contexts range from informal observations that result in immediate adjustments to formal diagnostic measurements that teachers consider in light of long-term goals. Teachers document learning and growth within the varied contexts of academic, social, and work environments. They conduct assessments as students move from early intervention programs to school, from elementary to middle school, from special to general education, or from school to work-related environments. Secondary teachers continue appropriate assessments to help students succeed beyond school environments into vocational programs, community-based and job settings, or institutions of higher learning. Teachers anticipate how students may respond to changes in learning environments and provide assessment information to help students, all service providers, and families achieve successful transitions.

Teachers Collaborate in the Assessment Process

To evaluate student progress across various settings, teachers receive, analyze, and interpret assessment data from numerous sources, such as general education teachers, school personnel, families, psychologists, private clinicians, counselors, speech pathologists, bilingual educators, reading specialists, medical and professional agencies, and others. Teachers ask incisive questions to gauge how others view their students. Understanding that accurate and thorough assessment information is vital to accomplished teaching, they use this information to select appropriate curriculum and design instruction. A teacher of young children, for example, might devise a checklist to measure a student's progress in multiple skills over several environments and from that data create curriculum and determine instructional strategies specific to that student's needs. In helping students achieve success in educational and career goals after leaving high school, teachers might work with transition assessment specialists to match courses of study, accommodations, self-determination skills, and community and vocational resources to students' needs.

Teachers work collaboratively with a full range of school personnel and other professional colleagues on issues of student assessment to ensure that students with exceptionalities access curriculum and achieve success. Aware of accommodations available for assessments in various contexts and focusing on the specific needs of their students, teachers assist general education colleagues in creating, accommodating, and modifying assessment tools that ensure access to the curriculum and accurately reflect the progress of students with exceptional needs. To measure achievement in the general education curriculum, teachers evaluate how well accommodations and modifications function for particular students.

Familiar with the benefits and limitations of different instruments and procedures of evaluation, these teachers carefully match assessment techniques to students'

developmental levels and to the particular attributes being assessed and then judge the appropriateness of the techniques in the context of students' educational goals. Teachers of students who are blind and visually impaired, for example, might collaborate with diagnosticians and school psychologists to plan assessments of developmental skills and academic functioning that yield useful, meaningful information specific to students' exceptionalities. When diagnostic assessments have been concluded they participate in meetings with appropriate staff members, family members, students, and others to interpret the results and explain their implications. They may also conduct workshops and training sessions to keep staff abreast of advances in student and program assessments. In such ways accomplished teachers fulfill their role as specialists or consultants in purposeful assessment.

Accomplished teachers welcome and include students and families in the assessment process. Families and teachers work together to develop and monitor individual plans for students and to assess student progress toward mastery of particular goals or objectives. Family involvement is important in helping teachers understand how students function at home and in the community. Teachers join with families to create effective communication systems to provide each other frequent and substantive information about student progress. Such options as regular meetings, telephone appointments, electronic communications, daily journals, home visits, video conferences, and other strategies mutually reinforce learning at school, at home, and in the community.

Standard VI

Communication

Accomplished teachers recognize the critical nature of communication for students with exceptional needs. They develop and foster communication skills that enable students to access, comprehend, and apply information; acquire knowledge; and develop and maintain interpersonal relationships.

Teachers Understand Language Acquisition and Development

Accomplished teachers know that students acquire language through the exchange of meaningful messages, so teachers provide students with multiple opportunities to practice language with one another and with others in school and in the community. Teachers understand that authentic communication can take place anywhere in many different modes and that the true essence of communication is the exchange of meaningful information between partners regardless of the complexity of the messages. Teachers also understand that for students to succeed in language learning, instructional contexts must be significant to students, who benefit when they see themselves as partners in their language education. Some students, for instance, might be inspired to learn technical vocabulary related to a particular field. The teacher of a student with severe communication disorders, for example, might help the student understand the concept that apple means snack or juice box means juice, and then encourage the student to point to an apple or to a juice box to indicate hunger or thirst, respectively. Accomplished teachers recognize that students' needs guide effective language learning, which occurs when students perceive the personal importance of the instruction.

Accomplished teachers understand language variations and speech and language disabilities. They know that language is learned through approximation of standard usages and that making mistakes is an integral part of language learning. Teachers design communication opportunities in which experimentation, failure to communicate successfully, and success teach students to help themselves take risks in their language learning, strengthen their ability to repair their communication, and develop meaningful interactive exchanges. Teachers support students' use of invented spellings in early writing, for instance, but know when to provide constructive feedback. A teacher might reinforce a student's talent and interest in public speaking, for example, by filming a debate or mock trial and then critiquing the student's presentation. Accomplished teachers use a wide range of response activities for the purpose of language assessment, such as dramatic productions, stories, and communication that occurs naturally in a variety of settings. By offering a

selection of choices, teachers provide students opportunities to improve and expand their language abilities.

To foster language development teachers provide students with messages that are scaffolded so that learners can extract meaning from them. Employing appropriate complexity for the developmental needs of each student, teachers use graphic organizers, visual representations, and concrete objects to clarify language that students encounter in textbooks and other learning materials and to clarify language used to deliver instruction. Teachers know that supporting language instruction in these ways is especially important for students acquiring a new language or dialect.

Teachers skillfully observe their students' progress in developing language and literacy skills, determine what students need to learn next, and design special interventions as necessary. Teachers understand that communication involves a wide variety of factors and conditions relating to thought, speech, language, and hearing. They recognize both overt and subtle communicative breakdowns and skillfully provide appropriate instructional support. For example, an accomplished teacher would perceive that a student who responds, "Ding, Ding, Ding, Ding, you are free to move about the cabin" when asked to identify something that flies has answered correctly because the student is expressing knowledge in the correct context. Immediate instructional support might include helping the student access the word airplane by providing the initial sound or a selection of words from which to choose. Long-term instructional support might include having the student practice describing objects by their shape, category, and function.

As careful listeners and observers, teachers identify communication delays, disorders, and differences and respond to them as they occur, adjusting their own language as appropriate to ensure student comprehension. In evaluating language acquisition problems, teachers consider a range of language-learning issues, such as prior exposure to curriculum, cognitive and learning characteristics, and academic and experiential backgrounds. Teachers recognize that individuals with communication disorders often struggle with language at its most basic level and sometimes have difficulty making themselves understood clearly. A student may state that someone buttered him, for example, when he means that he has been bothered. Students may have difficulty composing their thoughts and ideas or understanding what others say. They may be able to imitate words and phrases but not use words properly. For instance, when questioned about a disruptive incident, a student who has difficulty with expressive language may say that she pushed a friend, when in fact, she was pushed. Another student may talk about personal home situations or private bodily functions without understanding how doing so transgresses norms and expectations for appropriate communication in particular social settings. Another student may not know the rules of polite conversation and interrupt at inappropriate times or change topics abruptly.

Accomplished teachers understand the need to differentiate between communication needs based on language or dialectical differences and those that are exceptionality-based. They recognize the numerous challenges faced by

students who do not speak English as their primary language or who speak dialects of English and ensure that all students are given every opportunity to succeed. Teachers know that regional language patterns and dialectical variations could be mistakenly interpreted as speech and language delays or deficiencies. In some instances, these perceived delays or deficiencies trigger referrals for special services when they are unnecessary. Spanish speakers, for example, may have difficulty consistently producing the [j] or *sh* sound in English because it does not occur in Spanish, just as some English speakers have difficulty trilling the [rr] sound in Spanish words like *perro* or *burro*. Accomplished teachers also know that some errors that on the surface appear to be reading miscues, such as reversing the [k] and [s] sounds in *ask*, may actually reflect dialect differences. Teachers collaborate with specialists and professional colleagues, including bilingual educators and English as a new language specialists, to evaluate students who are linguistically diverse and determine whether they need language support services, special education services, or both. In addition, accomplished teachers develop collaborative assessment tools to accurately evaluate students with linguistic diversity, understanding that students are best assessed and served within and across many contexts and with multiple communication partners.

Teachers are sensitive to cultural influences on communication related to student learning, both academically and socially. They understand that different cultures have different styles of interaction in terms of preferred language or mode of communication, body language, voice tone and intensity, attitudes about personal space, and role perceptions. Furthermore, teachers acknowledge and respect differences in students' life experiences, world views, cultures, mores, and values. Many people who are deaf, for example, regard American Sign Language as an important part of their culture and wish to preserve it for future generations. The teacher of a student from a Mexican background, for example, who alters the student's word choice from *graveyard* to *park* in a story about picnicking in a cemetery on *Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead) has not honored the student's cultural heritage if this is the way her family observes this holiday.

Accomplished teachers understand that all behavior is a form of communication and that inappropriate behavior is often a response to communication breakdowns. For some students, powerful emotions affect their communication skills and create a variety of communication barriers. Teachers comprehend the complex relationships between communication and emotion, and they demonstrate patience and tolerance in teaching and assessing expectations for communication. They understand and anticipate the emotional responses triggered by aspects of communication, such as tone, voice volume, and word choice. They listen. They guide students to express themselves accurately and appropriately.

Teachers can differentiate between aspects of students' communication that require language-related interventions and those that require behavior-based interventions. They also acknowledge the necessity, at times, for explicit instruction on expectations and behaviors to assist students in developing a repertoire of interaction skills. A teacher whose student gains attention by yelling or hitting, for example,

knows how to replace that communication system with more appropriate behavior to advance the student's educational and social development. Teachers interpret the real message behind the behavior being exhibited. For a student with autism spectrum disorder whose communication breakdowns occur each time he goes to breakfast but never at lunch, for example, an accomplished teacher would investigate whether the behavior results from several different factors dealing with food choice, peer relationships, time of day, or communication partners. After gathering and assessing meaningful data to determine the nature of the communication events, the teacher would intervene accordingly to create and implement appropriate communication exchanges, collaborating with the student, staff, and peers involved. Accomplished teachers regard a student's behavior as a source of information and insight into the child's communication, not as a problem to be corrected.

Teachers understand students' behavior in relation to their communication skills and introduce strategies that enable students to gain insight into their behavior and relieve their frustrations in constructive ways. By giving students opportunities to discuss their opinions and ideas and to share personal reflections and beliefs, for instance, teachers help them communicate their intentions clearly so what they communicate is acceptable to others. (See [Standard VII—Social Development and Behavior](#) and [Standard IX—Learning Environment](#).)

Teachers Use Unique Strategies to Develop Communication Skills

Teachers use learning strategies appropriate to the language development levels and communication needs of all their students. For some students, teachers might obtain augmentative and assistive technology, special equipment, or electronic devices, such as screen readers and alternative keyboards. When designing electronically-mediated instruction, accomplished teachers consider students' communication needs as well as the developmental, mental, and physical abilities required to use communication devices effectively. For example, technology that reads and interprets facial expressions might help a student with autism spectrum disorder understand others' emotions and respond appropriately. To assist students who are mildly disabled frame responses to a language arts lesson, a teacher might utilize interactive technology that allows the immediate viewing of student feedback. As necessary, teachers collaborate with speech and language experts concerning students' communication needs.

Students with Moderate to Severe Communication Disorders

Teachers of students with moderate to severe communication disorders know that for students to be proficient in their chosen mode of communication, it must be understandable with many different partners in several environments. Teachers are innovative in addressing students' communication difficulties and design meaningful, developmentally appropriate language learning contexts tailored to students' needs. The solutions teachers derive to address students' communication difficulties demonstrate flexibilities and offer varied opportunities to gain and exchange knowledge and information. For a student with severe articulation problems, for example, an accomplished teacher might construct a communication board featuring favorite

objects or pictures representing the student's most common words and phrases and most relevant and important needs. These objects, such as a drinking cup or special spoon, would have rich meaning and functional significance for the student and, once incorporated into the student's school day, might inspire communication with partners.

Accomplished teachers employ strategies and methods to enable each student to learn and use both receptive and expressive communication skills. They are familiar with augmentative and assistive communication devices and, when appropriate, evaluate and recommend specific equipment for individual students. Teachers, for instance, can successfully train a nonverbal student with multiple exceptionalities to use a portable, talking communications device to maximize the student's receptive and expressive capabilities. Teachers help students develop the highest level of communication skills possible, whether written, verbal, gestural, pictorial, or aided through a communication device.

Accomplished teachers recognize that functional communication skills are essential for students with moderate to severe communication disorders, so they include in their language arts instruction a special focus on functional reading and writing, such as decoding bus schedules and street signs and compiling shopping lists; following written directions; developing listening skills; and acquiring a basic vocabulary that allows students to express themselves, comprehend safety warnings, and understand others at home and in the community. They do so in a manner that is age appropriate and sensitive to students' level of competence to increase the prospects that students can reach their full potential.

Students with Visual Impairments

Accomplished teachers of students who are blind and visually impaired are knowledgeable about the broad spectrum of specialized and unique communication skills for their students and multiple strategies to implement specialized communication skills. They understand the critical need for their students to be proficient in a variety of communication skills and tools to access and participate in all teaching and learning activities in their education curricula and in all school environments. These unique communication skills may include reading and writing braille, interpreting tactile graphics, using assistive technology, listening, and using low vision devices to read and write print. Teachers ensure that students have the specialized and unique knowledge and skills to communicate efficiently and independently in all settings.

Teachers ensure that students are actively engaged in communication activities in their primary learning medium at the same level as their sighted peers, especially if braille is needed. If a student reads and writes in braille, the teacher provides instruction so the student is knowledgeable in all braille codes, such as literary, Nemeth, music, and computer and tactile graphics. They teach students to use a variety of technology tools and equipment for braille and speech access for communication, such as braille writers (both manual and electronic), braille note-takers, refreshable braille displays, braille translation software, speech screen readers, and digital players.

A teacher, for example, might instruct a student who reads and writes in braille at the middle school level how to access all books and related curriculum materials in braille and tactile formats. For this student, the teacher would ensure that science and social studies materials are in braille and tactile graphics and that the student has the appropriate assistive technology tools. The teacher would make available tools such as a braille note-taker that translates from braille to print and print to braille and a laptop computer with braille access so the student can participate fully in the classroom. For a student who knows music braille code, the teacher might arrange access to braille music materials and tools for reading and creating braille music for the student to participate in choir and band. The teacher provides instruction so the student has the braille literacy skills to participate independently and efficiently in teaching and learning activities.

For a student who reads and writes in print and uses low vision devices, the teacher provides instruction so the student is knowledgeable about how to access print information for near and distance visual tasks. Teachers instruct students in using a variety of low vision devices to engage in all teaching and learning activities in all environments. A teacher, for example, might instruct a first grade student in using a magnifier to assist with map skills during geography lessons. The teacher might also provide a monocular telescope so the student can independently read letters on the whiteboard at the front of the room during a spelling lesson or read the menu posted at lunchtime in the cafeteria.

If a student communicates using tactile communication strategies, the teacher collaborates with team members to ensure appropriate and meaningful materials are created and provided in multiple literacy modes, such as tangible symbols, tactile symbols, and braille. The teacher provides instruction in the skills necessary to interpret tactile symbols and ensures they are used in all teaching and learning activities. A teacher, for example, would show a student in early childhood how to find the tactile symbol with a miniature wheel to communicate with the classroom teacher that it is time to get on the bus to go home, or to use the tactile symbol with a miniature cane to communicate that it is time for mobility lessons with the orientation and mobility specialist.

To teach and provide specialized communications skills, teachers have access to a wide array of resources and entities. They engage in a variety of evaluation activities to identify appropriate communication skills, work collaboratively with team members to enable students to communicate effectively in all environments, and monitor student performance to ensure success.

Students Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Teachers know that language and communication access and development are central to the well-being and to the learning of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Teachers are fluent in the languages or modes of communication students might use, such as American Sign Language, cued speech, Signed Exact English, or Pidgin. In working with students and families to select appropriate modes of

instruction, teachers take account of the controversies surrounding communication methodologies and philosophies and can articulate the arguments for and against each philosophy as they relate to the home and community circumstances of each student.

Teachers are familiar with current technological devices specifically related to the communication needs of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. They are knowledgeable about the benefits and drawbacks to cochlear implants and can provide families a variety of resources regarding this procedure. Teachers are familiar with varied forms of assistive technology, such as augmentative devices that change voice into text or voice and text into sign language; assistive listening devices, such as FM radio signals, infrared lights, and induction loop systems; visual assistive devices, such as video phones, video relay services, and visual PA systems; and text-driven electronic programs.

Teachers understand the urgency of early intervention for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, since many enter school with severe language delays. To close this gap, teachers might collaborate with general education teachers, families, peer helpers, audiologists, and other professionals to enact a number of teaching and learning strategies, such as preparing graphic organizers matched to students' developmental levels, captioning materials with helpful signs or symbols, incorporating lessons depicting familiar objects or activities paired with appropriate signs, arranging for field trips rich with multiple vocabulary opportunities, or designing test-taking accommodations.

Accomplished teachers can predict areas that will be difficult for students who are deaf and hard of hearing to grasp and develop strategies to meet these needs. In teaching from a text, for example, a teacher might scan the text to identify clusters—phrases that require translation into American Sign Language—and teach those clusters or emphasize them if they have already been taught.

For students who are deaf or hard of hearing, teachers understand the importance of managing instructional environments to ensure equitable access to learning opportunities. By managing ambient noise, incorporating group work or cooperative learning, relying on interpreters, using assistive devices and other technological supports, or implementing other effective strategies, teachers create appropriate contexts that support auditory and visual access for students.

Accomplished teachers of students who are deaf or hard of hearing have a deep knowledge of human speech and linguistics, including phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatic communication; the anatomy and physiology of the human auditory system; acoustics and the physics of sound; theories of primary and secondary language acquisition both in children who are hearing and in those who are deaf or hard of hearing; and theories of visual learning, especially spatial communication and instructional and memory aids (visual mnemonics).

Teachers Collaborate with General Educators, Related Service Providers, and Others to Facilitate Student Language Development

Accomplished teachers understand that language development is a shared responsibility of all who provide services to students with exceptional needs, so they collaborate with general education teachers, bilingual specialists, speech and language therapists, families, and others to determine the nature of a student's communicative abilities and initiate appropriate instructional strategies. Teachers know that with proper professional development, allocation of resources, and coordination of services, students who have communication difficulties or who are linguistically diverse can successfully access general education curriculum and misidentification can be reduced.

Standard VII

Social Development and Behavior

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs cultivate a sense of efficacy in their students as they develop each student's personal responsibility and independence, civic and social responsibility, respect for diverse individuals and groups, and ability to work constructively and collaboratively with others.

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs take responsibility for helping students become independent, contributing members of society who maintain healthy and constructive relationships with others in their schools and homes, in the workplace, and in community and civic life. Their instructional decisions reflect the recognition that physical, intellectual, social, and ethical development are interdependent and that exceptionalities often affect each of these domains. Teachers view the development of positive behavior within a continuum of strategies that includes prevention, skill instruction, the creation of appropriate learning environments, and intervention. To promote positive behaviors, teachers actively collaborate with others who serve their students across varied settings, welcoming the contributions of and facilitating communication among colleagues and resources.

Teachers Teach and Foster Social Skills

Recognizing that social interaction is crucial to communicative, cognitive, and affective development and that social skills contribute to successful learning in groups, teachers establish or contribute to classroom climates in which both verbal and nonverbal communication enhance social interactions and the development of social skills. They provide instruction in coping skills that provide students opportunities to resolve problems effectively, learn to exercise self-control, understand their motivations and reactions, manage themselves and their emotions in a variety of settings, develop a sense of social responsibility by taking actions to support the common good, and appreciate and respect others' viewpoints.

Teachers foster students' awareness of how cultural differences affect behavior and communication. Encouraging sensitivity both to verbal and nonverbal communication, such as body language, they strengthen students' understanding that cultural differences sometimes dictate how one should approach or respond to others. For instance, in some cultures lack of eye contact suggests disrespect and boredom, whereas in other cultures it is a sign of deference. In another instance, walking between two people in the midst of a verbal discussion is inappropriate, but walking between two people who are deaf conversing in American Sign Language is

not considered rude. Recognizing the diversity within cultural identities helps students know how to behave appropriately in a variety of settings.

Teachers Develop Students' Self-Confidence and Self-Determination

Along with nurturing students' social and functional skills, accomplished teachers work actively to develop in students an intrinsic sense of their own significance, power, and competence. Respecting factors that contribute to a person's self-definition, teachers help students focus on positive self-concepts. They do so by providing opportunities for students to be challenged at their appropriate levels and to experience success, thereby advancing independence and a sense of personal accomplishment. Teachers create learning environments that enable students to participate directly in their own educational planning and to believe they can determine their own futures. They discover ways to motivate non-engaged students and lead them to understand the benefits of active learning and the relationship between academic involvement and the ability to achieve future goals. Teachers encourage students to seek and accept help in preparing for standardized tests and inspire them to persevere during times of such heightened academic accountability. They teach students their rights and responsibilities under the law and to advocate for themselves when faced with discrimination or other barriers to participation in education, work, or community life.

Teachers Encourage the Development of Social and Ethical Principles

Teachers nurture in students the understanding of democratic values, including concern for the rights of others locally and globally. They inspire students to become aware of how they relate to family members, peers, their community, their country, and the world. They help students understand and use principles of freedom, justice, and equity and to recognize and work against discrimination, prejudice, and stereotyping.

By their own example and through class activities and discussions, accomplished teachers encourage positive character traits, including honesty, tolerance, loyalty, responsibility, and perseverance. They nurture tolerance in students for the behavior of others, including behavior that may arise from a student's exceptionalities. Teachers design activities that encourage students to think about ethical dilemmas and issues from a variety of perspectives, guiding students to an awareness of the needs, views, and rights of others. Teachers know that mutual respect is a vital component in fostering tolerance and positive behavior, so teachers maintain learning environments that uphold fair and consistent rules and clear guidelines for acceptable behavior. By involving students in classroom rule-making and decision-making, teachers enable students to understand the effects of their own actions and promote an awareness of civic and personal responsibility, thus preparing students to make wise decisions when they assume adult roles.

Teachers Foster and Support Positive Behavior

Accomplished teachers recognize that a student's behavior is a function of the complex interaction among numerous factors, such as the student's exceptionality, developmental level, previous school experiences, home environment, and communication skills. By using a variety of techniques, such as intervention plans, behavior contracts, visual aids, and verbal reminders, teachers target positive behavior and affirm students' ability to extend that behavior to various settings.

Accomplished teachers analyze and interpret students' behavior across contexts. They employ functional behavior analyses and develop behavior intervention plans in collaboration with students, families, and professional colleagues to help students understand, predict, and modify their conduct. Teachers ensure that such plans align behavioral expectations with individual learning goals and objectives, incorporate short- and long-term goals regarding student behavior, reward positive behaviors, and identify consequences.

To enhance positive behaviors that advance learning, teachers identify and head off antecedents to inappropriate behavior before they occur. They teach and reinforce appropriate replacement behaviors and encourage students to monitor their own behavior and to think about different ways of responding to situations. Teachers help students understand that behavior represents a form of communication, and they teach students decision-making skills and to weigh the consequences of their behavior. Whenever possible, teachers capitalize on students' appropriate behaviors to illustrate positive behavior in action.

To create, maintain, and reinforce behavior intervention plans, accomplished teachers collaborate with general education teachers, paraeducators, counselors, school psychologists, therapists, mentors, and families, upholding appropriate confidentiality. They promote communication and consistency among providers to ensure that plans are implemented effectively across settings. By doing so, teachers confirm that behavioral goals are approved, understood, and upheld by all those involved with the student.

Teachers Maintain Safe and Secure Environments for All Students

Accomplished teachers establish a safe environment for learning. Teachers can distinguish between student behaviors that require positive behavior intervention and those that require behavior intervention, and they consult with specialists when these determinations are unclear. Teachers, for example, know how to interpret the fervor some students display in upholding their viewpoints and have the appropriate patience in judging a student's assertive enthusiasm. In balancing these considerations, teachers take into account their ethical obligations to all students and the legal guidelines for disciplining students with exceptional needs, abide by due process and other mandates, and apply professional judgment.

When disciplinary action is necessary, teachers act promptly and equitably, correcting problems with minimal disruption and using evidence-based intervention strategies. When necessary, they know how to call upon school and community resources that might assist them in establishing and maintaining discipline and order. They know appropriate actions to take when students are involved in fights, strategies for safely responding to students engaging in violent behavior, techniques for separating students who are out of control from other students, and approaches for holding students to prevent them from hurting themselves or others. They take care in such interventions to preserve students' dignity and to minimize constraints on their physical freedom while protecting student and personal safety. Although they recognize that physical management techniques may be called for in particular circumstances, teachers comply with state regulations, local policies, and professional guidelines that speak to these issues.

Accomplished teachers anticipate what may provoke crises or conflicts and know how to prevent or intervene in such incidents or mitigate their effects. These teachers have crisis management plans in place before incidents occur so that they can respond effectively to the needs of students. When possible, they take advantage of crises and turn them into opportunities to teach appropriate behaviors, reinforce acceptable routines, and provide guidance to promote self-regulation. When that is not possible, they nevertheless remain calm crisis managers, equipped with multiple plans of action that curtail potential problems and minimize interruptions to learning. Moreover, they skillfully and safely handle students in cases of an emergency that affect the whole school community, such as a lockdown or the evacuation of the school because of fire. Throughout a crisis, the accomplished teacher's primary goal is to return students to an active and secure learning environment. (See [Standard IX—*Learning Environment*](#).)

Standard VIII

Curriculum and Instruction

Accomplished teachers command a core body of knowledge of the disciplines and of specialized curriculum for students with exceptional needs. They draw on this knowledge to establish curricular goals, design instruction, facilitate student learning, and assess student progress.

Accomplished teachers use their command of curriculum and instruction, as well as their knowledge of child development and of exceptionalities, to make sound curricular decisions for their students. They consider the whole student, including factors that affect learning, as they design educational plans and services; as they select, shape, modify, and adapt curriculum and instruction; and as they assess student progress. As lifelong learners, teachers continually extend their knowledge in various areas of curriculum and instruction to meet the individual needs of their students with exceptionalities.

The work of accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs varies according to the settings in which teachers instruct and the roles they serve. They may be a student's core subject teacher, or they may partner with the general education teacher as co-teacher, consulting teacher, or itinerant or facilitative teacher. For example, a secondary teacher in a residential school for students with emotional and behavioral challenges may provide instruction in English and literature while a colleague takes the lead in teaching mathematics and science. Teachers of students with emotional and behavioral challenges who teach mathematics in a co-teaching model have knowledge of the major ideas, theories, and concepts that characterize the mathematics studies curriculum. Itinerant teachers of students with visual impairments who consult with the general education social studies teachers, for example, have knowledge of the social studies state standards and expected student outcomes in this subject. Teachers collaborate with colleagues to establish ambitious yet realistic learning goals for students and to select appropriate curriculum options and instructional strategies to meet those goals and to challenge students in areas of their specific talents.

Regardless of their role or function, teachers of students with exceptional needs have knowledge of federal regulations, state standards, the general education curriculum, and a range of curriculum accommodations and modifications specific to students with exceptionalities. Moreover, accomplished teachers possess specific knowledge of the expanded curriculum—including social and emotional skills, life

skills, health and leisure education, and transition and career development—and how to individualize curriculum to meet the needs of students with exceptionalities.

Because the entry-level skills of each student may differ, teachers know that students do not all achieve the same goals at the same time and that they do not follow the same path to success. Accomplished teachers therefore individualize instruction for all diverse learners, providing multiple ways to engage students and enable them to demonstrate what they know. A teacher, for instance, may use a text to speech program to help a student understand a difficult piece of writing and, by doing so, create a learning opportunity for the student that might not otherwise occur. A teacher might initiate independent study and independent projects for high-performing students. By tailoring the content and process of learning to students' needs, teachers ensure that students access the entire curriculum and that curricular materials and instruction serve all students.

Accomplished teachers who work with students who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, or visually impaired are experts at knowing and using unique tools and strategies to meet the needs of these students.

Teachers Are Grounded in the Academic Core Curriculum

Accomplished teachers have knowledge of the core curriculum including English language arts, social studies and history, mathematics, science, the arts, health, physical education, and leisure. Teachers recognize that building competence in the ideas, themes, concepts, and facts comprising the core curriculum is an essential foundation that all students need. Accomplished teachers also know that the core components of any curriculum hinge on literacy and numeracy. Reflecting their belief that literacy and numeracy are foundational for success in school and in life, teachers ensure that these skills are integrated across the curriculum. Furthermore, teachers understand that core components may need to be expanded depending on each student's needs and exceptionalities.

Literacy

Accomplished teachers understand the nature of literacy. They are aware that the field entails a synthesis of knowledge of literacy acquisition and language development, as well as current literature on listening and speaking and the conventions of oral communication; on the reading process and how students learn to read, as well as the texts students encounter; on the writing process and how students learn to write; and on viewing and the conventions of visual communication in various media. Accomplished teachers can articulate this knowledge and use it to develop sound instruction for their students.

Teachers create rich environments for developing literacy skills by linking what students already know and are curious about with instruction. Teachers understand that developing language skills includes the ability to reflect on language, the development of a rich vocabulary, and the ability to communicate and understand

complex thoughts. In all instructional settings, teachers build on students' home languages and dialects, and structure learning opportunities to take advantage of students' prior literacy experiences. Teachers promote and encourage the development of language and literacy in English as well as in the languages spoken in the home and community. Knowing that oral language development supports the development of other literacy skills for many students, teachers may encourage play with sounds and words through rhymes, chants, and songs. Teachers skillfully offer suggestions to students about how they can improve their learning and do so without slowing the growth of students' expressive abilities and their desire to continue learning.

Accomplished teachers know how to help students listen and speak to share their ideas and feelings. Teachers know that listening involves receiving, understanding, analyzing, evaluating, and reacting to sounds and messages. They are adept at helping students understand that listening is vital to communication and learning processes. Accomplished teachers know that effective speaking involves factors, such as fluency, clarity, and awareness of audience, purpose, and context. They recognize that an understanding of the interrelatedness of speaking and listening as well as the interpretation of nonverbal skills—such as facial expressions—is essential to clear communication. Acknowledging that each person speaks what is, in effect, a personal dialect reflective of regional upbringing, ethnicity, occupation, age, and socioeconomic class, teachers accept the diversity of language forms of their students. They build on students' languages and dialects and teach a shared school language as they model effective communication. Additionally, teachers of students who are deaf or hard of hearing may model American Sign Language.

Accomplished teachers know how students learn to read. They know the processes, skills, and strategies that students at various developmental levels need to decode, comprehend, analyze, and evaluate texts. They therefore design appropriate instruction for students to understand patterns of phoneme-grapheme correspondences, syntax, and semantics, while also providing a wide variety of texts to prepare them to be fluent, lifelong readers. Teachers understand that reading builds on and extends language skills, including the ability to reflect on language, develop a rich vocabulary, and communicate and understand complex thoughts through language. Teachers strive to introduce students to the power of literacy and the joy of books while ensuring that all students acquire the foundational knowledge and dispositions for reading success.

Accomplished teachers know that writing entails complex and challenging processes through which students rarely move in a linear manner. Recognizing the key role writing plays in achieving successful communication and knowing that the best writing occurs in meaningful contexts, teachers craft writing instruction to match students' interests. They understand that writing takes many forms and has many applications and that writers draw upon a wide array of sources. Accomplished teachers know the importance of purpose and audience. They are familiar with the conventions of good writing. They know the importance of developing fine-motor skills for some students and of using models to teach effective writing. Understanding that

writing grows from and supports the development of other literacy skills, teachers weave language skills instruction throughout their teaching of writing.

Accomplished teachers recognize that visual communication is vital to achieving literacy in contemporary society. They understand the importance of being able to analyze visual language, interpret graphic representations, interpret and evaluate media messages, and communicate through visual media. They know the advantages and limitations of various media and how to teach students to develop their visual literacy. Teachers also understand that students who depend primarily on visual communication may require intensive, highly specialized reading instruction.

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs use their knowledge of language and literacy development to address students' needs along a continuum of increasing complexity, from fundamental skills to critical and creative thinking. Building on their own expertise in devising literacy instruction, teachers assess students' responses and design activities that continually advance students from current skills and capacities, modifying tasks and conditions as necessary.

Numeracy

Accomplished teachers comprehend the nature of numeracy. They know the foundations of the number system and the importance of using patterns to make generalizations and develop mathematical understandings as well as the central concepts and principles of important mathematical domains. Teachers are familiar with the fundamental processes of mathematical thinking, exploration, representation, modeling, conjecture, inference, interpretation, and analysis in addition to the importance of proof and formal reasoning. Teachers understand how students develop numeracy and mathematics concepts and understandings, and they use this knowledge to design and select curriculum and instructional materials, choose assessment and teaching methods, frame discussions, and respond to students. They can explain their teaching strategies in terms of the concepts, procedures, processes, and ideas that define number systems and number sense, geometry, measurement, statistics, probability, and algebra (patterns and functions).

Teachers create many opportunities for students to construct their own concepts and understandings of numbers and ideas in mathematics through open-ended work in a wide array of situations. To demonstrate concepts and provide students opportunities for exploration in mathematics, teachers select and create a variety of resources, materials, and activities, such as manipulatives, textbooks, charts, newspapers, calculators, computer software, puzzles, and games. They often arrange for students to work together, encouraging them to exchange ideas and appreciate varied approaches to problem solving. They encourage students to investigate alternate strategies and derive creative solutions. Teachers ask questions frequently to clarify how students perceive reasoning and thinking in mathematics. They challenge students to generate their own questions and propose their own solutions to problems, which they then explain or defend.

Accomplished teachers help students apply numeracy concepts and mathematics skills to their environments at home and in school. They routinely integrate mathematics where it naturally fits with subject areas across the curriculum. Teachers might employ or refer to mathematics during science experiments, literature lessons, cooking and snack times, sports, games, and field trips so that students see knowledge of mathematics as fundamentally important in numerous activities, experiences, and phenomena. For example, teachers might help students look for and recognize mathematical patterns by leading students to discover the geometrical symmetry of leaf structures during a nature walk.

Accomplished teachers design instruction to meet students' needs while deepening students' understanding of, and dispositions toward, numeracy and mathematics. Teachers draw on their knowledge of the numeracy and mathematics curriculum to plan activities that move students from basic skills to complex skills, and ultimately to the understanding and application of concepts. Teachers foster students' abstract thinking and their ability to communicate mathematically, for instance, to recognize structures within possibly confusing information, to interpret data, and to analyze strategies useful in defining a range of problems.

Teachers Expand the Core Curriculum to Ensure the Success of Students with Exceptional Needs

Accomplished teachers recognize that the general education curriculum may not meet all the needs of students with exceptional needs. Teachers therefore have a deep knowledge of the expanded curricula for students with exceptionalities, including curricula that address social and emotional development; life skills and functional academics; health, physical education, and leisure; and transition and career development. They know how to individualize the curriculum for each student and how to integrate skill development across disciplines, contexts, and settings.

Importance of Social Interaction

Accomplished teachers understand that effective social interactions are essential to academic success and to communicative, cognitive, and affective development, so teachers connect curriculum to the teaching of social skills. Teachers recognize that physical, intellectual, ethical, and social development are interdependent and that exceptionalities often affect each of these domains. Accomplished teachers infuse throughout the curriculum social and emotional elements that instruct students in resolving problems effectively; communicating effectively; learning to exercise self-control; understanding motivations and reactions; managing emotions in a variety of settings; and appreciating and respecting others' viewpoints. Teachers promote the development of positive character traits, including honesty, tolerance, loyalty, responsibility, and perseverance. (See [Standard VII – Social Development and Behavior.](#))

Life Skills Important for Independent Functioning

Teachers are knowledgeable about the complex curriculum in the area of life skills, from personal care, time management, problem solving, and decision making to functional academics in the areas of reading and writing, mathematics, and communication. Teachers understand that the life skills curriculum is equal in value to the academic curriculum and that both curricula are mutually interdependent in helping prepare students to lead satisfying and successful lives.

Teachers ensure that appropriate portions of a student's education involve instruction and application of life skills and seamlessly blend the curriculum of daily living skills into real life contexts meaningful to each student's unique needs. Teachers confirm that the curriculum includes all environments where students function, such as school, home, work, and community, and use these contexts to teach life skills. A teacher, for instance, might provide instruction in time management in the context of its importance for success in the workplace. Based on the assessment of individual needs, the teacher might instruct a student in how to develop a schedule and daily routine and monitor the student's ability to do so. Skills such as getting to work on time, catching the bus, working the appropriate hours, and preparing for the next day would be applied to the work setting.

To help a student develop self-determination, an attribute crucial to success in all environments, an accomplished teacher begins with high expectations and a clear understanding of the student's long-term goals and level of independence. The teacher might fashion a lesson in which the student role-plays a scenario where choices must be made. An opportunity to act out the results of positive experiences resulting from appropriate choices may enhance the student's ability to visualize success in personal actions. Knowing that achievement motivates students to strive to do their best, teachers might extend opportunities for success by recommending that successful instructional strategies be implemented across contexts, such as the school, home, or workplace. For example, after a teacher of a student who uses augmentative communication tools and strategies instructs the student in how to use various tools and strategies, the teacher might allow the student to select a mode of communication even if that choice is not the most technologically advanced available. The teacher skillfully guides the student to apply the augmentative communication device and strategies in the community, ultimately teaching the importance of advocating for and monitoring oneself.

Teachers recognize the personal nature of providing services to meet individual needs of students during life skills instruction and are adept at respecting students while maintaining appropriate boundaries and upholding students' dignity. Teachers recognize, for example, that personal hygiene and self-monitoring of one's appearance are important to acceptance by one's peers. Teachers know how to instruct students in routine personal hygiene skills, such as washing their hands, brushing their teeth, dressing, and combing their hair. They teach students self-monitoring strategies while allowing students some latitude in performing these functions. Teachers respect students' choices even if the attire chosen or the order in which tasks are performed does not exactly fulfill the instructions given. Accomplished teachers focus on the

importance of completing tasks independently and respecting students' personal dignity, not on prescriptions for performing tasks.

Health, Physical Education, and Leisure

Teachers understand that a sound school health program is comprehensive in nature, focusing on students' physical, mental, and social well-being. They create opportunities for students to develop and practice skills and knowledge that contribute to good health in each of these domains. They also understand the foundations of good health, including the structure and function of the body and its systems and the importance of developing lifetime habits of physical fitness and sound nutrition. Drawing on this knowledge, they help students understand the dangers of diseases and the benefits of a healthful lifestyle and the activities that contribute to it.

On their own or in cooperation with specialists, teachers plan, organize, and carry out programs in health education that reinforce the major concepts, ideas, and actions that contribute to a healthy lifestyle and that help students learn about nutrition, their bodies, germs and viruses, and substance abuse. They are alert to major health issues concerning students with exceptional needs and address such issues sensitively and in a developmentally appropriate manner, recognizing that some students mature physically before they mature emotionally and socially.

Accomplished teachers are familiar with principles of motor development and exercise science and understand how to apply this knowledge in developing physical education activities appropriate for students with exceptionalities. They design instruction to accommodate the intellectual abilities and medical conditions of their students, taking time to teach the rules of an activity or game and incorporating sound strategies for risk management and safety. They make wise use of appropriate assistive devices, such as wheelchairs, adapted seating devices, and handrails, to enhance students' participation in physical education.

In addition, teachers understand that appropriate and stimulating play activities and interests sharpen students' mental and physical skills, build self-confidence, and improve interactions with others. Realizing that participation at any level is important, teachers work with city and community recreation providers and private organizations to ensure greater access to recreational facilities and to develop and support leisure and recreational opportunities for students with exceptional needs. Teachers are familiar with a broad array of school and community recreation opportunities, and they know how to access these options and modify them in response to a student's specific cognitive and physical abilities. Drawing on this knowledge and their familiarity with students' interests and aspirations, teachers help students select appropriate activities and games that provide opportunities for success, improve self-image, and foster independence. For some students, this means active participation and competition in a variety of activities; for others, it means participation in an individualized recreation program. Whatever the activity—whether group or individual, participatory or spectator, physical or mental—teachers assist students in mastering

the skills and concepts necessary to enable them to participate fully and to achieve long-term independence and satisfaction.

Student Transitions and Career Development

Accomplished teachers are knowledgeable about the multiple, significant transition points in the life of a child—from home to school, across school levels, and from high school to employment and post-secondary education. They understand the needs of students during these transitions and the importance of preparing them for the challenges of adjustment to new settings, new relationships with peers and adults, and increased expectations for independence. Teachers are sensitive to the concerns of families and the changing relationships that occur at each level. They communicate with families and support their participation in transition planning at each stage, helping family members to understand that their own participation changes along the developmental path and that as students mature, their participation and decision making take on a more significant role.

Accomplished teachers understand the central importance of transition planning as a unifying framework to identify students' postsecondary goals and create programs of study and support services designed to achieve those goals. Such services include school-based and community-based services; career assessment; career-technical, job training, and placement services; vocational rehabilitation services; and transportation. Accomplished teachers are familiar with a broad range of resources available in the community and, with an awareness of students' individual needs, strengths, interests, and goals, they match students and families with appropriate services.

Transition in the Early Years

Accomplished teachers understand that transition is a progressive developmental process toward adult independence that begins during children's early years. They assess students' and families' needs, strengths, and preferences and collaborate with them in developing transition objectives. Teachers inform families about and link them with day care, early intervention programs, preschool and elementary programs, and services, such as therapy or transportation. Accomplished teachers recognize the significance of the critical passage from the family context to formal schooling and are sensitive to the concerns of families as their children enter the school setting.

As students move from elementary to middle school and then from middle to high school, accomplished teachers recognize students' changing transition needs. For example, students transitioning from elementary to middle school may encounter numerous teachers, varying schedules, and complex settings. A student moving into high school from middle school may confront the responsibilities of increased self-advocacy and independence. In collaboration with families and colleagues, teachers ensure that all transitions are successful. Teachers organize learning activities to help students acquire and develop work habits and social skills and to provide opportunities for students to become familiar with various occupations

and career options. For example, teachers teach students to work in groups; solve problems and resolve conflicts; follow routines; and understand the importance of task completion, dependability, and responsibility. They link instruction with real-life experiences so that students may explore their own career interests. They may set up learning centers where students can play store and perform a variety of jobs—from butcher, to stocker, to cashier, to manager—or they may have students organize a food drive for a homeless shelter. For a student who is fascinated by fish and turtles, the teacher may design lessons that teach about marine life through literature, art, and real-life experiences. The teacher may invite workers from the local aquarium to talk to the class about the feeding and caring of marine animals and skills needed to work as an aquarist.

Transition to Middle Years and Young Adulthood

Accomplished teachers know the central importance of transition planning for students whether their postsecondary plans include two- or four-year colleges, technical schools, apprenticeship programs, employment, or some combination of these. They design programs of study that provide choices and diverse opportunities. The general curriculum therefore includes options that integrate academic and career or technical elements to a variety of settings, from school to work or community. For example, teachers might design mathematics, reading, or writing tasks that include taking measurements for materials students purchase during a site visit to a building supply store.

Accomplished teachers have a broad knowledge and understanding of the social skills, attitudes, communication needs, and work habits required for success in career-technical and community-based work experience programs and know how to infuse these skills into the curriculum. They might coach students, for instance, on how to ask for assistance from the work-site supervisor. Teachers use role-play so students learn to advocate for support services they may need.

Teachers focus career-technical instruction on functional work skills, such as maintaining excellent attendance, managing time, dressing appropriately, working productively with coworkers, interacting appropriately with customers and supervisors, and getting to and from the job safely and on time. They develop students' travel skills and teach them about job performance and evaluations. They also conduct analyses to determine the skills and vocabulary students will need to perform jobs and tasks outside the school setting. To assist students in finding employment to match their strengths and interests, teachers work with business and community agencies to locate work sites that welcome all applicants.

To prepare students to participate in the transition process, accomplished teachers imbue the broader curriculum with self-advocacy and self-determination curricular elements in a variety of ways. A teacher might explore the theme of self-determination through the exploration of a character in a novel or short story. A teacher might use a small group process to discuss self-advocacy with students who are in job apprenticeships in the community.

Teachers Differentiate Instruction Based on Students' Strengths and Needs

Accomplished teachers differentiate instruction to engage all students with exceptionalities at appropriate developmental levels. They are flexible in setting expectations, designating goals, adjusting curriculum, seeking new resources, determining instructional strategies and teaching methods, structuring activities, and designing assessments. They try several approaches and observe and document results to identify which strategies work best, which approaches make students feel most comfortable, and which sustain students' growth as learners and inspire them to achieve success. Teachers analyze the sources of individual student's learning strengths and needs and identify appropriate curricular adaptations and intervention strategies. These findings do not lead to a single prescription for each student, but are important information as teachers decide on the right combination of learning opportunities for their students in both general education and in programs for students with exceptionalities.

Accomplished teachers prepare students for success in many endeavors by developing their capacity for critical thought. Teachers involve students in learning activities and tasks designed to strengthen their cognitive skills—thinking, learning, problem solving, organizational, and study skills—and their ability to think inductively and deductively. They plan for instruction that deepens and becomes more challenging as students develop, gain skills, and mature. As students explore important issues, accomplished teachers anticipate students' confusions and misconceptions, act to avoid them, clarify them when they do occur, or take advantage of their potential to illuminate important concepts.

By introducing multisensory activities teachers stimulate abstract, creative thinking and inspire students to combine ideas, themes, and knowledge from varied subject areas. A sidewalk art festival in which students draw chalk pictures of characters and events from a favorite book, for example, might permit students to confirm their understanding of curriculum content while exhibiting their own imaginative interpretations in personal artwork. To broaden students' awareness of civic responsibility and to reinforce expository writing skills, for instance, students might be asked to listen to newscasts or read the newspaper to identify topics of personal relevance and then write persuasive letters to appropriate authorities arguing a particular point of view.

Accomplished teachers engage students in inquiry-based activities that appeal to students' varied knowledge, interests, experiences, and skills and involve issues and questions often approached from cross-disciplinary viewpoints. They provide students with open-ended learning opportunities to motivate students to explore the breadth and depth of topics as they pose questions, examine alternatives, and draw new conclusions. Teachers may employ cooperative-group work or whole-class discussion to strengthen creative thinking and open-mindedness. They might prompt students to investigate an issue like global warming from the differing perspectives of a meteorologist and an economist. They devise opportunities for students to

understand the universal relevance of certain themes. A responsible discussion of racism, for example, might follow after the class reads a book or watches a video that addresses this topic. Teachers understand the importance of developing students' abilities to consider concepts, ideas, and relationships from multiple perspectives and beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries.

Accomplished teachers differentiate instruction and implement modifications and accommodations to meet the needs of individual students and create learning situations in which students feel safe to explore various approaches and response formats. Some students are comfortable just listening, whereas others thrive on learning activities that involve touch or motion. In studying a play, for example, some students might compare the play with other works of literature and enact selected scenes. Other students might demonstrate their understanding of the play by describing a character and role-playing an incident from the plot. Students might also approach the text in different ways. Some might read the play or alternative versions of it, while others watch a video or listen to a recording. Teachers provide a variety of ways for students to demonstrate their learning, recognizing that the threshold of success varies from student to student.

Teachers may provide accommodations for students, such as extending time to complete tasks or having students answer questions orally or by using a computer. They might alter the pace of instruction, separate tasks into stages, change the method of presentation to appeal to visual or auditory learners, vary tasks around the same materials, or employ manipulatives to illustrate concepts. They may use direct instruction to facilitate the learning of certain skills or draw on a variety of meaningful examples to clarify tasks. To support the learning of organizational skills and time management, for example, teachers might instruct students in how to use checklists, schedules, calendars, mnemonics, or color coding.

Accomplished teachers of students with mild to moderate disabilities are able to respond to the diverse needs and characteristics of their students. They know, for example, that the performance of students with learning disabilities can be affected not only by discrepancies between ability and achievement but also by other factors, such as attention deficits or social interaction difficulties. They help students who read significantly below grade level by implementing individualized education goals focused on raising performance to match students' abilities. To do so, teachers use their knowledge of both the accommodated general education curriculum and specialized academic interventions designed to address students' individual learning needs. A teacher, for example, might accommodate instruction by employing speech-to-text technology; validated intervention programs for reading, mathematics, oral, and writing expression; and reinforcement of concepts through tactile and hands-on experiences. For students who demonstrate difficulty attending to instruction or who have behavioral challenges, the teacher ensures that instructional strategies address academic as well as related needs to help students achieve goals and develop the self-confidence to maintain high performance.

Accomplished teachers provide access to technology so students can communicate with others, participate meaningfully in a wide range of activities, and expand their learning. For some students, appropriate technology might include digitized voice mechanisms, computerized switches, keyboard overlays, or specially designed software. For others, the teacher might use a word-processing program with a word-prediction function. The teacher might also employ technology used for enrichment in general education classrooms to help students with exceptional needs engage with subject matter while they develop appropriate learning skills and strategies. For example, teachers might supplement the reading of historical texts with a visual interpretation of relevant topics or might ask students to discuss character development after they listen to a recorded reading of a novel. Adaptations and strategies may include such cues as having a student wear a ring on the left hand to remember on which side of the page to start reading; providing a manipulative for a student whose field- and depth-perception problems make it difficult to understand two-dimensional diagrams in math; or wrapping pens and pencils in foam rubber for a student with tactile problems or difficulties with fine motor control. A strategy could involve a number of steps, such as outlining the theme of a reading passage orally for a student with learning disabilities, using a highlighter to emphasize the main ideas in each paragraph, reproducing each paragraph on a separate sheet of paper, and then presenting the entire passage for the student to read.

Students With Visual Impairments

Teachers understand that the unique curriculum for students with visual impairments is a parallel curriculum of disability-specific skills supplementary to, but not a substitute for, the regular curriculum. They use multiple techniques and creative strategies for promoting student growth in sensory perceptual skills and early concept development; communication skills; adaptive technology skills; special academic skills; skills in the use of vision alone or with other senses to facilitate task completion; social behaviors; and functional life skills. They understand fully the similarities and differences in specific instructional strategies for students with low vision compared with blind students, applying differentiated strategies with ease and confidence. They further understand their role in providing consultation or direct instruction in unique skills to students who have other disabilities.

Accomplished teachers of students with visual impairments work effectively and cooperatively with families, educators, and other professionals to support and promote high-quality learning experiences in various settings, including schools, homes, community settings, and work sites. They modify or adapt instructional materials for their students by providing braille and appropriate print formats, supplying objects and scale models, using environmental modifications to enhance the use of vision or other senses, and producing tactile maps and graphics. Skilled at balancing the various aspects of teaching unique skills with the demands of the regular curriculum, teachers willingly demonstrate the use of specialized instructional methods to other educators, support personnel, and family members.

Accomplished teachers of students with visual impairments routinely evaluate their students in terms of the expanded core curriculum, identify their needs, and

develop individualized education plans to ensure that their students' needs are met in all areas.

Teachers are knowledgeable about planning, managing, and monitoring student progress in the expanded core curriculum and provide direct instruction in all areas. They orchestrate teaching strategies so that students understand how the unique skills learned in the expanded core curriculum apply to life skills. Teachers regard the development of students' life skills in the expanded core curriculum, and in environments, such as home, work, community, and non-academic school activities, as a means to help students access all aspects of the core curriculum. When appropriate, teachers collaborate with general education teachers and other specialists to integrate the expanded core curriculum into school programs.

When a pre-school student uses tactile skills as a primary learning mode, the accomplished teacher provides direct instruction in communication skills, such as concept development, sensory development, emergent braille literacy skills, and listening skills. The teacher collaborates with parents and early childhood staff to integrate these communication skills in daily activities in the home and in the pre-school curriculum. The teacher introduces appropriate assistive technology tools, such as specialized braille tools for reading and writing, and collaborates with the orientation and mobility specialist to promote the student's independence through environmental awareness and exploration, motor skills, and travel skills. The teacher encourages the student to develop appropriate social skills in play and interactions with others. The teacher assists in developing the student's independent living skills, such as eating and dressing. By teaching the student to care for possessions and exposing the student to a wide variety of home and community activities, the teacher helps to prepare the student for career education experiences.

Accomplished teachers of students with visual impairments know how to apply the expanded core curriculum for students at all developmental levels. They are knowledgeable about the unique areas within the expanded core curriculum and their application to students with low vision, students who are blind, students who use a combination of both visual and tactile learning modes, and students who have multiple disabilities.

Throughout their educational practice, whether teaching disability-specific skills or modifying classroom instruction, accomplished teachers foster, promote, and model basic principles, such as the use of concrete, multisensory experiences to establish early concepts and to promote quality learning throughout the school years. They create experiential activities that actively involve students in all aspects of learning opportunities, thereby allowing them ample opportunities to learn by doing. Teachers provide experiences that promote generalization and application of skills learned in school to real-life contexts and that unify parts of lessons into meaningful wholes, and they help students acquire skills that students without visual impairments learn incidentally through visual observation, such as certain social behaviors.

Students Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Teachers use their knowledge of students' unique developmental characteristics to design effective instructional programs and to help students, families, and education professionals understand the individual characteristics of students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

An important goal for teachers of students who are deaf or hard of hearing is to help students develop independent communication. To that end, teachers draw on a rich repertoire of instructional strategies to meet students' physical, cognitive, cultural, and communication needs, using assistive devices as appropriate and adapting instruction in accordance with such factors as the availability of support services. Teachers infuse speech skills into academic areas consistent with students' abilities and modes of communication. They vigilantly search for instances of incidental learning that hearing children naturally acquire and find ways to impart that learning to their students. Teachers of students who are deaf or hard of hearing have an extensive knowledge of English and American Sign Language (ASL) structure; of first- and second-language learning theories applied to English and ASL; and of theories of signed languages and their relationships to literacy development. Additionally, they understand the differences between English and ASL literacy and use appropriate methods to facilitate student learning.

Accomplished teachers demonstrate a depth of understanding and a fluency in instruction that distinguishes their practice. They skillfully select and adapt available curricula, materials, and instructional strategies to meet the individual needs of their students, and when needed, design new curricula. They understand the similarities and differences in using specific instructional strategies with a widely diverse population of students, such as those who are deaf, those who are gifted or severely developmentally delayed, and those who have additional disabilities.

Accomplished teachers have a wide knowledge of available technology not only for assisting and augmenting communication but also for delivering instruction. In addition, they can evaluate the acoustics of learning environments for students who are deaf and especially for those who are hard of hearing, weighing such factors as the signal-to-noise ratio and reverberation. Teachers evaluate technology relative to deafness issues and, as necessary, integrate new uses into existing strategies. They do not simply accept the equipment the student already has, such as a particular kind of hearing aid; rather, on the basis of functional assessment and diagnostic data, teachers determine if equipment is appropriate and fits properly or whether new equipment should be investigated. Teachers skillfully employ captioning equipment, FM systems, visual altering devices, and other technological applications.

Standard IX

Learning Environment

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs establish a caring, stimulating, and safe community for learning in which democratic values are fostered and students assume responsibility for learning, show willingness to take intellectual risks, develop self-confidence, and learn to work independently and collaboratively.

Teachers Establish Safe and Positive Learning Environments

Accomplished teachers create and support positive learning environments that are intellectually, physically, and emotionally safe, and in which students actively participate, take chances, explore alternatives, challenge assumptions, and feel comfortable with themselves. By validating students' efforts and taking an interest in their lives, ideas, and activities, these teachers fashion an atmosphere in which students feel welcomed, valued, respected, and stimulated; where they gain command of new ideas and tasks; and where they can develop socially, academically, and intellectually. Such supportive and purposeful learning environments, designed in collaboration with colleagues across the settings that serve students, promote active learning, value diverse perspectives and insights, expose students to a variety of challenges, and prepare them for independent learning and living.

Given the range of intellectual, physical, and social abilities and health considerations for students with exceptional needs, students benefit from the security and safety of structured and supportive settings. In such environments, students will likely gain a sense of community that builds self-confidence and socialization skills, preparing them to participate in other instructional settings and to take their place in the school and the community at large.

Teachers of students with exceptional needs teach in a variety of settings that represent the continuum of services they offer and the adaptations they make to benefit their students. Learning environments often incorporate multiple contexts to encompass the entire school, including general and special education classrooms, hallways, cafeterias, outdoors areas, and community work settings. Early childhood instruction, for example, may occur in pre-schools and child care centers. Elementary students may participate in several learning environments each day. Secondary students are likely to receive instruction in multiple classrooms, and some visit resource rooms or learning centers for specialized instruction. Students who are advanced in mathematics might attend classes at a nearby school or university that offers accelerated courses. Teachers might augment classroom instruction

for some students by taking them outdoors to teach functional and mobility skills. Some students may receive instruction in alternative schools, treatment centers, or residential schools. The workplace might comprise a learning environment for some high school students. Regardless of where instruction occurs, and in collaboration with general education teachers and other service providers, accomplished teachers maintain safe, secure, and nurturing learning environments that support all contexts of appropriate services.

Accomplished teachers analyze and manage learning environments to promote student success. They are sensitive, for instance, to the educational consequences for students who receive services outside the general education class and work to balance the benefits of such services with the quality and integrity of academic instruction. Teachers are experts at evaluating student needs within available instructional arrangements to determine the most appropriate learning environments. They advocate for accessible environments in all settings that serve students with exceptional needs and empower students to advocate for themselves in securing access to curriculum and learning opportunities. Additionally, accomplished teachers willingly take on leadership roles in efforts to persuade district, local, or state authorities to meet the requirements of accessibility.

Teachers Value and Support Equity, Fairness, and Student Effort

The learning environments constructed by accomplished teachers foster a sense of community, independence, and caring. These teachers apply principles of fairness in a sensitive manner. They allocate time, learning opportunities, and other resources fairly and wisely, and they recognize competence, effort, and performance. Because teachers value and support outstanding academic achievement, they hold high expectations for all students and communicate their belief that all students can and will participate and learn. They use many strategies to promote conceptual understanding and to encourage innovation, creativity, independent inquiry, and student engagement. They recognize a wide variety of student accomplishments and positive behaviors. Teachers' efforts in fashioning supportive environments affirm students' confidence that they have a role in the classroom and community and that they can safely explore ideas, ask questions, and disagree. Such actions contribute to building students' self-efficacy—the belief that they can succeed in school and that through their own work they can make significant contributions to their school and community.

Teachers recognize that respect for students' thoughts and judgments fosters self-confidence and individual dignity. They instill in their students the ideas that learning is challenging, that experimentation is essential, and that recognizing and correcting mistakes are as important as celebrating successes. This orientation fosters learning environments that engage students, recognize individual differences, encourage choice and expression, and promote inquiry and the independent pursuit of learning. In these settings, teachers provide support and opportunities for students to communicate effectively with peers.

Learning environments that meet the needs of students with exceptionalities provide structure and routine with clear expectations and are productive, safe, and predictable. To help children who need assistance using lockers, for example, open bins might be necessary to house their materials while students learn to use combination or modified locks. Although classrooms sometimes are cluttered, for students who use walkers or wheelchairs, areas are kept clear for best access to learning environments. Students who use wheelchairs must have easy elevator and classroom access and desks at required heights. Although classrooms often display students' artwork, too many items on a wall might distract some students and hinder their concentration. Teachers of students who are deaf or hard of hearing ensure that nothing visually blocks communication, that preferential seating is provided, and that ambient noise is minimized. On a continual basis, accomplished teachers collaborate with general education teachers and others to design, implement, and evaluate strategies for establishing optimum learning environments responsive to the needs of students.

Teachers involve students in setting clear expectations for behavior, and they uphold these expectations fairly and consistently. They develop and discuss classroom rules, consequences, routines, and behaviors for effective learning, and in doing so they create a climate for working together. Teachers maintain productive, open, and enriching learning environments by using well-developed repertoires of strategies, skills, and procedures that allow their classrooms to function smoothly and enable them to change directions effectively when necessary. They combine knowledge, preparedness, caring, and direction to keep students engaged in a wide range of productive activities that promote self-direction and independence. By gaining their students' trust and confidence and by modeling behavior that encourages students to internalize responsibility for their own actions, teachers help students develop a sense of responsibility and belonging to a learning community.

Teachers of students with exceptional needs actively pursue positive interactions among all students to demonstrate respect for others, encourage students to accept one another as capable individuals, and promote support for all members of the school community. They teach students problem-solving and mediation skills to manage and resolve conflicts. Accomplished teachers recognize crises that require intervention on their part and know a variety of strategies to respond appropriately. They are familiar with legal mandates and students' rights in such situations, and they seek assistance from other professionals as necessary. (See [Standard VII—Social Development and Behavior](#).)

Standard X

Instructional Resources

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs select, adapt, create, and use rich, unique, and varied resources, both human and material, to promote individual student learning.

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs understand that the lessons, materials, teaching strategies, assignments, and assessment procedures they use must vary from one situation to the next to meet the needs of all learners. Therefore, they constantly seek to enrich and expand the wide assortment of resources and materials at their disposal across school, home, and community contexts. They take advantage of the latest technology and find programs and tools to benefit students. Additionally, teachers view the community as an important instructional resource that permits them to build on students' strengths and address in context students' needs that might arise when they are away from school environments.

Recognizing that they must meet students' specific needs and ensure access to the general education curriculum, teachers have well-developed criteria for selecting and using instructional resources. Drawing on this knowledge, they build a library of strong teaching materials to support the core curriculum and the specialized curriculum required in each student's individualized family services plan or individualized education program. They use research documenting the effectiveness of materials and practice and incorporate assessment data and their own evaluation of individual student progress to select and develop appropriate instructional interventions and materials. They regularly find ways to supplement classroom resources and often learn to make and adapt materials and equipment instead of relying solely on commercially available products. Teachers may collaborate with others, such as paraeducators, braillists, and volunteers, to assist them in this process. Teachers collaborate with library media specialists, technology specialists, art and music teachers, and other colleagues, who serve students across varied settings, to enrich their instructional resources. In choosing, designing, and implementing instructional materials they draw broadly from literature across fields to represent traditionally under-represented groups. Making use of abundant professional literature, research, collegial discourse, and existing resources, they design and adapt materials to accommodate their students' strengths and respond directly to students' needs.

Teachers Manage Time and Human Resources Productively

Skilled managers of time and resources, accomplished teachers are adept at devising and adhering to the often complicated schedules required to implement

individualized education programs and transition plans with minimal disruption, complete paperwork and related tasks, and carry out other professional duties despite the delivery of many different services to different students at different times during the day.

Accomplished teachers actively supervise and support paraprofessionals, volunteers, and others who work alongside them, insightfully observing their work and skillfully guiding their practice. Teachers instruct paraprofessionals and volunteers to strengthen their abilities to perform in educationally effective ways that supplement instruction and required services. With an awareness of student needs, teachers offer a range of options for the involvement of peer role models, paraprofessionals, and volunteers. Furthermore, in their determination to provide appropriate services for all their students, accomplished teachers pursue opportunities to collaborate with administrators and others who hire and evaluate paraprofessionals and volunteers.

Teachers Select Appropriate Materials

Teachers believe that with the proper mix of creativity, resources, instructional strategies, and research they can reach all students. Garnering ideas from multiple sources, including professional workshops and seminars, students, colleagues, families, community members, and organizations, teachers design and use a wide range of instructional materials, including those that integrate assistive technology. They understand that their knowledge of subject matter alone does not guarantee that students will learn important concepts and facts. Teachers often incorporate instructional materials to help students generalize from their learning in the classroom and make real-world connections to situations and problems they will likely encounter in the community, the workplace, and in their everyday lives.

Teachers recognize that many technologies have the potential for providing pathways for learning, communication, and independence. Aware of current technologies and products for students with exceptional needs, they know how to integrate these tools into their classrooms to challenge students' learning and to help students improve their academic performance. They study a range of options in addition to technology to provide the appropriate instructional resources for each student. For students who have difficulty with handwriting, for example, teachers introduce assistive technology products such as speech recognition software. They teach students with significant physical impairments to use electronic augmentative devices, including those with environmental controls, to enable them to communicate by whatever means possible, whether by a glance at a screen or a puff-and-sip assistive device. If appropriate, they familiarize students with software and devices that facilitate their written communication, and they support those who have difficulty with note taking by photocopying materials, recording class discussions, or making an extra copy of a classmate's notes. For students with limited English proficiency, teachers provide instruction in the native language or use English-as-a-second-language strategies.

In addition to resources designed for specific exceptionalities, teachers of students with exceptional needs evaluate other materials and select those that will be effective for their students. They search for high-quality and appropriate instructional materials free of bias that will engage students. They critically review materials for safety and suitability given students' particular characteristics, and they adapt materials and construct alternatives as necessary. They provide differentiated materials to address students' range of abilities, strengths, and interest levels, taking account of key characteristics such as students' linguistic proficiency.

Teachers Partner with Colleagues, Families, and the Community as Important Resources

Teachers enlist the knowledge and expertise of their colleagues and others to provide students with rewarding learning experiences. Building on the funds of knowledge available in all communities, they find individuals to share resources, serve as consultants with specific areas of expertise, or work collaboratively with fellow teachers and other personnel in planning and teaching. As lifelong learners, teachers take advantage of opportunities to enhance their own knowledge and skills, attending community and professional events to gather research findings and other relevant information they can integrate into their instruction. (See [Standard XI—Contributing to the Profession and to Education through Collaboration](#).)

Accomplished teachers view close collaboration with the student's family as vital to the student's success. Since they are closest to the student, particularly in early childhood years, families have a rich fund of knowledge for teachers to access. Recognizing how involvement with the student varies in terms of the family's culture and the student's developmental level and respecting the family's autonomy, accomplished teachers engage families in a process of mutual exchange that benefits the student in both the home and school settings. Teachers capitalize on strategies families use to meet a student's needs and suggest strategies parents or caregivers might implement at home to reinforce classroom learning. To promote cooperation and facilitate communication with families, teachers investigate ways families can access technology. Additionally, teachers might maintain their own lending libraries of resources for families or encourage the school's library to include books and other materials of interest to parents of students with exceptional needs. Teachers make certain that materials are available in languages other than English for families that require those resources. (See [Standard IV—Family Partnerships](#).)

Teachers are open to inquiries from colleagues and parents related to the selection, design, use, and evaluation of instructional resources, understanding that other viewpoints and suggestions may offer valuable insights about meeting the needs of students.

Beginning within their own schools, accomplished teachers may invite colleagues to share their specific expertise with students. As advocates for their students, they actively seek programs and individuals who can bring special knowledge and points of view to their students. Teachers have an expansive view of the learning environment,

seeing their local community as an extension of the school. They actively recruit and welcome families and other community members, paraprofessionals, agencies, universities, and businesses as partners in the school program, making full use of an array of local resources to enrich the curriculum, to provide extension activities and broaden the depth of study, and to introduce students to the varied worlds of work. They link outside resource and service providers, such as the health care community and business and industry, with the student, the school, and the family.

Roles and Practices in the Learning Community

Standard XI Contributing to the Profession and to Education through Collaboration

Accomplished teachers provide leadership through collaboration to improve teaching and learning for students with exceptional needs and to advance knowledge, policy, and practice.

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs regard collaboration as a distinguishing characteristic of their profession. Teachers know that collaboration is integral to almost every aspect of accomplished practice. It is the means through which professionals, families, and community members problem solve with shared responsibility and accountability for meeting the complex needs of students with exceptionalities. Collaboration affirms the teacher's knowledge that an interdependent process based on mutuality and effective interactions among professionals leads to improved outcomes for students. At the heart of such effective collaboration is accomplished teachers' dedication to working with all service providers to benefit students and ensure their full participation and progress in all learning environments. Collaboration, both as a way of thinking and as a set of practices for accomplished teachers, is the significant theme that appears throughout this document and unites all the standards that describe outstanding teaching in the field.

Collaboration for accomplished teachers may include providing leadership on a variety of school teams. For example, in co-teaching or facilitative support models, teachers play active and flexible roles to ensure that school environments support the needs of all students. They also collaborate with school administrators and colleagues on site-based teams to build capacity for services within the school and from community-based agencies, to introduce effective interventions for improving school-wide practices, and to evaluate the quality of programs and services. Teachers initiate and facilitate collaborative practices on the teams responsible for identifying, planning for, and reviewing the progress of students with exceptional needs.

Accomplished teachers focus their collaborative relationships on ensuring student access to general education and to standards-based education and assessment. A teacher of students with exceptional needs, for instance, might work with general education teachers and a range of professionals to align the standards-based curriculum with the goals of students' individualized education programs. For example, a teacher may collaborate with a general education teacher and a student to develop individualized written communication goals aligned with state standards for writing. A teacher may partner with colleagues in curriculum design and delivery, in delivery of instruction and in assessment of student learning. Accomplished teachers also provide collaborative leadership in the challenging tasks of aligning services across systems.

To ensure student access to all learning environments and support student success, teachers collaborate with colleagues and parents as students transition from early childhood programs to school, across school levels, and from high school to employment and post-secondary education. As determined by their assessments of student needs, teachers also form partnerships with secondary educators, transition specialists, and vocational and rehabilitation personnel to integrate the secondary education plan of study with appropriate services.

Accomplished teachers may collaborate in a variety of purposeful ways to influence school culture. For example, they might design and deliver professional development opportunities for general educators to further the philosophy of shared responsibility and to provide tools to help students be accepted, respected, and valued members of the learning community. Teachers may mentor student teachers or others new to the profession. Accomplished teachers recognize that collaboration is a process of mutuality, and they readily seek the expertise others have and acknowledge and address others' concerns. Understanding that disagreements are inevitable in professional interactions, teachers view such conflicts as opportunities to find creative solutions and to grow professionally.

In training and managing the work of paraprofessionals, accomplished teachers view their cooperation with administrators as important to meeting the needs of students with exceptionalities. Because teachers frequently rely on paraprofessionals to implement instructional plans, teachers ensure that these staff members receive frequent and intense professional development opportunities that prepare them for their particular instructional roles. A teacher with a student who displays severe behavioral challenges, for example, would arrange for training in social interaction, behavior modification, and behavior management skills so that the paraprofessional can address the student's specific needs. By making certain that the paraprofessional knows how to perform effectively, the teacher ensures the safety of the student and staff member.

As schools have evolved into teaching and learning communities, expectations have risen for how accomplished teachers collaborate with others. Collaborative practices have become a centerpiece of education laws and related disability laws. These laws define the specific educational services and supports that must be

provided to eligible students and require teachers to collaborate with each other, with other professionals and providers, and with families in the provision of services to meet individual student needs.

Teachers Participate in the Profession

Accomplished teachers employ collaborative approaches to recognize and act on their professional responsibility to remain current with new knowledge in the broad arena of teaching and learning. Teachers therefore involve themselves in a variety of activities, such as leading a learning community or book study, working with colleagues to build a professional library, contributing as members to professional organizations, participating in or leading electronic collaborations, attending and making presentations at conferences, and actively participating in courses and other educational endeavors. They might also affiliate with university professionals, co-teach with faculty, serve on advisory boards in teacher preparation, and facilitate university-school partnerships. (See [Standard XII – Reflective Practice](#).)

Teachers Contribute to the Advancement of Education Policy and the Profession

Through collaboration, accomplished teachers advocate for people with exceptional needs and help develop local, state, and national policies related to issues, such as equity, accessibility, student assessment, and teacher quality and retention. Reaching these goals includes working closely with colleagues, parents, and professional organizations. For example, teachers may actively collaborate with administrators, policy makers, and higher education faculty to recruit local teachers, paraprofessionals, and specialists to fill shortages critical to the education of students with exceptional needs within the region. They may provide testimony to legislative bodies at the local, state, or national levels and write letters to elected representatives to advance the educational interests of students with exceptional needs and their families.

Standard XII

Reflective Practice

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs regularly analyze, evaluate, and synthesize their practice to strengthen its quality.

Accomplished teachers are lifelong learners who regularly and systematically examine their practice and use that knowledge to improve results for students with exceptional needs. They routinely engage in reflective professional development activities that challenge their knowledge, skills, and dispositions and stimulate them to examine research, evaluate new theories and techniques, and improve teaching and learning interventions. Through such continual reflection, teachers incorporate promising new concepts, strategies, approaches, programs, and materials that strengthen their teaching.

Teachers Evaluate Student Progress and Make Changes as Necessary

Teachers continually challenge their beliefs about effective educational practice, particularly in terms of how students with exceptionalities learn. Based on their observations of student performance in diverse instructional environments, teachers analyze all dimensions of the learning process. They regularly reflect and evaluate how individual students function and how instructional decisions and interactions influence students' progress or behavior. They weigh the relative merits of teaching practices. They seek ways to enrich the learning environment, the curriculum, and their teaching strategies to facilitate students' participation and promote positive learning outcomes. When a lesson or strategy succeeds, they determine why and devise ways to replicate this success.

Teachers are systematically introspective and analytical as they make adjustments to strengthen their instruction and improve student outcomes. They engage in reflective inquiry that guides their instructional problem solving and consider alternative explanations for the performance and progress of students. They analyze the appropriateness of their expectations; the validity of instructional materials; the response of individual students to learning activities; and the effects of adjustments, accommodations, and modifications on students' performance.

Teachers Engage in Reflective Practices

Teachers participate in a wide range of reflective practices to foster professional growth that leads to improvements in educating students with exceptional needs. They engage in continual self-evaluation activities regarding what they know and are able to do. They examine their own strengths and weaknesses and employ that knowledge in the analysis and planning of instruction. Accomplished teachers distinguish themselves by their capacity for critical self-examination, their openness to innovation, and their willingness to change to strengthen their teaching. Ultimately, reflective practice contributes to their depth of knowledge and skills, enriches their dispositions, and adds dignity to their practice.

The complexity of issues and instructional contexts involved in teaching students with exceptional needs requires accomplished teachers to engage in a variety of reflective activities. Personal and collaborative reflection with colleagues helps teachers achieve an appropriate educational balance that mitigates the competing tensions created by the mandates of legal compliance, the constraints of time available with students, and the responsibility to meet students' needs. To examine their practice critically, teachers might collaborate with education researchers. To determine the effectiveness of new materials, teaching strategies, and research, teachers might engage in their own action research. Welcoming and reflecting on observations by colleagues may allow accomplished teachers to consider ways to improve instructional outcomes while building on students' strengths and highlighting students' achievements.

Accomplished teachers reflect on their biases and the influences these biases have on the instruction they provide to students with exceptional needs and on their interactions with students, other professionals, families, and the community. Teachers consider the extent to which they may interpret student responses on the basis of their own cultural values versus the cultural perspective of the student or the student's family or community, and they work to overcome problems created by such gaps in understanding.

Teachers Pursue Professional Growth Focused on Reflective Practices

Accomplished teachers of students with exceptional needs vigorously pursue both independent and organized professional development opportunities. Teachers engage in advanced coursework and degrees. They may travel to observe the practice of other accomplished teachers and to keep abreast of useful new materials, teaching strategies, and research. Interacting with other professionals aids self-reflection and self-renewal, so teachers participate in a collaborative process of reflection, making themselves available to other professionals and paying particular attention to the information they learn from colleagues. They may share their expertise with colleagues through conferences and workshops, professional development sessions, formal presentations, publications, and informal exchanges. Moreover, teachers may seek and use technological resources in their efforts to improve their

practice, communicating and consulting with colleagues electronically through such means as video conferences or distance learning. These resources enable teachers to take advantage of the expertise of specialists and others to improve and develop exemplary resources for students, to share ideas and concerns, and to stay abreast of trends and practices.

Keeping current in their field is essential for accomplished teachers as the profession continues to debate, rethink, reinvent, and redefine a broad range of issues that have instructional implications for students with exceptional needs. Teachers therefore explore resources that keep them informed of the most current professional findings. By building personal libraries of professional literature and by engaging in personally reflective activities, such as independent reading and journal writing, teachers expand their knowledge base, refine their evolving philosophy of education, stimulate their creativity about ways to improve student learning, and strengthen their practice.

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The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) is deeply grateful to all those who contributed their time, wisdom, and professional vision to *Exceptional Needs Standards, Second Edition*. Any field grows, shifts, and evolves over time. Standards, too, must remain dynamic and therefore are subject to revision. In 2006, NBPTS convened a second Exceptional Needs Standards Committee. This committee was charged with achieving both continuity and change, using the first edition of the standards as the foundation for its work but modifying the standards to reflect best practices of the early twenty-first century. The Exceptional Needs Standards Committee exemplified the collegiality, expertise, and dedication to the improvement of student learning that are hallmarks of accomplished teachers. Special thanks go to committee chairs Katherine Bishop, NBCT, and Alba Ortiz, for their invaluable leadership in making the second edition a reality.

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