Responsive and Inclusive Practices and the South Carolina Teaching Standards

The South Carolina Department of Education's (SCDE) vision is that all students graduate prepared for success in college, career, and citizenship. Disproportionalities among races in student academics, disciplinary outcomes, and college and career readiness opportunities demonstrate there is important work to be done to reach this vision. The SCDE is committed to eliminating barriers to ensure that ALL students receive a high-quality K-12 education that prepares them to be college and career ready and to contribute meaningfully to our society.

Specifically, educators must be intentional about creating a safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environment for all students and ensuring all classrooms are spaces where all students learn the knowledge, skills, and characteristics needed for success in meaningful ways. To reflect this commitment, the SCDE adopted new language in the Environment domain of the South Carolina Teaching Standards (SCTS) to better describe classrooms that are conducive to teaching and learning for all students. This document describes the connection between these revisions and research-based practices. The SCDE defines responsive and inclusive teaching as using knowledge of each student's strengths and academic needs to design learning experiences that are rigorous, relevant, engaging, and accessible for all students. A student's strengths may include, but are not limited to, cultural knowledge, prior experience, and home language.

The chart below describes four research-based responsive and inclusive teaching practices: creating a safe space for learning, knowing and communicating with students, building relationships, and designing with high expectations for cognitive rigor. It aligns these practices with the SCTS Rubric, including the Environment domain and provides examples of what each practice looks like and sounds like in the classroom.

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Responsive & Inclusive Practice	What the Research Says	What the Rubric Says	Looks Like/Sounds Like	Possible Conference Questions
Creating a Safe Space for Learning	An emotionally stable and responsive environment goes beyond the decorations on the walls; teachers that create a safe space for learning set the social and emotional tone of confidence and caring. (Hammond, 2015).	● The classroom displays current student work that promotes a positive and inclusive classroom environment. (**Environment**) ● The teacher uses a variety of techniques to maintain student engagement and promote a positive classroom environment. (**Engaging Students & Managing Behavior**) ● Instructional plans include activities, materials, and assessments that build on prior student knowledge, are relevant to students' lives, and integrate other disciplines. (**Instructional Plans**) ● Students regularly learn from their mistakes and can describe their thinking on what they learned. (**Expectations**) ● Teacher engages students in giving feedback to one another. (**Academic Feedback**) ● Students generate higher order questions that lead to further inquiry and self-directed learning. (**Questioning**)	● Resources, images, and student work in the classroom depict people from a variety of backgrounds. ● Lesson plans connect to previous learning . ● Students make connections between classroom activities and their experiences or real-life scenarios. ● Students take academic risks, including giving and receiving feedback, asking questions, and recognizing mistakes as a part of the learning process.	● How do you create a safe space for learning where every student feels valued and respected? ● How does this lesson connect with your students' life experiences? ● How do your students take ownership of their learning? ● In this lesson, where are there opportunities for students to raise questions or offer feedback?

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Knowing & Communicating with Students	Inclusive teachers know enough about students' cultural and individual life circumstances to be able to communicate well with them. (Hanover Research, 2019).	● Teacher-student and student-student interactions consistently demonstrate caring and respect for one another and celebrate and acknowledge all students' background and culture. **(Respectful Culture)** ● Presentation of content always includes concise communication. **(Presenting Instructional Content)** ● Questions are consistently purposeful and coherent. **(Questioning)** ● Teacher practices incorporate student interests and cultural heritage. Teacher provides differentiated instructional methods and content to ensure students have the opportunity to master what is being taught. Teacher practices display understanding students anticipated learning difficulties. **(Teacher Knowledge of Students)** ● All learning objectives are explicitly communicated. Learning objectives are consistently connected to what students have previously learned. **(Standards & Objectives)**	● Teacher and students share about their backgrounds and culture. ● Teacher uses culturally appropriate language and gestures with students. ● Teacher acknowledges important aspects of all students' cultures (holidays, norms, etc.). ● Teacher speaks clearly and provides information in a manner understandable to all students. ● Students or teacher make connections between today's learning, previous learning, and/or their lives. ● Student work demonstrates different learning pathways and multiple ways to demonstrate mastery. ● Students explain how current learning connects to previous learning.	● How do you model respect for your students? ● What do you know about your students' lives, challenges, cultural backgrounds, or how they communicate best? ● How does what you know about this group of students impact your planning and instruction? ● What might students have difficulty with in this lesson and how will you address potential misconceptions? ● How will you activate prior knowledge?

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Building Relationships	Teaching that supports dependent learners requires a learning partnership that includes both rapport and alliance (Hammond, 2015).	● Teacher and students establish collective commitments for learning and behavior. (**Engaging Students & Managing Behavior**) ● Teacher fosters positive teacher-to-student and student-to-student interactions that demonstrate overall care, kindness, and respect for one another. (**Respectful Culture**) ● Positive relationships and interdependence characterize the classroom**. (Respectful Culture**)	● Students assist teacher in creating classroom rules/norms. ● Teacher models norms and uses them consistently to remind students of classroom rules/procedures. ● Students exhibit behaviors consistent with rules/norms. ● Students are accountable for their learning (e.g. taking notes, completing homework, etc.). ● Students work cooperatively to dig deeper into concepts. ● Students give each other respectful feedback. ● Students collaborate productively to solve problems and reach learning goals. ● Teacher demonstrates care by making time for students, expressing belief in and compassion for students, asking students genuine questions, being a listener, expressing enthusiasm about students engagement with the content, and/or expressing respect and acceptance for every student.	● How have you developed rapport with students in this class this year? ● What steps are you taking to further establish a close relationship with students who are more difficult for you to reach? ● How have your students developed a positive working relationship with one another?

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Designing with High Expectations for Cognitive Rigor	Helping dependent learners cultivate an academic mindset is critical in order for them to act on feedback and move toward independent learning (Hammond, 2015).	● Teacher optimizes instructional time, teaches more material, and demands better performance from every student. (**Expectations**) ● The teacher circulates to prompt student thinking, assess each student's progress, and provide individual feedback. (**Academic Feedback**) ● Teacher consistently provides opportunities where students monitor their thinking to ensure that they understand what they are learning, are attending to critical information, and are aware of the learning strategies that they are using and why. (**Thinking**)	● Teacher moves about the room to view students' work and ask/answer students' questions. ● Teacher gives individual students advice in response to their questions or their work. ● Students work independently to accomplish learning tasks. ● Learning tasks match the rigor and depth of knowledge required by the standards. ● All students have access to academic tasks that require multiple types of thinking and problem solving. ● Students reflect on what learning strategies work best for them and why. ● Teacher asks a variety of questions, including higher order questions that sustain engagement and promote critical thinking.	● How do you communicate your high expectations for all students? ● How does this lesson build in time and space for students to reflect on their learning? ● What types of thinking and problem solving will students need to do to be successful in this lesson?

Resources

CEEDAR Center. (2017). *About the High Leverage Practices.* https://highleveragepractices.org/about-hlps. In particular, HLPs 3, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, and 14 align with the responsive and inclusive teaching practices.

Hammond, Zaretta. (2015). *Culturally responsive teaching and the brain: Promoting authentic engagement and rigor among culturally and linguistically diverse students.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. Hammond's work connects research on cognition with research on engaging all students.

Hanover Research (2019). *Cultural Awareness and Cultural Competence Toolkit.* https://www.hanoverresearch.com/.