

**TEXAS BEGINNING EDUCATOR
SUPPORT SYSTEM**

TxBESS FRAMEWORK

**Performance Standards
and
Developmental Continuum**

January 2005

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TxBESS FRAMEWORK

Introduction

Welcome to the world of beginning teaching! As part of the Texas Beginning Educator Support System (TxBESS), this framework, which consists of performance standards and a developmental continuum, illustrates how beginning teachers develop the knowledge and skills that comprise the complex act of teaching.

The TxBESS Performance Standards are grouped into these four clusters:

1. **Planning for Learner-centered Instruction;**
2. **A Classroom Environment That Promotes Equity, Excellence, and Learning;**
3. **Instruction and Communication; and**
4. **Professionalism.**

The clusters are designed to promote professional practice that results in high levels of student learning. Each cluster consists of performance standards that further elaborate on the desired teaching practices. The description of each standard is accompanied by a developmental continuum that progresses through the following four levels:

- Performances described as **developing** do not yet reflect the standard of performance expected of a beginning teacher.
- Performances described as **beginning competent** reflect the expected level of performance at the end of student teaching or early in the first year of teaching.
- Performances described as **advanced competent** reflect the expected level of performance for first-year teachers who have received support from a trained mentor and support team.
- Performances described as **proficient** reflect the high goals that beginning teachers strive to attain as they become accomplished members of the educational community.

Using the *TxBESS Framework* and the *TxBESS Activity Profile*

The *TxBESS Framework* defines the act of teaching and introduces teachers to the components of effective practice. The *TxBESS Activity Profile* provides a structure for reflection in which mentors and other support team members guide beginning teachers to reflect on their own teaching practice. The TxBESS Performance Standards are the basis for the *TxBESS Activity Profile* (TAP), a case study of beginning teaching. The performance standards and the accompanying developmental continuum are based on four years of piloting the TAP and reflect the range of beginning teacher performances derived



from approximately 7,000 profiles. Analysis of these profiles has shown that the performance of a beginning teacher varies from standard to standard as a normal part of the developmental process. Additionally, because TxBESS beginning teachers typically undertake the TAP self-study during the first semester of their teaching experience, it is expected that performance on some standards may be at the developing level. Identifying these challenge areas early in a teacher's career provides the basis for the action plan and targeted professional development for the beginning teacher.

To use the developmental continuum as a tool for reflection, beginning teachers can use a highlighter to identify those aspects of each description in the continuum that best fit their teaching practice at that point in time. This self-assessment can help the beginning teacher and mentor determine areas that are their priorities for the beginning teacher's professional development. At a later time, beginning teachers can use another color to highlight updated descriptions of their current practice, illustrating professional growth over time and possibly necessitating a revision to the beginning teacher's professional development plan.

Additionally, the performance standards and developmental continuum serve as useful tools to support coaching and mentoring relationships. The framework provides a common vocabulary for such professional discourse.

The *TxBESS Framework* and the TAP complement the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS) by providing standards and a formative assessment designed especially for beginning teachers who will later undergo evaluation using the PDAS or a similar appraisal system. Beginning teachers report feeling very prepared for the PDAS after participating in the TAP, since they have already had an opportunity to reflect critically on their teaching practice.

Though the framework was developed as part of the Texas Beginning Educator Support System (TxBESS), pre-service educator preparation program faculty may also find the framework to be helpful. The performance standards in the framework mirror the standards for the Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities (PPR) test in the Texas Examinations of Educator Standards (TExES). Teacher preparation programs that are aligned with the framework can help ensure that beginning teachers meet certification testing requirements and enter the classroom prepared for their first year on the job.

The framework and the TAP are appropriate for all teachers, including those who may be employed on temporary credentials or waivers. Additionally, teachers who have been away from the profession for a significant amount of time can benefit from an induction program based on the framework and the TAP, since they provide opportunities to self-assess teaching practices and consider recent changes in the profession. Veteran teachers new to a district, campus, or assignment may also benefit from the *TxBESS Framework* and TAP.

The support, respect, and professional collegiality gained from participation in TxBESS benefit both beginning teachers and mentors. Membership in such a professional community positively impacts the retention and effectiveness of beginning teachers. The



TxBESS Framework and the TAP are tools for establishing lasting commitments to the teaching profession for beginning teachers and mentors.

History of the *TxBESS Framework*

In 1999, the Texas State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC), a committee of Texas educators, and the Educational Testing Service developed the TxBESS Performance Standards. The framework reflects the research-based standards of teaching described in Charlotte Danielson's *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching*. After the initial development, SBEC and Resources for Learning (RFL) modified the performance standards and developmental continuum based on feedback from beginning teachers and mentors and performance on the TAP.

Structure of the *TxBESS Framework*

A graphic that outlines the framework is shown on page 6. It shows the four clusters, twenty-two performance standards, and multiple elements that comprise each standard. Each cluster is important both individually and in relation to the other clusters. For example, thorough planning (Cluster 1) encourages a positive classroom atmosphere (Cluster 2) and effective instruction and classroom communication (Cluster 3). Following instruction, reflection and other professional interactions (Cluster 4) improve future planning, creating a cyclical approach to improved planning and instruction (back to Clusters 1, 2, and 3).

The framework provides a comprehensive look at teaching, addressing activities that occur *outside* of the classroom as well as activities that occur *inside* the classroom. Teaching activities associated with Clusters 1 and 4 (on the left side of the chart) take place outside of instruction. Cluster 1 encompasses the many aspects of planning required for providing learner-centered instruction. Cluster 4 involves the reflection, communication, and professional development that improve future planning and instruction. Clusters 2 and 3 (on the right side of the chart) describe behaviors that are most readily observable in the classroom—the environment a teacher establishes and the instructional sequences a teacher implements. Teachers know that the knowledge and skills described in all four clusters are necessary for successful teaching and learning. Thus, what happens outside the classroom (Clusters 1 and 4) is as important as what happens in actual instruction (Clusters 2 and 3).



TxBESS FRAMEWORK

CLUSTER 1: Planning for Learner-centered Instruction	CLUSTER 2: A Classroom Environment That Promotes Equity, Excellence, and Learning
<p>1a: Demonstrating Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy Content knowledge Prerequisite relationships Content-specific pedagogy</p> <p>1b: Demonstrating Knowledge of Students Characteristics of age group Students' varied approaches to learning Students' skills and knowledge Students' interests and cultural heritages</p> <p>1c: Selecting Key Knowledge and Skills Significance Clarity Suitability for diverse students</p> <p>1d: Demonstrating Knowledge of Materials, Resources, and Technology Materials/resources Technology</p> <p>1e: Designing Activities That Promote Student Learning Learning activities Learning groups Lesson structure</p> <p>1f: Planning to Assess Student Learning Assessment content and methods Criteria</p>	<p>2a: Creating an Environment of Rapport and Respect Teacher interaction with students Student interaction</p> <p>2b: Establishing a Culture for Learning Importance of content Expectations for learning and achievement</p> <p>2c: Managing Classroom Procedures Transitions Materials and supplies Non-instructional duties Volunteers and paraprofessionals</p> <p>2d: Managing Student Behavior Expectations Monitoring of student behavior Response to student behavior</p> <p>2e: Organizing Physical Space Environmental considerations in support of learning Safety and arrangement of furniture Accessibility to learning and use of physical resources</p>
CLUSTER 4: Professionalism	CLUSTER 3: Instruction and Communication
<p>4a: Reflecting on Teaching Accuracy Use in future teaching</p> <p>4b: Maintaining Accurate Records Student progress in learning Non-instructional records</p> <p>4c: Communicating with Families/Caregivers Information about the instructional program Information about individual students Engagement of families/caregivers in the instructional program</p> <p>4d: Contributing to the School Relationships with colleagues Service to the school</p> <p>4e: Growing and Developing Professionally Enhancement of content knowledge and pedagogical skill Participation in beginning teacher support</p> <p>4f: Serving as an Advocate for Students Decision making Student advocacy</p>	<p>3a: Communicating Clearly and Accurately Directions and procedures Oral and written language Student communication</p> <p>3b: Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques Quality of questions/discussion techniques Student participation</p> <p>3c: Engaging Students in Learning Representation of content Activities and assignments Grouping of students Materials, resources, and technology Structure, sequencing, and pacing</p> <p>3d: Assessing Student Learning Implementation of assessment Use for planning Quality and timeliness of feedback</p> <p>3e: Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness Lesson adjustment Response to students Persistence</p>

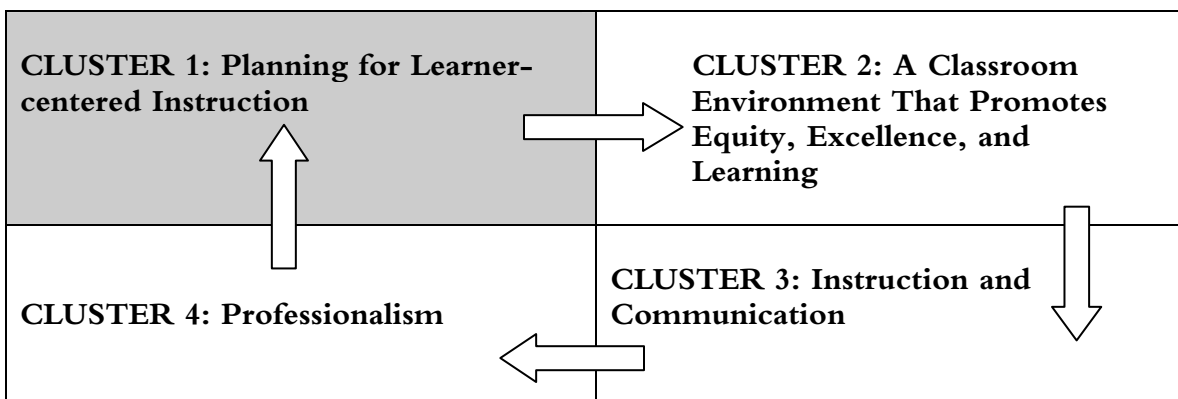


Cluster 1: Planning for Learner-centered Instruction

The standards in Cluster 1 describe how the teacher organizes the content students will learn and how the teacher designs instruction. Cluster 1 covers all aspects of instructional planning, including the teacher’s knowledge of content and pedagogy and the teacher’s understanding and appreciation of the students and what they bring to the learning experience. The teacher makes the content accessible to students through the instructional design. All elements of the instructional design, including learning activities, materials, and instructional strategies, should be appropriate for both the content and the students. The instructional content and process of assessment must also reflect the key knowledge and skills targeted for student learning and should document student progress and needs during and after the learning experience.

Research has shown the importance of planning and preparation for teaching all students. Shulman (1987) emphasizes the key to distinguishing the knowledge base of teachers from others who work in a given discipline is the teacher’s capacity to transform content knowledge into forms that are accessible to many students who differ in ability and background. Sykes and Bird (1992) stress the importance of teachers’ knowledge of their students and the prior conceptions that they bring to the learning situation. According to Floden, et al (1987), “Representations [of the subject] need to take into account what learners are already likely to know and understand about the subject matter as well as the experiences and knowledge they bring with them from their environment.” Additionally, research documents the need for learning goals that convey high expectations for students, coherent instruction, and aligned assessment (Brophy and Good, 1986; Moll, 1988; Oakes, 1986; Smith, 1985).

The teacher who excels in Cluster 1 designs instruction based on his or her reflection on previous experiences (Cluster 4) and his or her understanding of the important concepts and principles within the content. The design is coherent in its approach to teaching, assessment methods, and appropriateness to the range of students in the class.



Cluster 1
Planning for Learner-centered Instruction

1a. The teacher demonstrates knowledge of content and pedagogy.

Content knowledge
Prerequisite relationships
Content-specific pedagogy

1b. The teacher demonstrates knowledge of students.

Characteristics of age group
Students' varied approaches to learning
Students' skills and knowledge
Students' interests and cultural heritages

1c. The teacher selects key knowledge and skills.

Significance
Clarity
Suitability for diverse students

1d. The teacher has knowledge of and makes use of materials, resources, and technology.

Materials/resources
Technology

1e. The teacher designs activities that promote student learning.

Learning activities
Learning groups
Lesson structure

1f. The teacher plans to assess student learning.

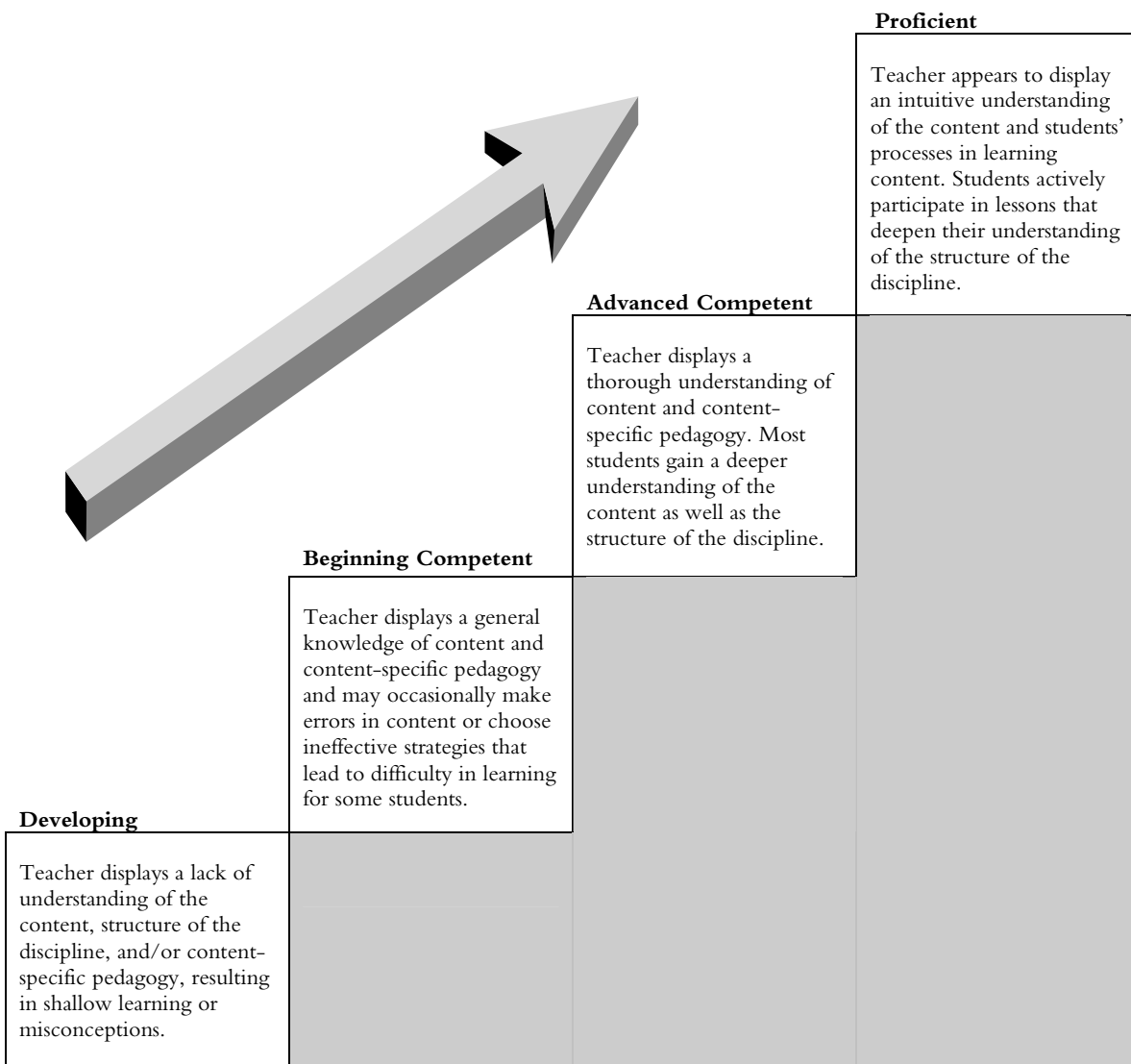
Assessment content and methods
Criteria



Standard 1a: The teacher demonstrates knowledge of content and pedagogy.

The teacher must have sufficient command of the subject matter in order to guide student learning. Content includes far more than factual information; it encompasses all aspects of a subject, including concepts, principles, relationships, and methods of inquiry. In addition, the teacher knows which concepts are central to a discipline, which concepts are peripheral, and which prerequisite relationships are necessary for new learning. Students view the teacher as an authoritative source on the content they need to learn. Although the teacher may sometimes withhold information to encourage student inquiry, the content that he or she conveys should be accurate and reflective of the teacher’s deep understanding.

Possessing sufficient content knowledge is a critical component to good teaching, but teachers must use it in conjunction with sound pedagogies related to that content. The teacher uses pedagogical techniques particular to each content area to convey information and teach new skills. The teacher who is knowledgeable about content-specific pedagogy anticipates common student misconceptions and uses strategies to dispel these misunderstandings.



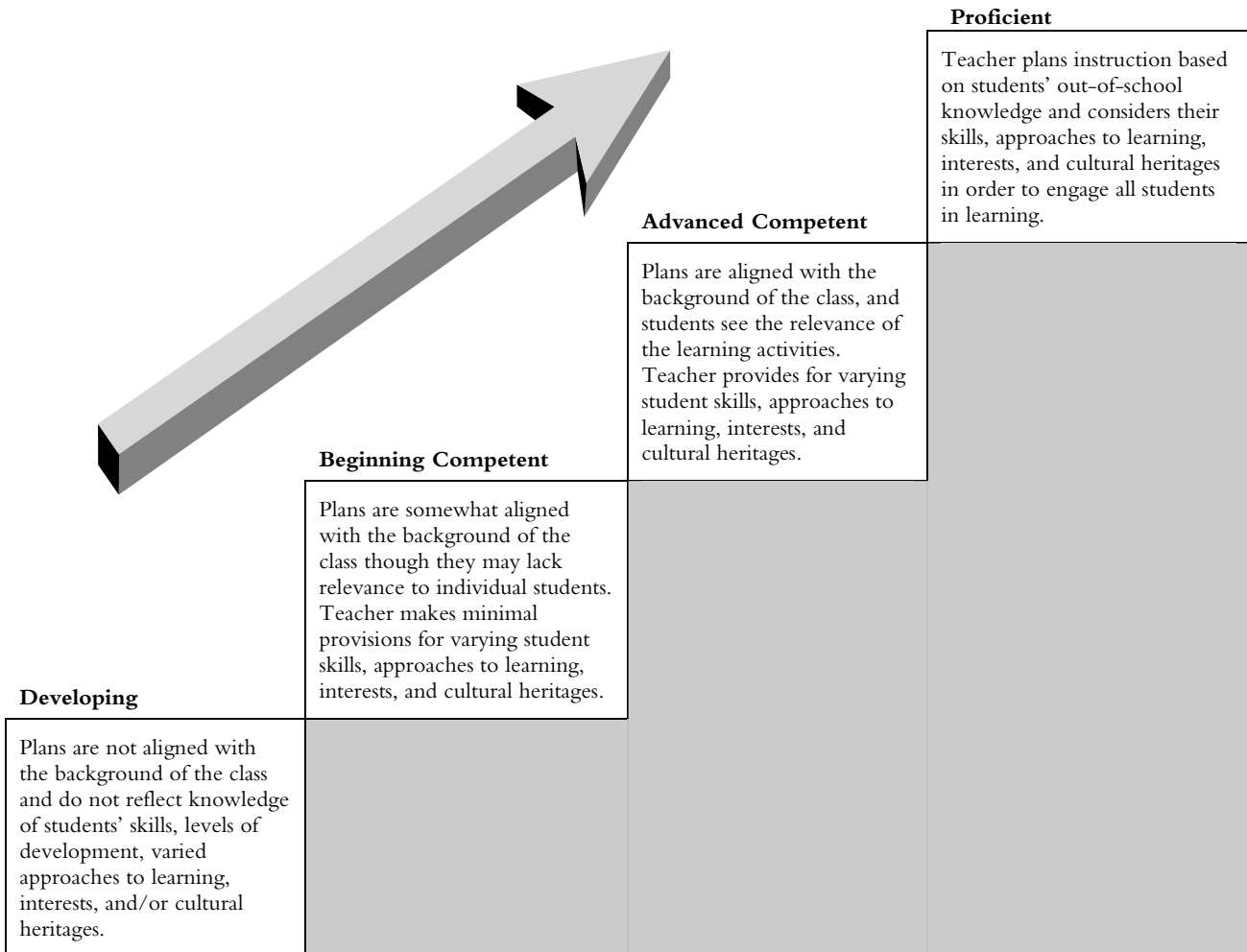
Standard 1b: The teacher demonstrates knowledge of students.

To maximize learning, the teacher must know his or her students. Each individual student and group of students have certain intellectual, social, cultural, and emotional characteristics. The teacher’s knowledge of students should include an overall understanding of child and/or adolescent development, including individual variations in development that may deem a child “at-risk.”

Research indicates that new learning best occurs when students actively participate in learning experiences that are linked to their prior experiences. For example, students’ current understandings of fractions influence what else they can learn and understand about the topic. Some students may have acquired erroneous information. The teacher’s knowledge of students includes discovering and correcting these misunderstandings.

Students’ interests, talents, and preferred approaches to learning vary. The skilled teacher helps students build on their strengths while developing competence in other areas. Today’s classrooms include increasing numbers of students with identified special needs. The teacher’s knowledge of students should include information about accommodating students’ special needs through instructional planning.

Students’ academic knowledge is not the only area that affects their learning. Students already possess out-of-school knowledge of everyday events, interests, and activities associated with their home and community environments. The breadth of knowledge students bring to the classroom can play a vital role in creating an atmosphere of active learning and relevance. Students also bring to school the richness of their cultural heritages. Appropriately and meaningfully incorporating students’ cultural heritages helps provide an effective learning environment for all students.

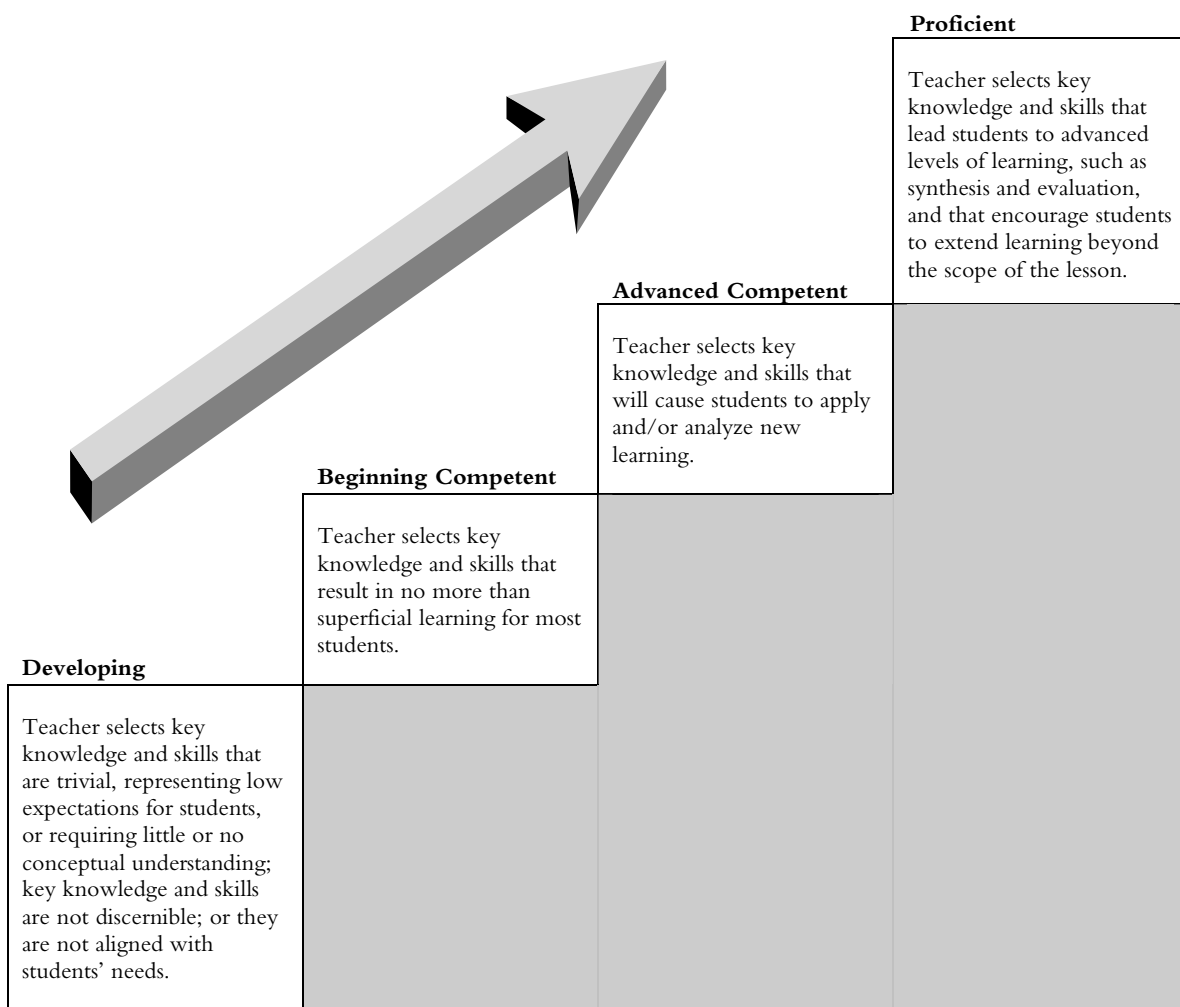


Standard 1c: The teacher selects key knowledge and skills.

When the teacher selects key knowledge and skills for instruction, he or she must consider a number of factors—the state standards, district curriculum, community expectations, and the needs of all students. State standards are the guidelines that inform educators of the information and skills they must include in the curricula. Simply put, state standards clarify and unify what is taught in the state.

Key knowledge and skills must represent learning central to a discipline as well as high expectations for the learning of all students. The knowledge and skills may represent factual knowledge, conceptual understanding, skills, and even student dispositions, such as willingness to listen to all points of view or taking pride in one’s work.

In selecting key knowledge and skills, the teacher should consider the relevance of each to students and their academic needs. Key knowledge and skills should be stated in clear language that recognizes these differing needs and addresses all types of learning.

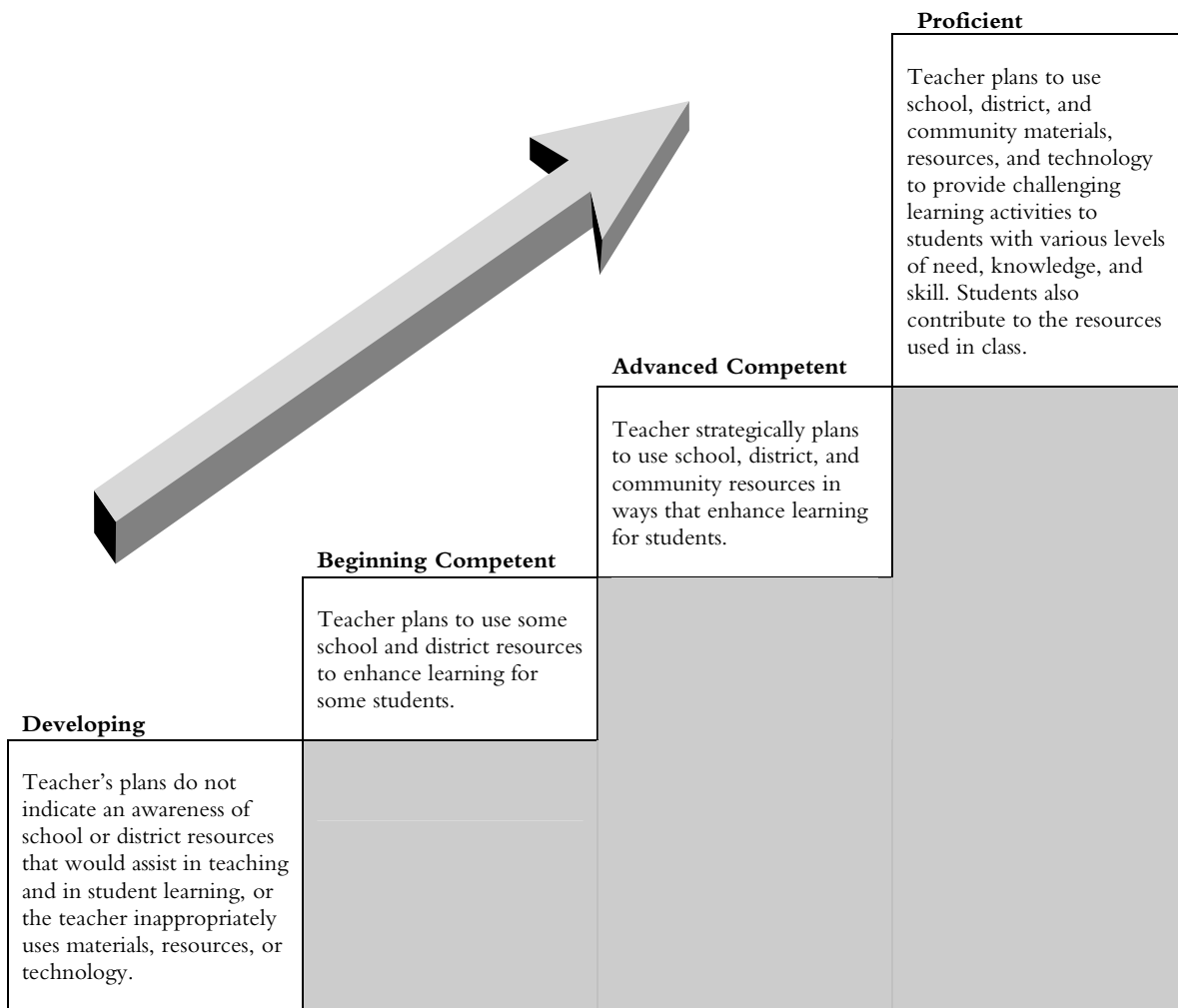


Standard 1d: The teacher has knowledge of and makes use of materials, resources, and technology.

An important element in instructional design is the teacher’s choice of materials, resources, and technology. Teachers should carefully select these elements to support student learning of the key knowledge and skills.

When teachers know the range of materials and resources available to aid in teaching, their repertoires of instructional strategies expand. Being aware of these resources is the first step to using them in the classroom. Technologies, such as computer hardware, software, and Internet access, when available, are used appropriately to support student learning while accommodating different learning styles.

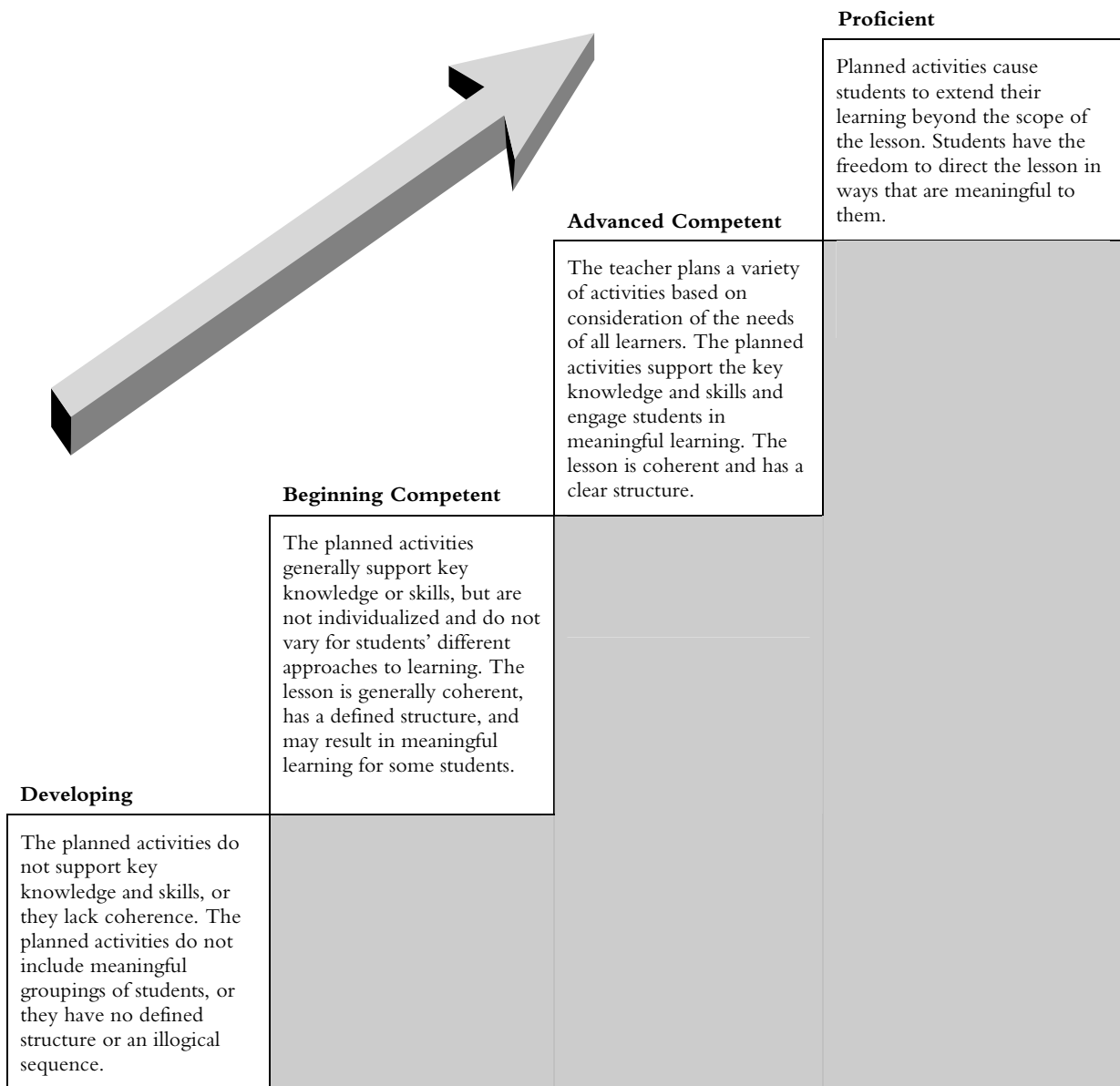
The teacher tries to access instructional resources beyond those the school provides, thereby further enhancing students’ learning experiences. Resources may be found outside the school and district, e.g., museums, concert performances, materials from local businesses, and parental involvement.



Standard 1e: The teacher designs activities that promote student learning.

The teacher develops a coherent instructional plan that translates key knowledge and skills into meaningful learning for students. A critical element in instructional design is the creation or adaptation of a series of learning activities that help students demonstrate key knowledge and skills. This sequence of instruction should be logical and should engage students in meaningful activities that impact their learning beyond the current lesson or unit. The activities and grouping strategies should vary, providing many ways to engage students in the content.

A coherent instructional plan has a well-defined structure. Individual activities support the overall instructional design to which each activity makes a significant contribution. Time allocations are reasonable and provide opportunities for students to engage in reflection and closure. Topics from one part of the plan are connected to others; students explore a subject from many different angles and understand the relationship of the parts to the whole. Instructional groups are suitable to both the instructional goals and the needs of students. When appropriate, students themselves take initiative in choosing with whom to work. The students engaged in these activities can articulate what they are learning versus what they are doing.

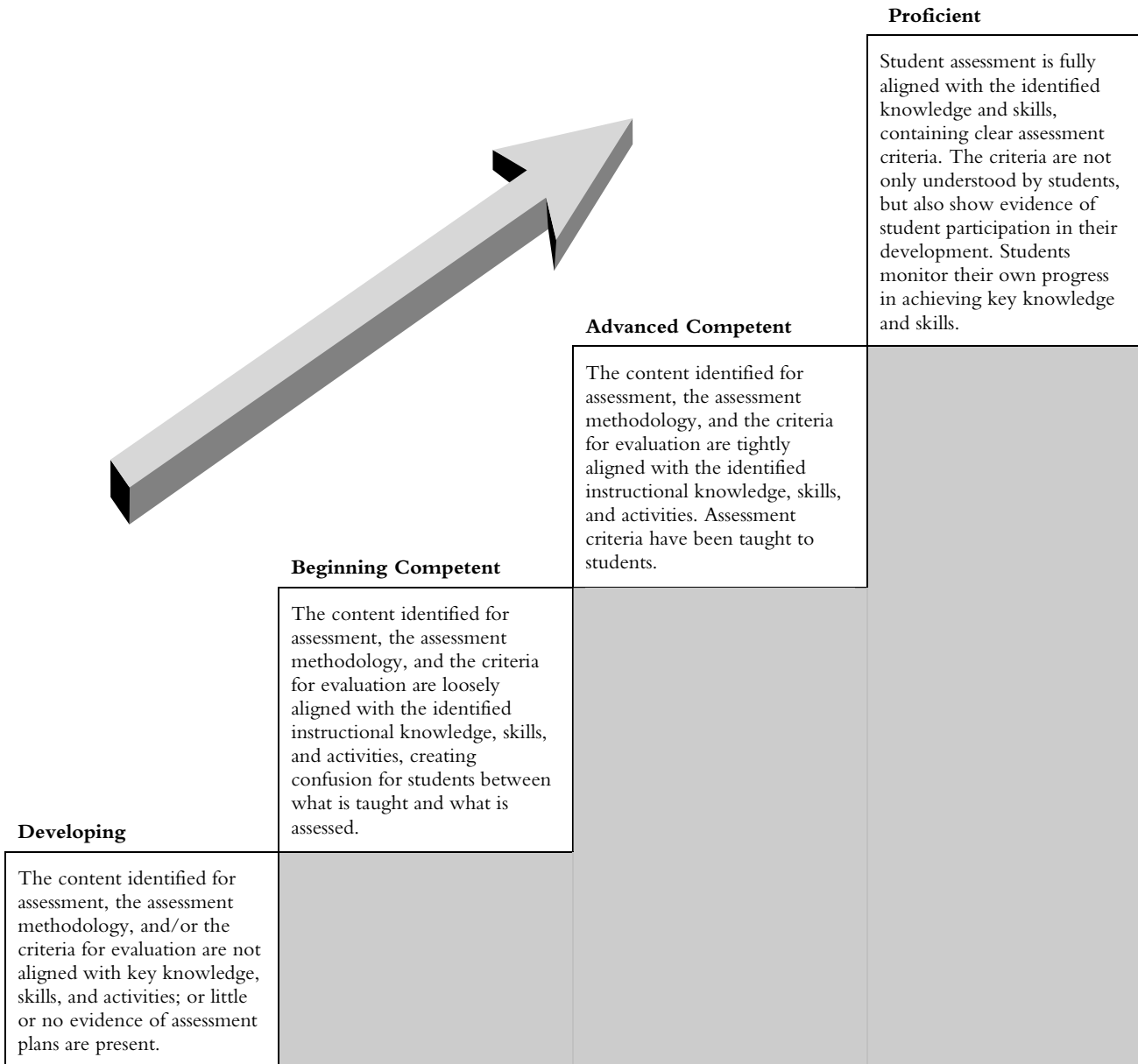


Standard 1f: The teacher plans to assess student learning.

A well-designed instructional plan clearly delineates how the teacher will assess student learning. Students understand these criteria. For complex learning and for assessment methods that do not yield a single correct response, the teacher may design a scoring protocol, or rubric, to evaluate student work. Such a rubric not only describes performance at various levels, but also delineates a minimum level of acceptable performance. Students know how to use rubrics and understand the role of rubrics in determining their success in the class.

When appropriate, assessment methodologies should reflect real-world applications of knowledge and understanding. Such connections to the real world motivate students and provide the teacher with a comprehensive view of student understanding.

Teachers carefully align their assessments with the specific content being taught and the method by which the teachers plan to deliver that content.

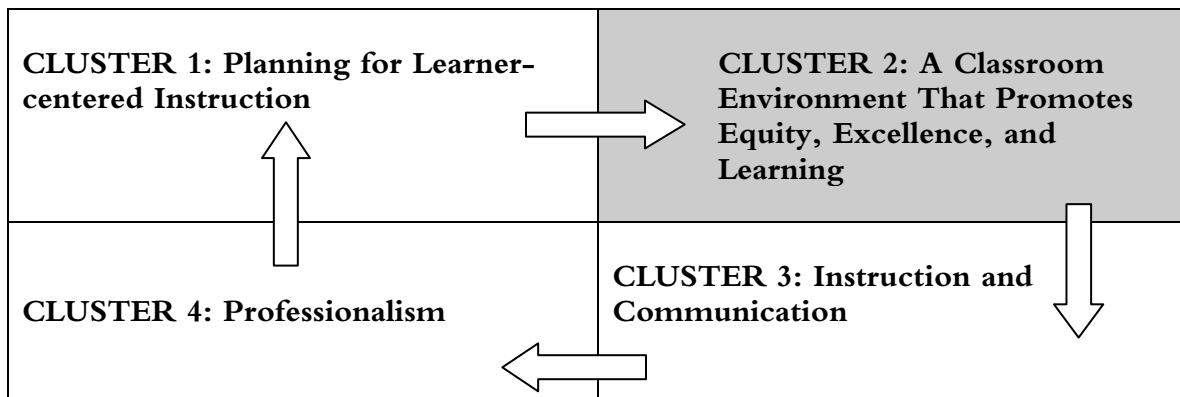


Cluster 2: A Classroom Environment That Promotes Equity, Excellence, and Learning

The standards in Cluster 2 focus on the interactions that occur in a classroom. These interactions are independent of any particular content, even though they are necessary for effective instruction. This cluster elaborates on the teacher's responsibilities with respect to the elements of a classroom environment, such as developing a comfortable and safe classroom, creating a culture for learning, and establishing a safe place for risk taking to occur during meaningful learning. The atmosphere is structured, and the teacher efficiently handles non-instructional routines and procedures. Student behavior is respectful, and the physical environment is supportive of the stated instructional purposes.

Research documents the need for a functional classroom environment (Doyle, 1986) with routines and procedures that establish consistent high expectations for student behavior and learning for all students (Brophy, 1987). The teacher's role in communicating such high expectations is critical in diverse classroom settings to increase the achievement of previously low-performing groups of students (U.S. Department of Education, 1987).

The teacher who excels in Cluster 2 respects students' interests, concerns, and intellectual abilities. As a result, the students regard their teacher as a knowledgeable and caring adult with whom they can build a trusting relationship. The foundation for a classroom environment that is conducive to learning is instructional design that is based on knowledge of content, content-specific pedagogy, and the students themselves.



Cluster 2
**A Classroom Environment That Promotes
Equity, Excellence, and Learning**

2a. The teacher creates an environment of rapport and respect.

Teacher interaction with students
Student interaction

2b. The teacher establishes a culture for learning.

Importance of content
Expectations for learning and achievement

2c. The teacher manages classroom procedures.

Transitions
Materials and supplies
Non-instructional duties
Volunteers and paraprofessionals

2d. The teacher manages student behavior.

Expectations
Monitoring of student behavior
Response to student behavior

2e. The teacher organizes physical space.

Environmental considerations in support of learning
Safety and arrangement of furniture
Accessibility to learning and use of physical resources

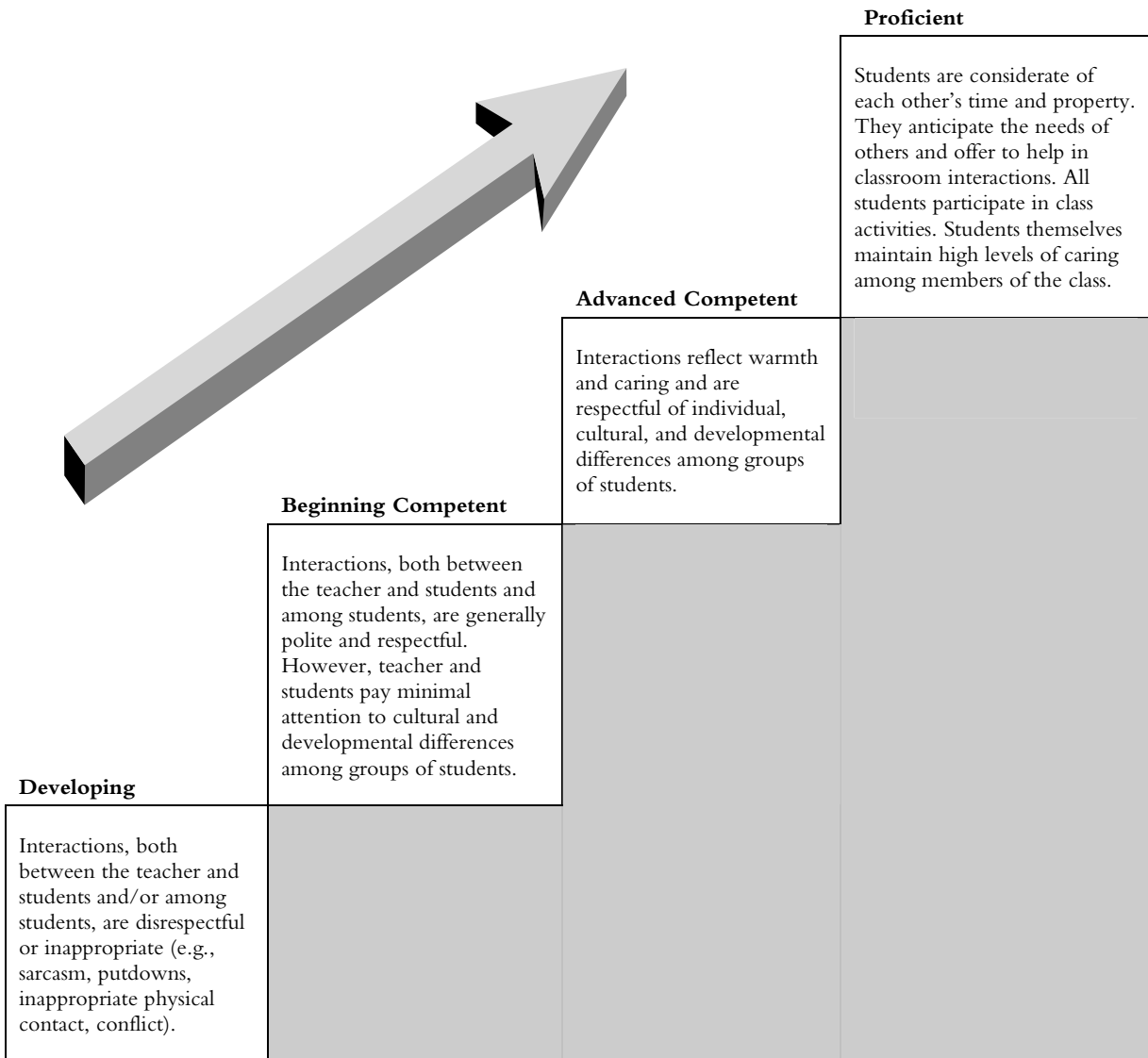


Standard 2a: The teacher creates an environment of rapport and respect.

The teacher promotes positive relationships with and among students. These relationships are grounded in rapport and mutual respect. In a respectful environment, the teacher treats all students with dignity, making students feel valued.

The teacher provides a structured, business-like atmosphere. Underlying this structure is the respect that the teacher exhibits for his or her students, along with the respect that the teacher encourages students to exhibit for one another.

Appropriate ways of demonstrating respect for and rapport with students depend on nonverbal as well as verbal behavior. The teacher’s interactions with students are based on an understanding of their developmental levels and cultural traditions.



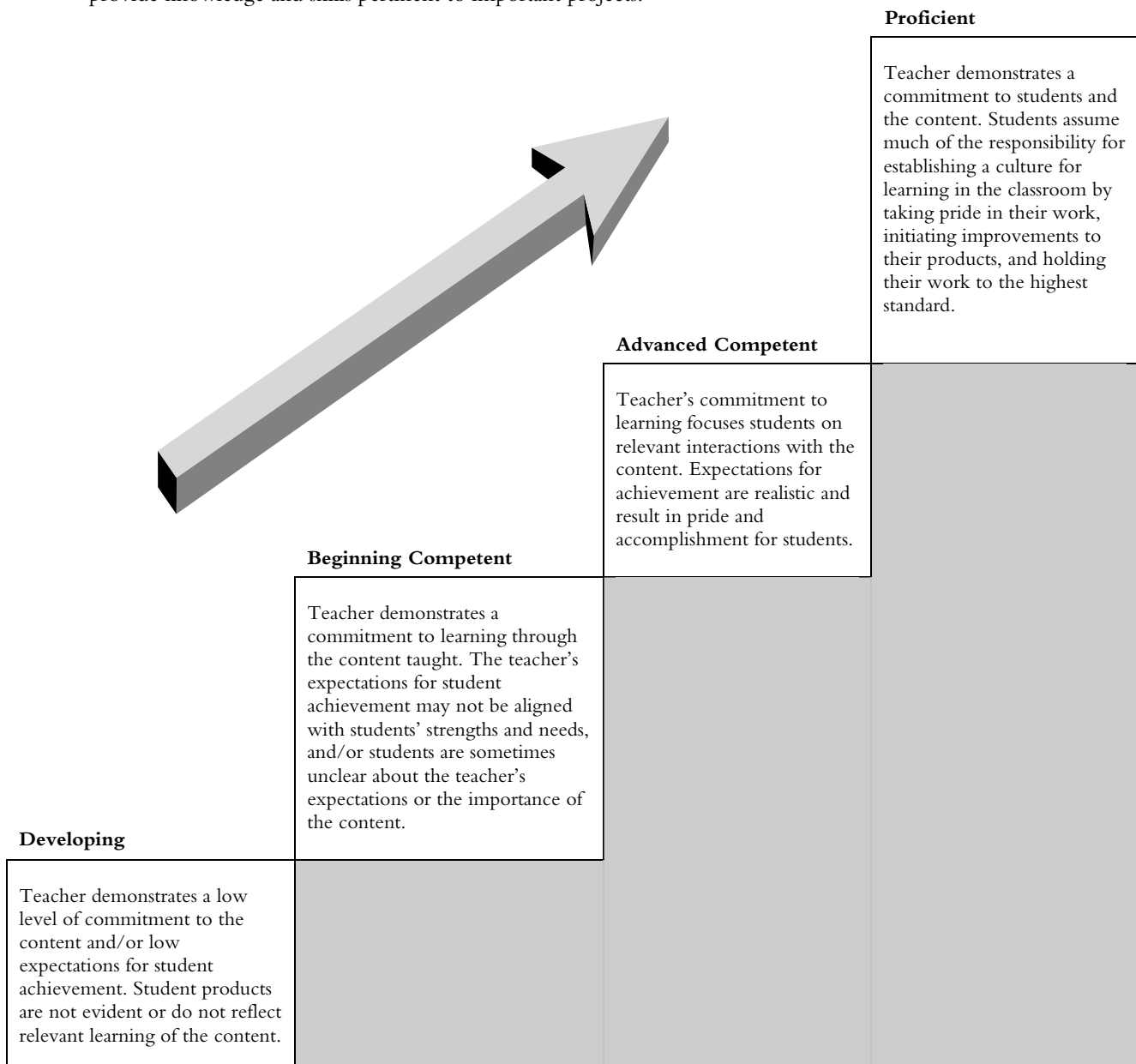
Standard 2b: The teacher establishes a culture for learning.

In classrooms with a strong culture for learning, everyone, including the teacher, is engaged in valuable academic pursuits. A culture for learning implies high expectations for all students and a safe environment for taking risks.

All students know that their teacher has a high regard for their abilities, which strengthens their commitment to high academic achievement. The teacher’s high expectations, which students internalize and convey, are at the center of a culture for learning.

In these classrooms, teachers and students are cognitively engaged, valuing high-quality instruction and work. Student work is displayed. Teacher-student interactions are characterized by teacher insistence on, and student acceptance of, the need for students to demonstrate their best efforts.

The teacher who establishes a culture for learning creates an atmosphere of excitement about the importance of learning. Students are engaged in meaningful work that carries significance beyond the next test and can provide knowledge and skills pertinent to important projects.

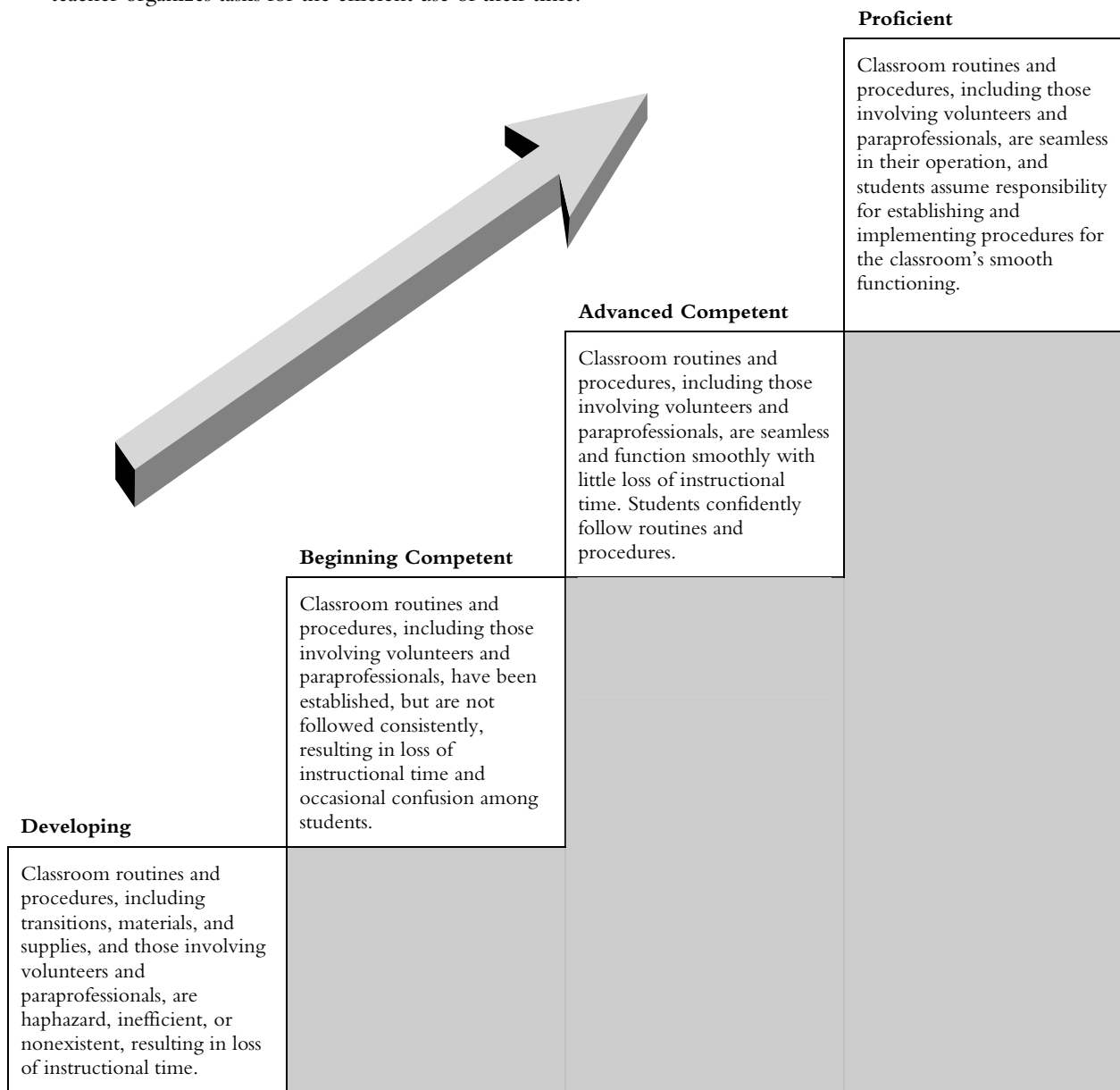


Standard 2c: The teacher manages classroom procedures.

The teacher develops procedures for the smooth operation of the class and efficient use of time. Routines are established for the movement and management of classroom groups, the distribution and collection of materials, the performance of non-instructional tasks, and the supervision of volunteers and paraprofessionals. Students demonstrate understanding of procedures. The teacher expedites non-instructional duties, resulting in maximum time for instruction.

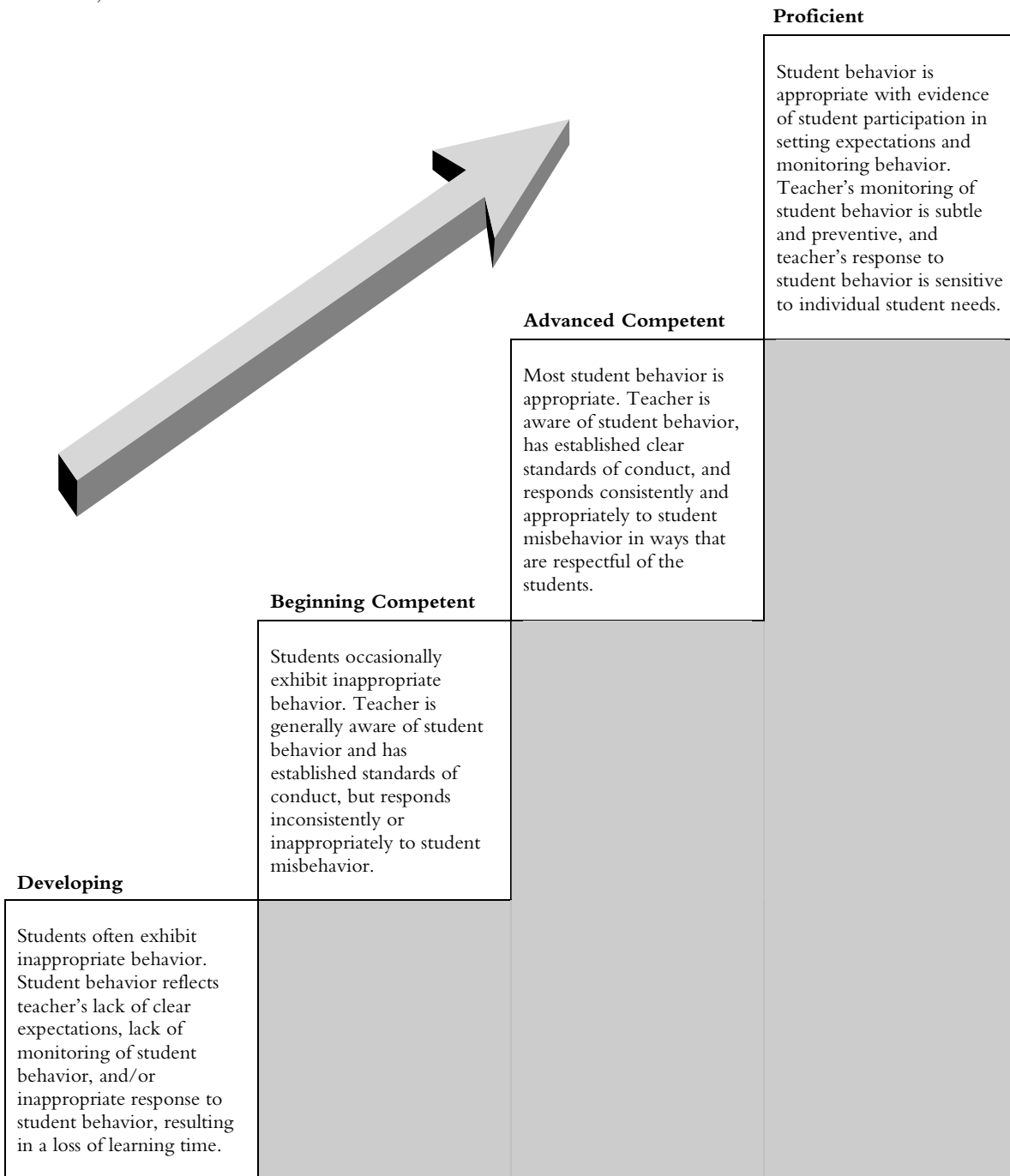
In a well-managed class, procedures and transitions are seamless, and students assume responsibility for the class's smooth operation. Learning groups are purposeful, and students participate meaningfully in those groups. Routine procedures enhance each student's cognitive engagement.

Class activities have clear beginnings and endings, and minimal time is lost as the teacher and students move from one lesson segment to another. Materials needed for instruction are at hand, and procedures for distributing and collecting these materials are well established and followed. The use of technology is effective. When volunteers and/or paraprofessionals are available to support the teacher and students, the teacher organizes tasks for the efficient use of their time.



Standard 2d: The teacher manages student behavior.

In order to ensure respectful student behavior, the teacher provides students with opportunities to engage in content that is relevant to their lives. The teacher maintains high expectations for student learning. This understanding, when combined with effective classroom management approaches, guides teacher actions. The teacher monitors the classroom environment and maintains composure at all times. Expectations are clear to everyone and may be posted in the classroom. Standards of behavior are appropriate to the developmental levels of the students. The teacher thoughtfully considers the cultural backgrounds of students in the class. The teacher encourages students to monitor their own behavior. When the teacher must address student misbehavior, the teacher assumes responsibility for correcting the problem, focusing on the student’s behavior, not on the student’s character.

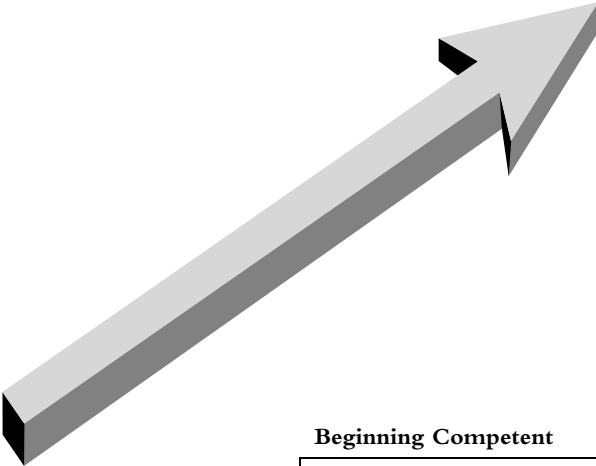


Standard 2e: The teacher organizes physical space.

Effective use of physical space is important in a learning environment and varies depending on the context and situation. Organization of space sends signals to students about how the teacher views learning. The teacher intentionally arranges the physical space of the classroom to support learning.

A classroom must be safe—no dangling cords or obstructed exits. All students, including those with special needs, must have access to the teacher and to all learning resources. The arrangement of furniture accommodates efficient traffic flow. For example, for group work, tables or desks may be arranged in blocks. For a class discussion, desks or chairs placed in a circle may be a better arrangement. The teacher’s use of physical resources, such as teaching aids, chalkboards, flipcharts, overhead projectors, VCRs, and technology, enhances learning and contributes to effective instruction.

In a classroom that is a true community of learners, students take initiative to make the physical environment effective. It is their room, and they make it work. When the teacher cultivates class participation, students take responsibility for the learning environment.



<p>Developing</p> <p>The classroom’s physical arrangement does not support the lesson. Teacher fails to use standard safety procedures in the physical environment, resulting in unsafe or inaccessible conditions for some students.</p>	<p>Beginning Competent</p> <p>The classroom’s physical arrangement generally supports the learning activities. Teacher inconsistently uses standard safety procedures, resulting in careless actions on the part of the teacher or students and/or inaccessible or difficult learning conditions for some students.</p>	<p>Advanced Competent</p> <p>The classroom’s physical arrangement supports the learning activities. Teacher consistently uses standard safety procedures in the physical environment, resulting in students’ abilities to complete activities without risk of physical harm. Learning is accessible to all students.</p>	<p>Proficient</p> <p>The classroom is safe, and students help ensure that the physical environment supports the learning of all students.</p>
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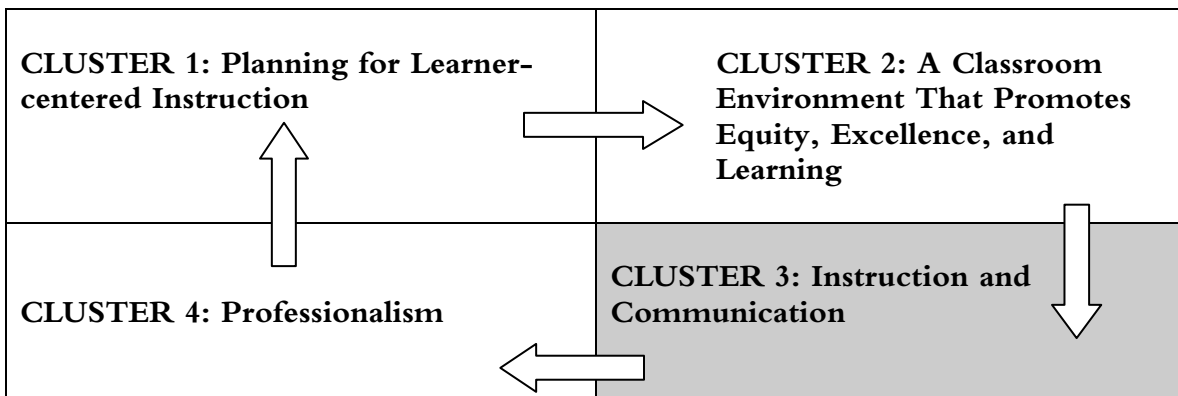


Cluster 3: Instruction and Communication

Cluster 3 contains the standards that are at the heart of teaching—the meaningful interactions between teachers and students that lead to student learning. Students build new understandings and learn new skills while participating in a community of learners. Led by a teacher who is a compelling communicator, students gain access to a world of new knowledge and skills.

Again in Cluster 3, the importance of the teacher’s communicating high learning expectations is extremely important. Effective schools serving poor children are characterized by clear goals and high learning expectations (Edmonds and Frederickson, 1978). When teachers use questioning strategies that challenge students at various cognitive levels, students become actively engaged in generating, structuring, transferring, and restructuring knowledge (Ellett, 1990). Additionally, teachers provide feedback to students on their learning, an extremely important aspect of increasing student performance (U.S. Department of Education, 1987). In order to create a community of thinking students, a teacher must be thinking at a high cognitive level.

The teacher uses his or her knowledge of content, content-specific pedagogy, and students in a respectful and safe environment in order to engage all students in learning. Through the presentation of content, questioning and discussion strategies, and feedback to students, the teacher implements the plans created in Cluster 1.



Cluster 3
Instruction and Communication

3a. The teacher communicates clearly and accurately.

Directions and procedures
Oral and written language
Student communication

3b. The teacher uses questioning and discussion techniques.

Quality of questions/discussion techniques
Student participation

3c. The teacher engages students in learning.

Representation of content
Activities and assignments
Grouping of students
Materials, resources, and technology
Structure, sequencing, and pacing

3d. The teacher assesses student learning.

Implementation of assessment
Use for planning
Quality and timeliness of feedback

3e. The teacher demonstrates flexibility and responsiveness.

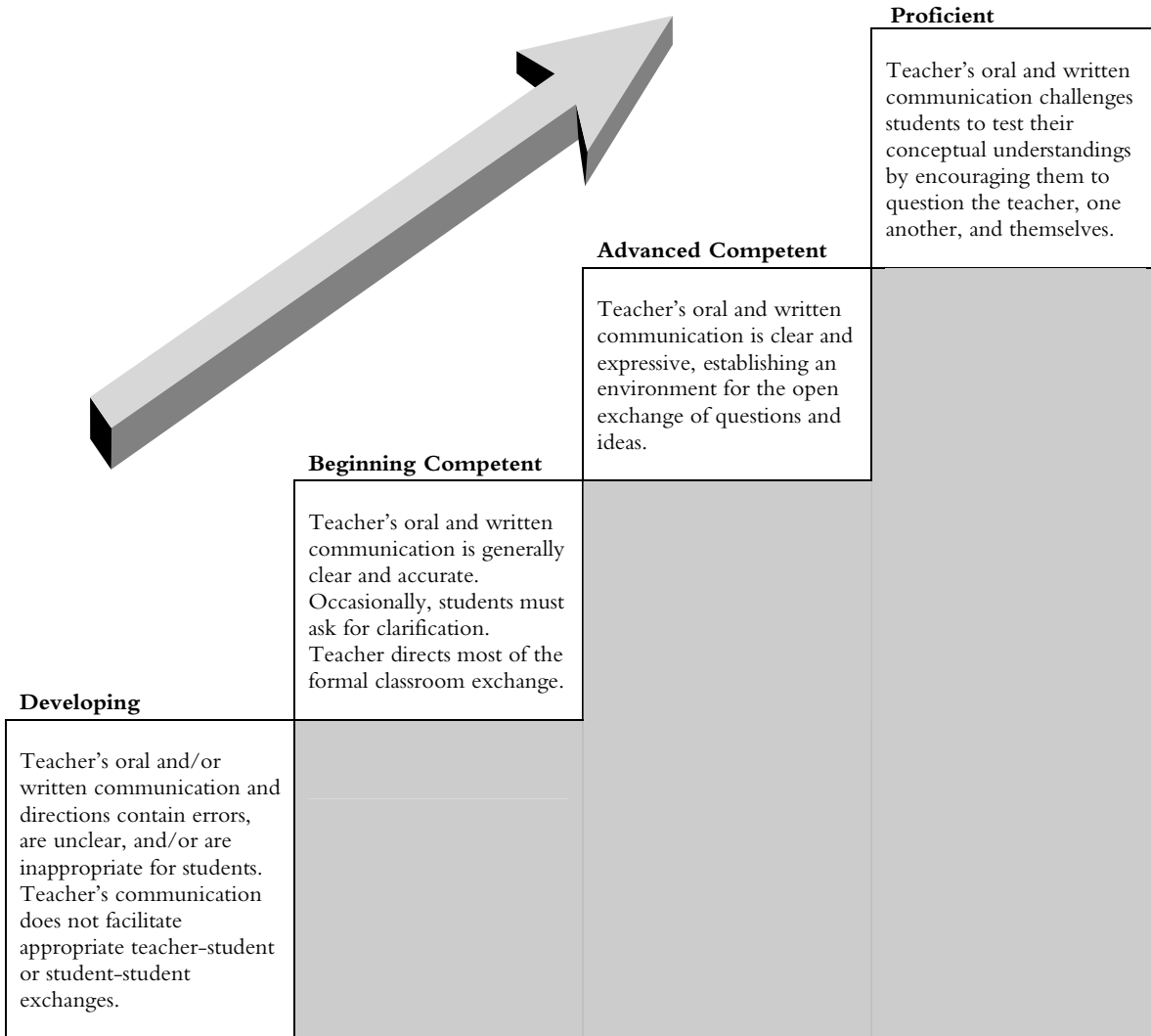
Lesson adjustment
Response to students
Persistence



Standard 3a: The teacher communicates clearly and accurately.

To engage students in learning, the teacher uses clear and accurate communication. Easily understood directions for learning activities enable students to work independently or in small groups. Oral communication with students should be audible, and written communication should be legible.

The teacher’s language reflects correct usage and a rich vocabulary to serve as a model for students. Additionally, the teacher’s communication skills provide a basis for intellectually challenging classroom exchanges between teachers and students and among the students themselves.



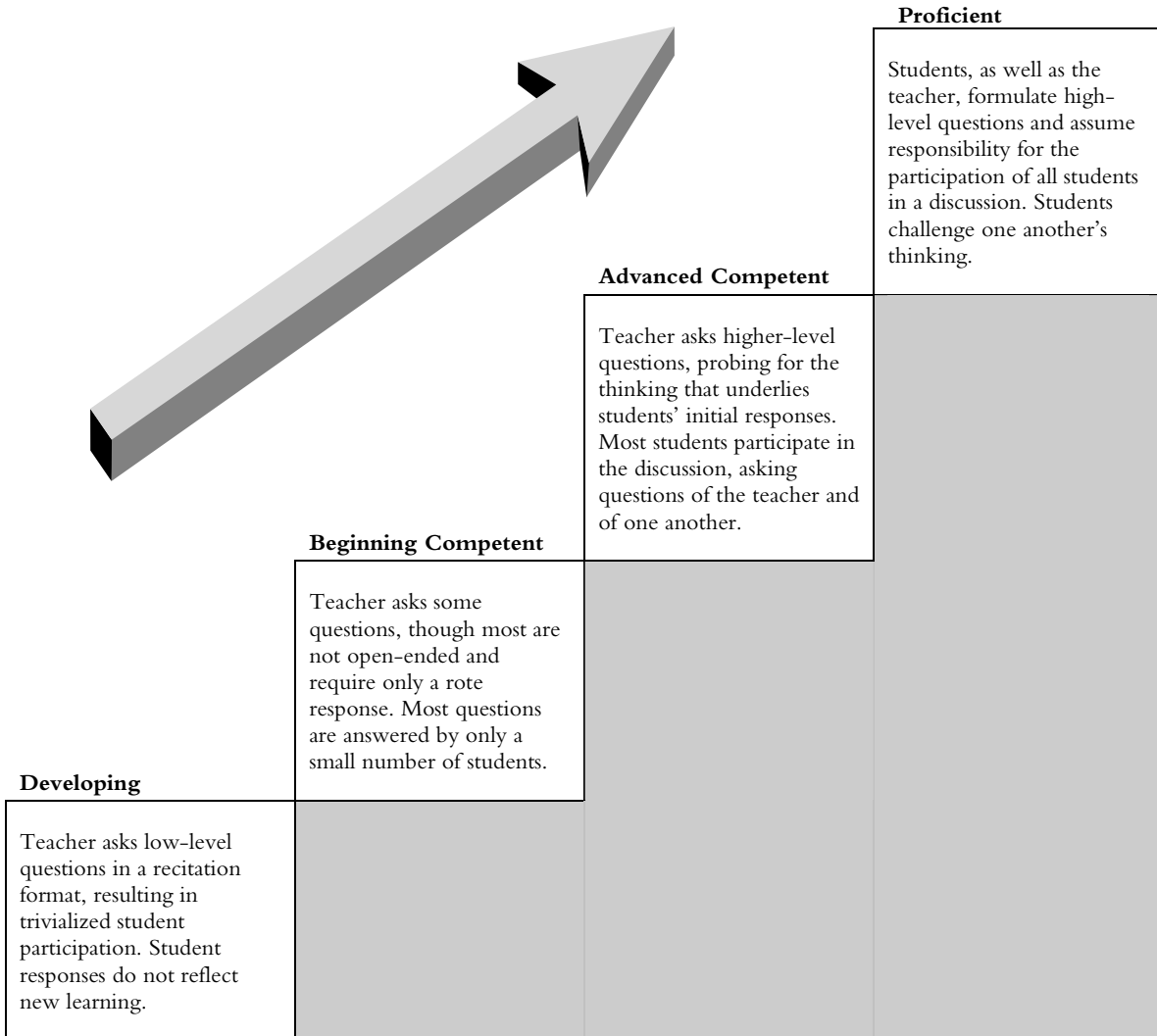
Standard 3b: The teacher uses questioning and discussion techniques.

The teacher’s skill in questioning and in leading discussions is valuable for many instructional purposes, such as facilitating student engagement, accessing critical thinking, and eliciting reflection.

When the teacher uses skilled questioning techniques, students are likely to engage in a deep exploration of content. Carefully framed questions enable students to reflect on their understanding and to derive new solutions to problems. The questions posed rarely require simply a yes-or-no response and may have many possible correct answers. The teacher both allows students time to think before they must respond to a question and encourages all students to participate. In the hands of the skilled teacher, discussion is participatory, democratic, and content-rich.

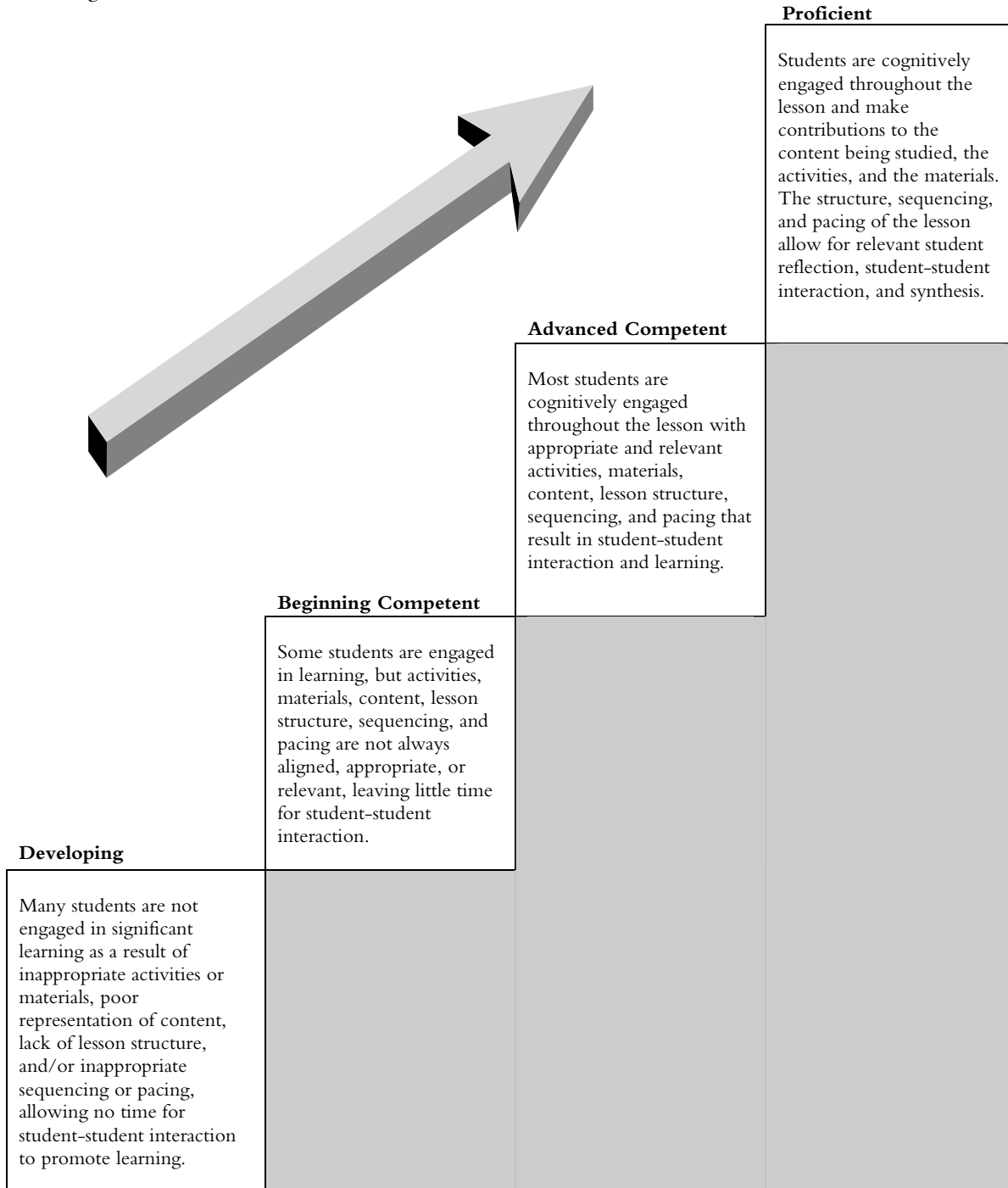
The teacher cultivates skill in leading participatory discussions. As a result, class discussions can become animated, engaging students in important issues and using the discussion format as a technique to extend knowledge. The teacher’s use of skilled questioning techniques provides opportunities for students to have responsibility for the discussion.

An effective discussion thrives on questions generated by students. The formulation of questions activates student curiosity and requires critical thinking. The opportunity to pose their own questions motivates students as much, if not more, than responding to stimulating questions posed by the teacher.



Standard 3c: The teacher engages students in learning.

The successful teacher cognitively engages students in learning activities. Student engagement is not the same as “time on task,” a concept that refers to student involvement in instructional activities. Mere activity is insufficient for true intellectual engagement. Effective intellectual engagement requires the presentation of content in relevant ways, resulting in the active and invested participation of all learners. The teacher makes many decisions about the structure, sequence, and pace of a lesson to maintain the engagement of all students. When students have opportunities to interact significantly with peers in a variety of groups, learning is further enhanced.

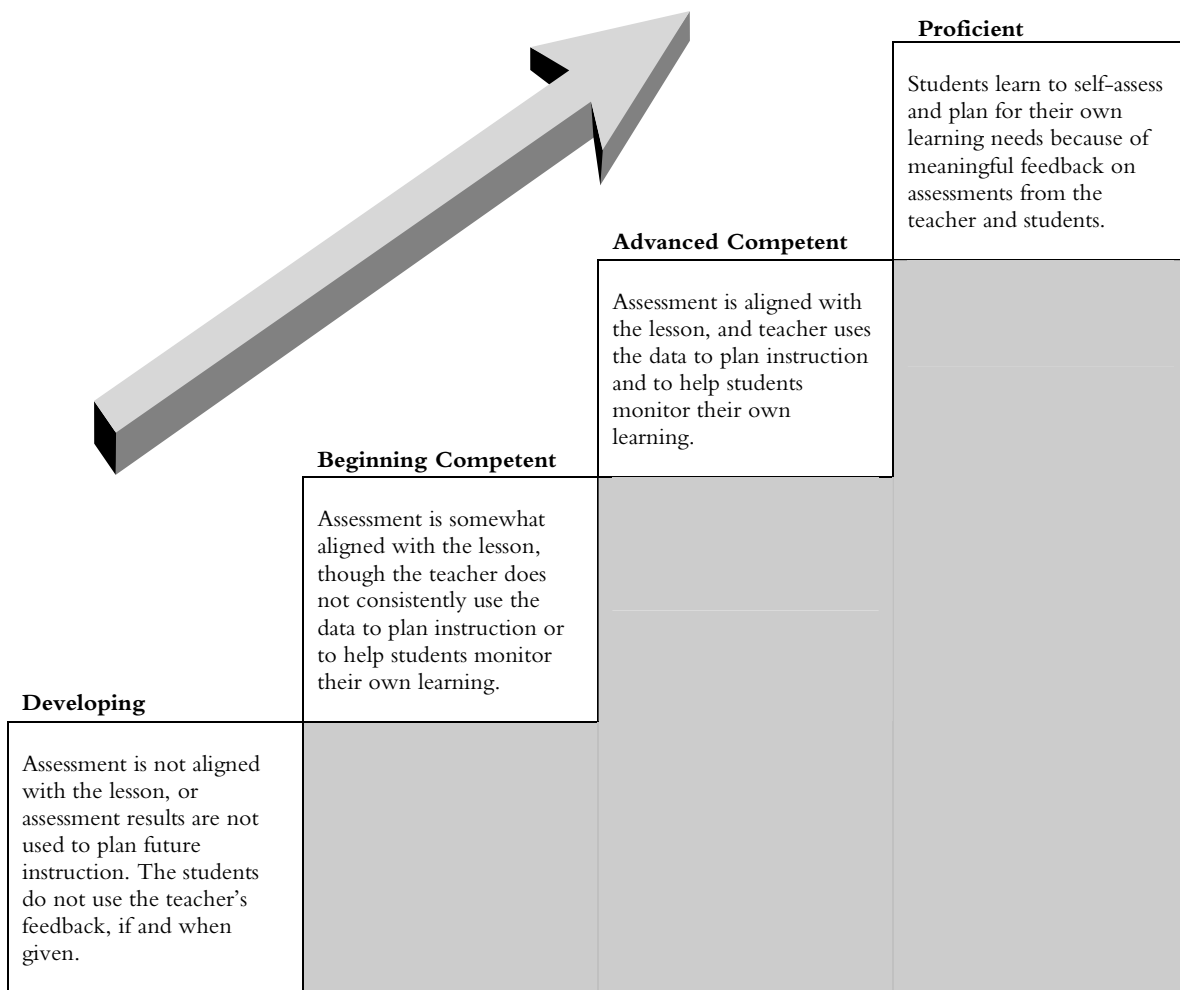


Standard 3d: The teacher assesses student learning.

The teacher designs and implements assessment as an integral part of instruction on an ongoing basis. Because of the reciprocal nature of assessment, planning, and instruction, the teacher may modify plans for formal assessment during the course of a lesson. Additionally, the teacher assesses student learning while providing instruction and while monitoring student progress in independent and group work.

The teacher uses assessment results to plan future learning. The teacher may need to reteach using alternative strategies if some students do not demonstrate the key knowledge and skills after the initial instruction. The teacher also uses assessment results to provide feedback to students. The teacher provides feedback equitably so that all students receive useful information about their work. By providing feedback to students, the teacher guides their learning.

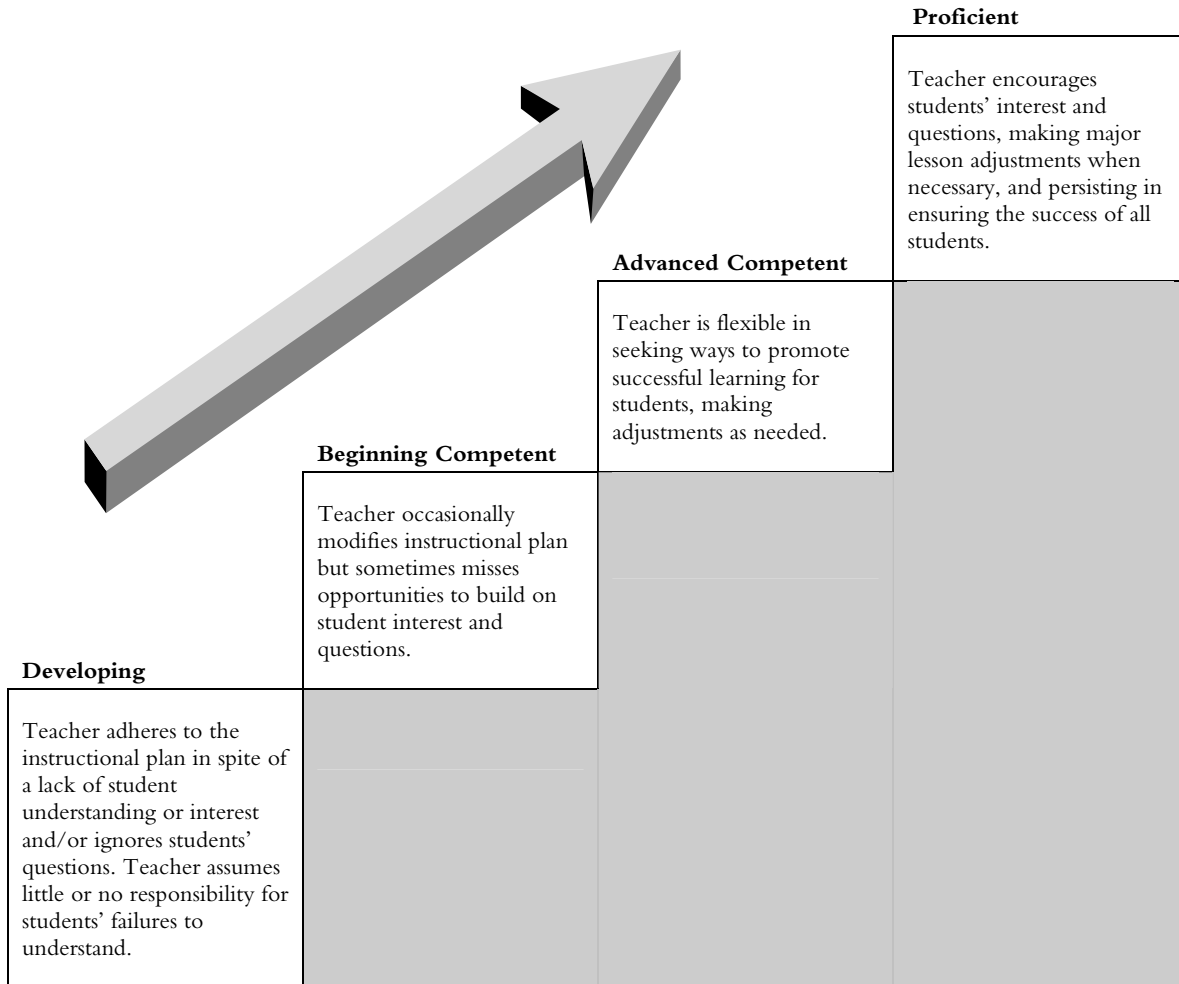
The teacher should provide feedback on all significant work, (e.g., compositions, quizzes, homework, class work). To be effective, feedback should be accurate, constructive, substantive, specific, timely, and based on the identified criteria.



Standard 3e: The teacher demonstrates flexibility and responsiveness.

The teacher makes hundreds of decisions daily. Some of the most important decisions require adjusting a lesson plan when it appears that such an adjustment will improve student learning.

The teacher demonstrates flexibility and responsiveness in the course of the school day. When an instructional activity is not working effectively, the teacher must be able to move to “Plan B.” When given the opportunity, the teacher capitalizes on an unexpected event that provides a “teachable moment.” Additionally, when students experience difficulty in learning, a flexible, responsive teacher persists in the search for alternative approaches that will lead to success for each student.

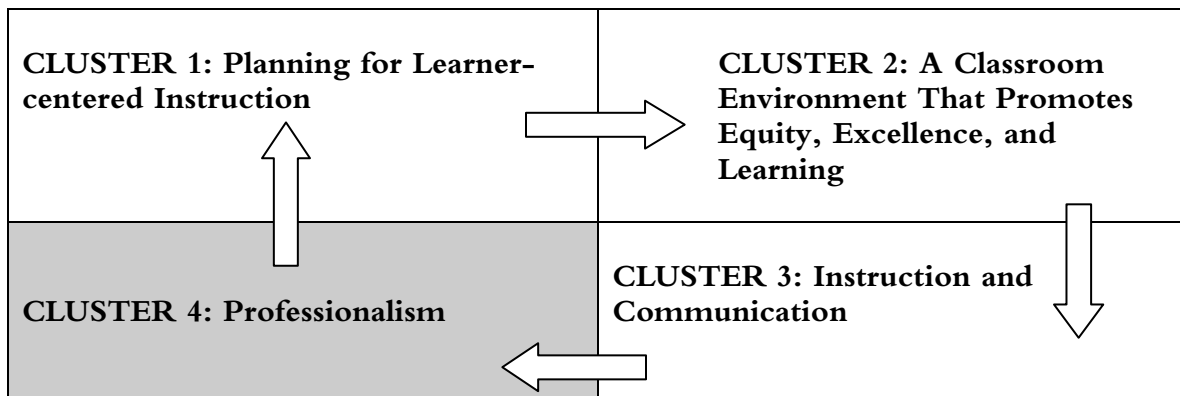


Cluster 4: Professionalism

The standards in Cluster 4 are associated with a true professional educator. These standards encompass the roles the teacher assumes outside the classroom. Students may only rarely observe these activities, but they are critical to the professional growth of the beginning teacher.

Teachers who practice the skill of reflection will see the benefits, which will then be mirrored in the learning experiences of their students. However, reflection does not come naturally; it must be learned (Galvez-Martin, et al, 1999). Not only does reflection increase the potential for student learning, but the ability to reflect also revitalizes teachers in their goals of life-long improvement (Shulman & Colbert, 1988). Other aspects of Cluster 4 include relationships with other professionals, parents, and the community. Most students want their families/caregivers to be involved in their education, and research has shown that family involvement increases student achievement (Hartman-Haas, 1983). Research with parents of minority and low-income students suggests that these parents want to be involved with their children's education (Metropolitan Life, 1987), though many may lack the confidence to do so (Chavkin & Williams, 1993).

Cluster 4 encompasses this wide range of professional responsibilities—from reflection and professional growth to contributions to the school and the profession as a whole. The standards also include interactions with the families/caregivers of students, contacts with the larger community, maintenance of records and other paperwork, and advocacy for students. Students can depend on the teacher to serve their interests in the school and in the larger community. The teacher is active in the school and professional organizations. Colleagues and parents highly regard the teacher who excels in Cluster 4. Cluster 4 also includes teachers' reflections on skills outlined in Clusters 1, 2, and 3, which are critical for making improvements to future planning, instruction, and assessment.



Cluster 4 Professionalism	
4a. The teacher reflects on teaching.	Accuracy Use in future teaching
4b. The teacher maintains accurate records.	Student progress in learning Non-instructional records
4c. The teacher communicates with families/caregivers.	Information about the instructional program Information about individual students Engagement of families/caregivers in the instructional program
4d. The teacher contributes to the school.	Relationships with colleagues Service to the school
4e. The teacher grows and develops professionally.	Enhancement of content knowledge and pedagogical skill Participation in beginning teacher support
4f. The teacher serves as an advocate for students.	Decision making Student advocacy

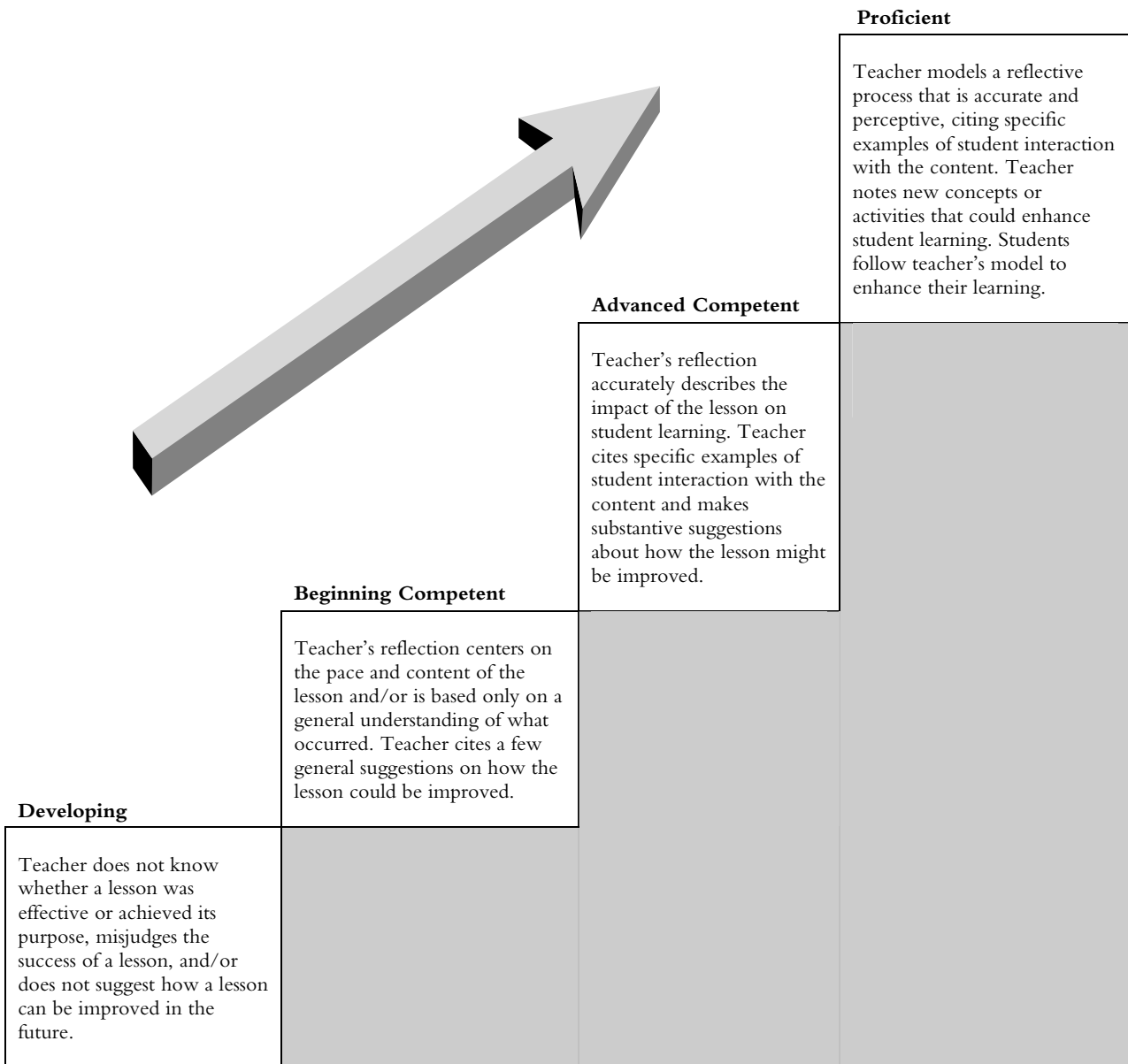


Standard 4a: The teacher reflects on teaching.

Through reflection, both the teacher and students grow and excel. The teacher systematically examines the impact of planning and instruction on student learning. Reflection enables the teacher to identify additional courses of action to improve student learning. As a result of focused, guided reflection, the teacher’s repertoire of research-based instructional strategies expands.

The teacher considers how students demonstrate key knowledge and skills. One way for the teacher to assess the impact of a lesson on students is by analyzing the levels of questions asked by students. The teacher also assesses his or her interactions with students and student-student interactions. The careful analysis of student work with other teachers is another effective model of reflection.

With experience, the teacher becomes better able to evaluate instructional effectiveness and student learning. Insights from reflections help the teacher refine approaches and improve teaching practice. Attention is given to planning, environment, implementation, delivery, and related student performance.

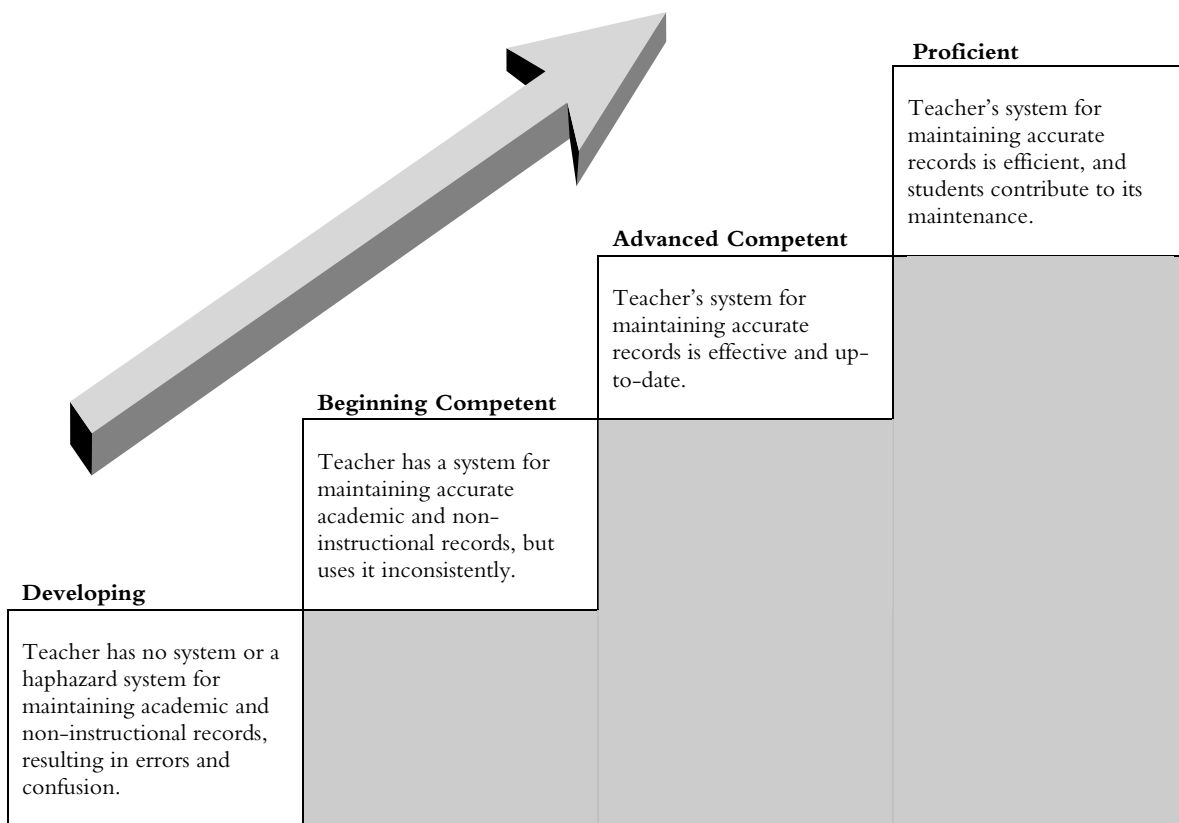


Standard 4b: The teacher maintains accurate records.

One example of the complexity of teaching is the many records the teacher must maintain. Such records document critical interactions with students and families/caregivers, enabling the teacher to anticipate and respond to individual learning needs.

The teacher records evidence of student learning to indicate which of the state standards students have and have not mastered. A system for monitoring student progress must align with the teacher’s approach to instruction and the needs of students. Records of student progress enable the teacher to provide accurate information to students themselves and to their families/caregivers.

Records must be maintained on non-instructional activities such as returned permission slips for a field trip. The teacher is also required to complete other paperwork, including inventories and supply orders in an accurate and timely manner.



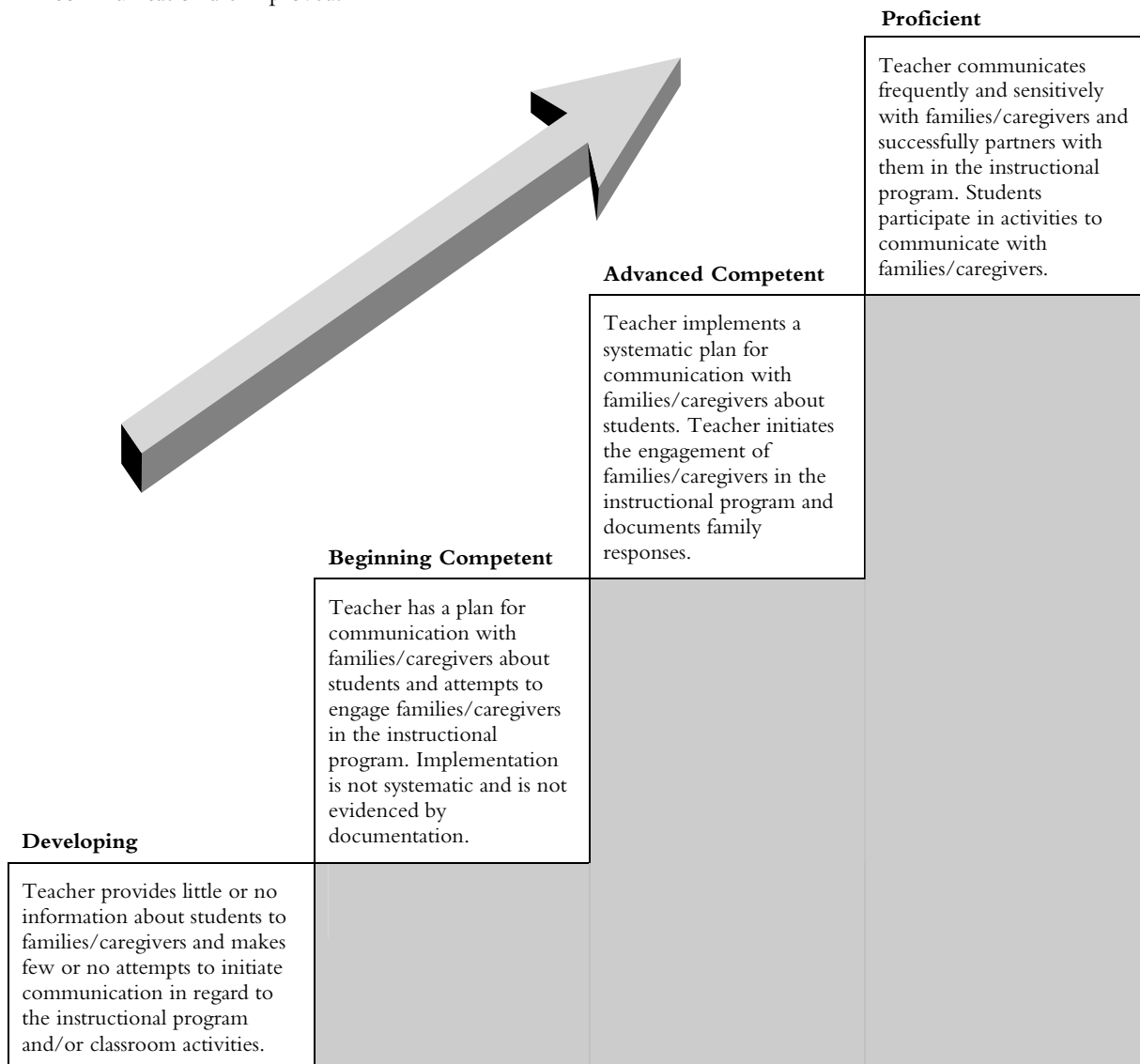
Standard 4c: The teacher communicates with families/caregivers.

Effective communication with families/caregivers includes them in all aspects of instruction and learning. The teacher informs families/caregivers of classroom events, procedures, and grading systems. In addition, when the teacher uses innovative instructional approaches that may be unfamiliar to families/caregivers, the teacher provides them with sufficiently detailed information.

The teacher informs families/caregivers about the academic and social progress of their child. Although sometimes difficult, communicating honestly with families/caregivers about their child’s learning is essential. Communication with families/caregivers about individual students is interactive and occurs when a student is achieving success as well as when he or she is experiencing difficulty.

Multiple modes for such communication are desirable. The teacher sends home a regular newsletter or periodic information on upcoming school and classroom events. The teacher encourages involvement of families/caregivers in learning by sending weekly take-home folders and regularly scheduling conferences. These efforts will likely result in reinforcing student learning at home.

The teacher develops ways to engage families/caregivers in school-based activities focused on the instructional program. The teacher knows that when families/caregivers are involved in the actual learning process, all areas of communication are improved.

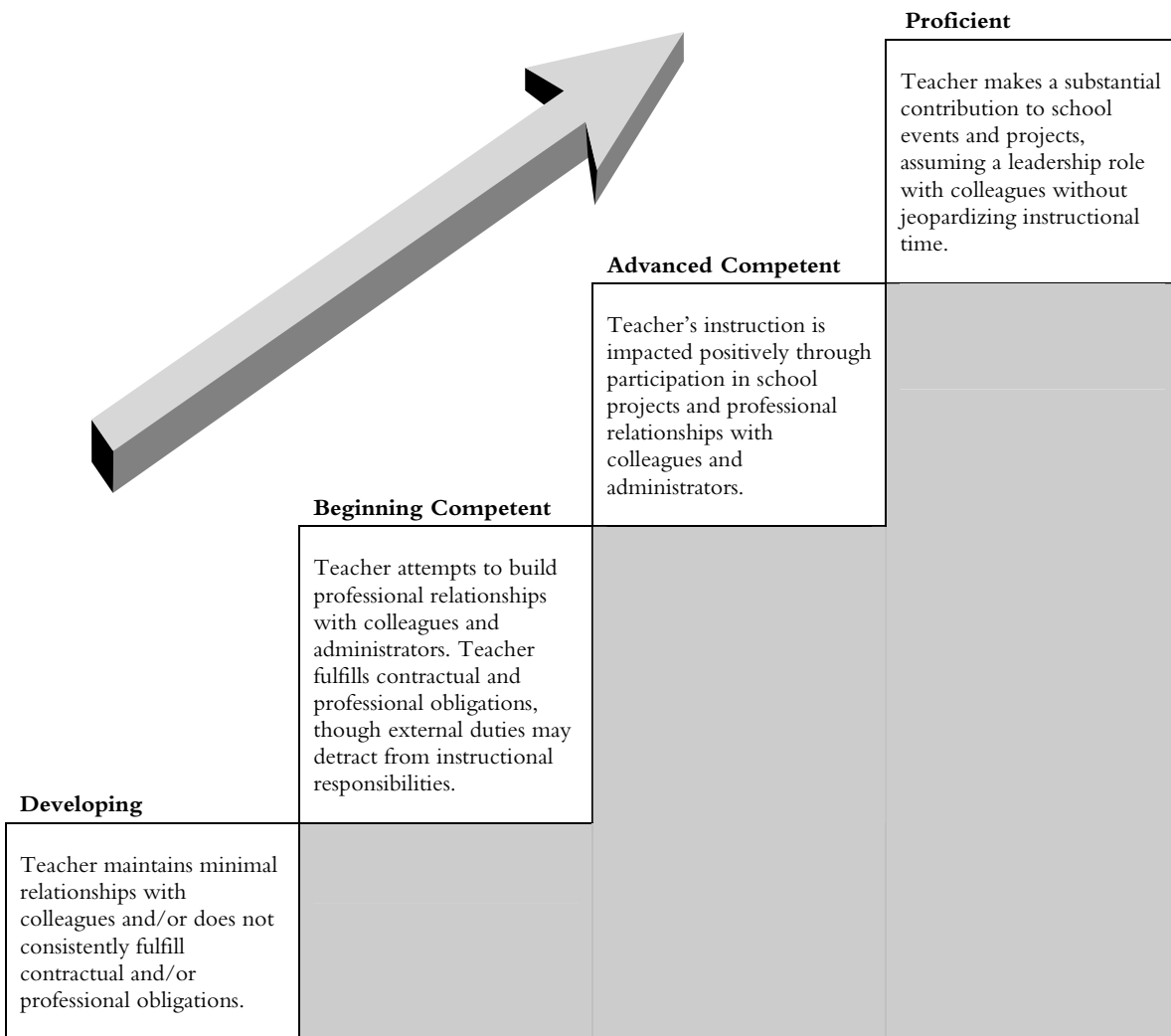


Standard 4d: The teacher contributes to the school.

Either by contractual agreement or through a sense of professional responsibility, the teacher discovers that school days often contain activities that seem to be peripheral to instruction, such as attending meetings or assisting with academic competitions. Despite these other commitments, the teacher is not distracted from his or her primary responsibility of providing meaningful learning experiences for students.

Relationships with colleagues are an important element of the teacher’s contributions to the school. The teacher maintains extensive and highly professional relationships with colleagues and contributes positively to the morale of the faculty. The teacher fosters collaborative relationships with colleagues that will help achieve improved student learning.

The professional educator makes many contributions to the school. In almost all schools, many opportunities exist for the teacher to assume additional responsibilities, thereby benefiting the entire school. The teacher must become adept at balancing the needs of his or her classroom with the needs of the entire school community to become a proficient educator.



Standard 4e: The teacher grows and develops professionally.

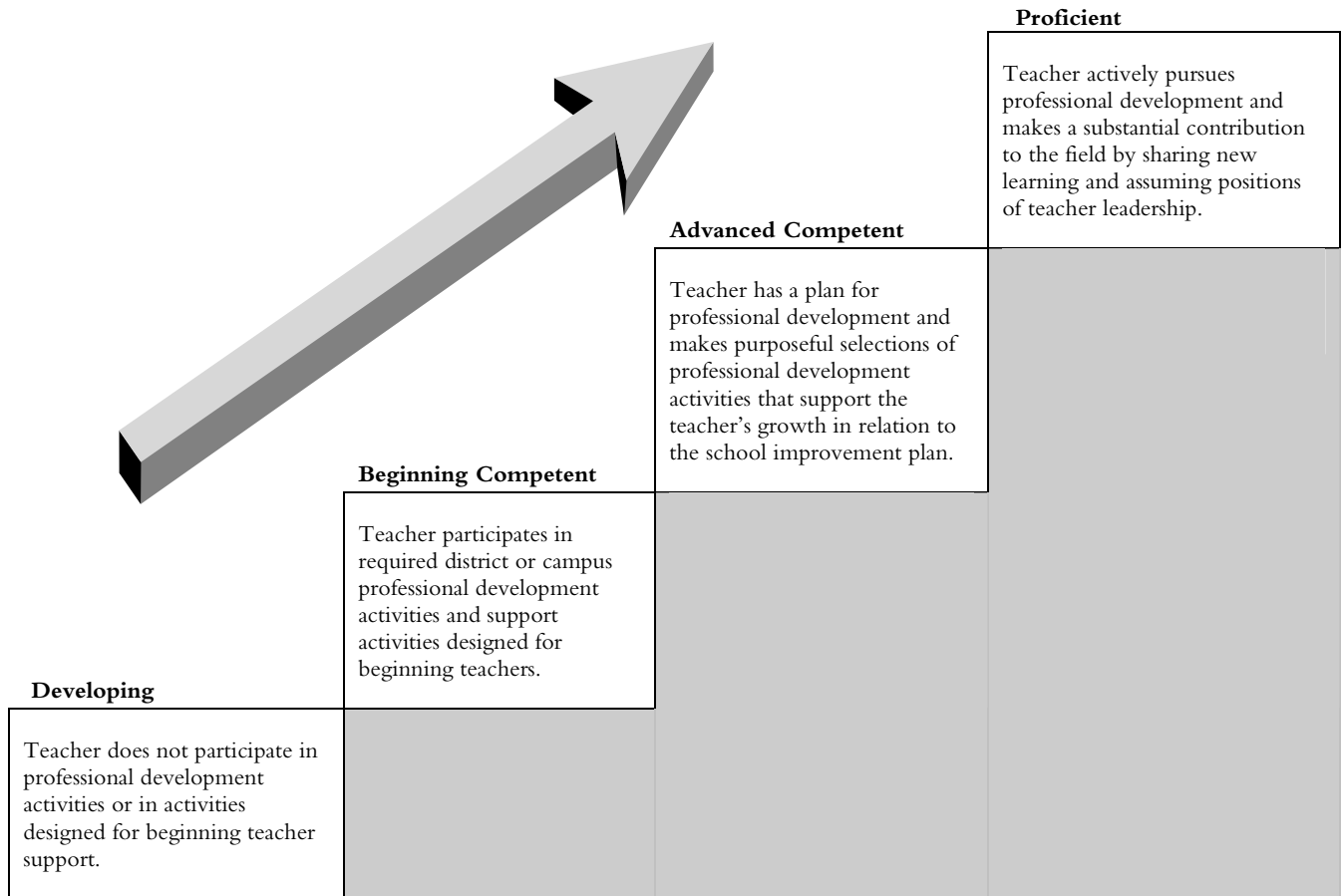
The teacher is continually developing professionally. The teacher invests much energy in remaining current and implementing research-based best practices as aligned with the school improvement plan. One way beginning teachers grow and develop professionally is by participating in induction programs. Developing a relationship with a mentor and participating in formative assessment are two components of strong induction systems.

The teacher grows in his or her understanding of students. As researchers report new findings, the teacher expands his or her knowledge of student needs, including those of English language learners, students with identified special needs, students at risk of dropping out of school, and students who are identified as gifted and talented.

The teacher grows and develops in the area of content knowledge. A superficial understanding of content knowledge is insufficient for effective teaching; deep understanding is essential. Continuing education is necessary for the teacher to stay abreast of the latest developments in the content areas taught.

The teacher also enhances teaching skills by strengthening his or her knowledge of general and content-specific pedagogy and technology. Findings from educational research can point to new methods of motivating students and promoting intrinsic learning. Additionally, without frequent training, the teacher risks being left behind as new technologies are incorporated into classroom instruction.

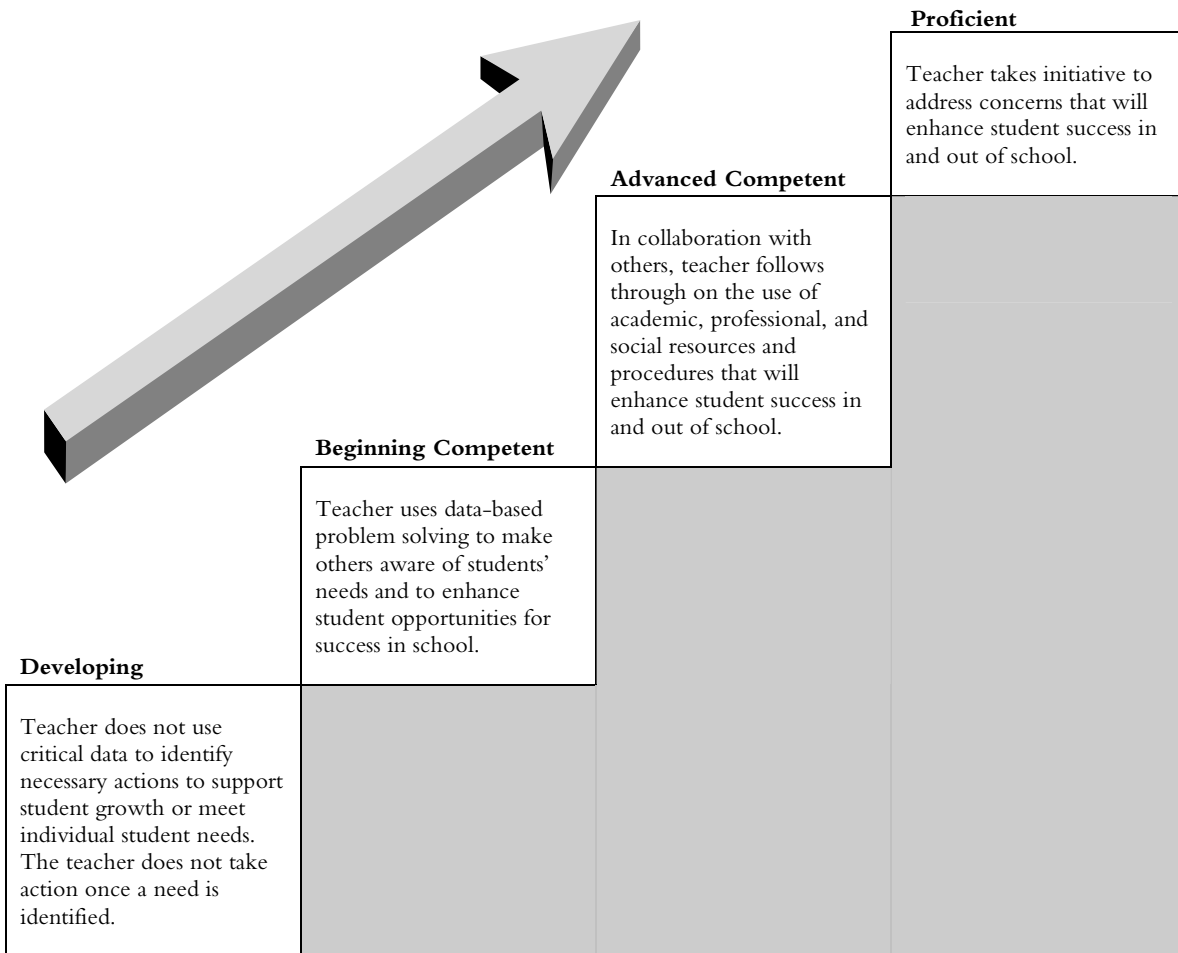
The teacher seeks to become part of the larger professional community through membership in professional organizations, both general teacher organizations and content-based organizations. The teacher uses the resources of these organizations to enhance professional practice and student learning.



Standard 4f: The teacher serves as an advocate for students.

The teacher displays professional qualities that help serve students and the education profession. The teacher maintains an open mind and is willing to attempt new solutions to old problems. The teacher bases judgments and recommendations on data rather than on hearsay and tradition. The teacher encourages students to use pertinent data in their own decision making. When the teacher finds it necessary to intervene on behalf of individual students or groups of students, data serves as the basis for improving learning opportunities for students.

The teacher who is committed to serving as an advocate for students will undertake serious study to deepen his or her understanding of students' needs. The teacher knows how to access community resources to better meet student needs.



Glossary

TxBESS: Texas Beginning Educator Support System (TxBESS), an initiative of the Texas State Board for Educator Certification with project leadership and oversight from Resources for Learning, designed to provide systemic support for beginning teachers in their first and second years of teaching

TxBESS Activity Profile (TAP): The process that mentors and beginning teachers use to gather data to improve the teaching performance of beginning teachers

TxBESS Developmental Continuum: A description of the typical steps beginning teachers take in developing their teaching practice as described in the performance standards

TxBESS Framework: The booklet that contains the TxBESS Performance Standards and the TxBESS Developmental Continuum

TxBESS Performance Standards: Twenty-two interrelated proficiencies that describe what a beginning teacher should know and be able to do (based on the research-based components of teaching described by Charlotte Danielson)



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