Organizing Content Knowledge for Student Learning

Knowledge of the content to be taught underlies all aspects of good instruction. Domain A focuses on how teachers use their understanding of students and subject matter to decide on learning goals; to design or select appropriate activities and instructional materials; to sequence instruction in ways that will help students to meet short- and long-term curricular goals; and to design or select informative evaluation strategies. All of these processes, beginning with the learning goals, must be aligned with each other, and because of the diverse needs represented in any class, each of the processes mentioned must be carried out in ways that take into account the variety of knowledge and experiences that students bring to class. Therefore, knowledge of relevant information about the students themselves is an integral part of this domain.

Domain A is concerned with how the teacher thinks about the content to be taught. This thinking is evident in how the teacher organizes instruction for the benefit of her or his students.

The primary sources of evidence for the criteria in Domain A are the class profile, instruction and reflection profile, and preobservation interview. The classroom observation may also contribute to assessing performance on these criteria.

A1: Becoming familiar with relevant aspects of students' background knowledge and experiences

A2: Articulating clear learning goals for the lesson that are appropriate to the students

A3: Demonstrating an understanding of the connections between the content that was learned previously, the current content, and the content that remains to be learned in the future

A4: Creating or selecting teaching methods, learning activities, and instructional materials or other resources that are appropriate to the students and that are aligned with the goals of the lesson

A5: Creating or selecting evaluation strategies that are appropriate for the students and that are aligned with the goals of the lesson
Creating an Environment for Student Learning

Domain B relates to the social and emotional components of learning as prerequisites to academic achievement. Thus, most of the criteria in this domain focus on the human interactions in the classroom, on the connections between teachers and students, and among students. Domain B addresses issues of fairness and rapport, of helping students to believe that they can learn and can meet challenges, of establishing and maintaining constructive standards for behavior in the classroom. It also includes the learning “environment” in the most literal sense — the physical setting in which teaching and learning take place.

A learning environment that provides both emotional and physical safety for students is one in which a broad range of teaching and learning experiences can occur. Teachers must be able to use their knowledge of their students in order to interpret their students’ behavior accurately and respond in ways that are appropriate and supportive. When they do so, their interactions with students consistently foster the students’ sense of self-esteem. In addition, teachers’ efforts to establish a sense of the classroom as a community with clear standards should never be arbitrary; all behavioral standards and teacher-student interactions should be grounded in a sense of respect for students as individuals.

Evidence for the criteria in Domain B will be drawn primarily from the classroom observation; supporting evidence may be drawn from the observation interviews. The class profile provides contextual information relevant to these criteria.

**B1:** Creating a climate that promotes fairness

**B2:** Establishing and maintaining rapport with students

**B3:** Communicating challenging learning expectations to each student

**B4:** Establishing and maintaining consistent standards of classroom behavior

**B5:** Making the physical environment as safe and conducive to learning as possible
Teaching for Student Learning

This domain focuses on the act of teaching and its overall goal: helping students to connect with the content. As used here, "content" refers to the subject matter of a discipline and may include knowledge, skills, perceptions, and values in any domain: cognitive, social, artistic, physical, and so on. Teachers direct students in the process of establishing individual connections with the content, thereby devising a good "fit" for the content within the framework of the students' knowledge, interests, abilities, cultural backgrounds, and personal backgrounds. At the same time, teachers should help students to move beyond the limits of their current knowledge or understanding. Teachers monitor learning, making certain that students assimilate information accurately and that they understand and can apply what they have learned. Teachers must also be sure that students understand what is expected of them procedurally during the lesson and that class time is used to good purpose.

Most of the evidence for a teacher's performance with respect to these criteria will come from the classroom observation. It may be augmented or illuminated by evidence from the observation interviews.

C1: Making learning goals and instructional procedures clear to students

C2: Making content comprehensible to students

C3: Encouraging students to extend their thinking

C4: Monitoring students' understanding of content through a variety of means, providing feedback to students to assist learning, and adjusting learning activities as the situation demands

C5: Using instructional time effectively
Teacher Professionalism

Teachers must be able to evaluate their own instructional effectiveness in order to plan specific future lessons for particular classes and to improve their teaching over time. They should be able to discuss the degree to which different aspects of a lesson were successful in terms of instructional approaches, student responses, and learning outcomes. Teachers should be able to explain how they will proceed to work toward learning for all students. The professional responsibilities of all teachers, including beginning teachers, also include sharing appropriate information with other professionals and with families in ways that support the learning of diverse student populations.

The primary source of evidence for the criteria in Domain D is the class profile and physical evidence the teacher may provide.

D1: Reflecting on the extent to which the learning goals were met

D2: Demonstrating a sense of efficacy.

D3: Building professional relationships with colleagues to share teaching insights and to coordinate learning activities for students

D4: Communicating with parents or guardians about student learning