

Key Themes and Essential Knowledge



The Utah Effective Teaching Standards describe the skills that teachers must have to support all students in learning at high levels, and they are necessarily complex. In order to fully understand the standards, indicators, and rubrics, educators must have up-to-date background knowledge to support further learning and skill development. Below are the key themes that run through the Utah Effective Teaching Standards, accompanied by an outline of the essential knowledge needed to implement them.

Personalized Learning for Diverse Learners

The explosion of learner diversity means teachers need knowledge and skills to customize learning for learners with a range of individual differences. These differences include students who have learning disabilities and students who perform above the expected level and deserve opportunities to accelerate. Differences also include cultural and linguistic diversity and the specific needs of students for whom English is a new language.

The teacher :

- Understands **how learning occurs**—how learners construct knowledge, acquire skill, and develop disciplined thinking processes—and knows how to use **instructional strategies** that promote student learning.
- Understands that each learner’s cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical development influences learning, and knows how to make **instructional decisions** that build on **learners’ strengths and needs**.
- Identifies **readiness for learning**, and understands how development in any one area may affect performance in others.
- Understands the role of language and culture in learning and knows how to **modify instruction** to make language comprehensive and instruction relevant, accessible, and challenging.
- Understands and identifies differences in approaches to learning and performance and knows how to design **instruction that uses each learner’s strengths** to promote growth.
- Knows about second language acquisition processes and knows how to incorporate instructional strategies and resources to **support language acquisition**.
- Understands that **learners bring assets** for learning based on their individual experiences, abilities, talents, prior learning, and peer and social group interactions, as well as language, culture, family, and community values.
- Knows how to access information about the **values of diverse cultures and communities** and how to incorporate learners’ experiences, cultures, and community resources into instruction.
- Knows how to **use technologies** and how to guide learners to apply them in appropriate, safe, and effective ways.
- Knows how to help learners **work productively and cooperatively** with each other to achieve learning goals.
- Understands how learner **diversity can affect communication** and knows how to communicate.

A Stronger Focus on Learner Engagement and Application of Knowledge and Skills

Effective teachers build literacy and thinking skills across the curriculum, as well as address multiple perspectives in exploring ideas and solving problems. They apply knowledge to understanding concepts, engage learners in self-directed learning, and support learners in creating original work. They also address interdisciplinary themes and design learning experiences that draw upon multiple disciplines.

The teacher :

- Has a deep knowledge of **student content standards** and learning progressions in the discipline taught.
- Understands how integrating **cross-disciplinary skills** in instruction engages learners purposefully in applying content knowledge.
- Knows a range of **evidence-based instructional strategies**, resources, and technological tools and how to use them effectively to plan instruction that meets diverse learning needs.
- Knows how to integrate **culturally relevant content** to build on learners' background knowledge.
- Understands how current **interdisciplinary themes** connect to the core subjects and knows how to weave those themes into meaningful learning experiences.
- Understands **creative thinking processes** and how to engage learners in producing original work.
- Understands the relationship between **motivation and engagement** and knows how to design learning experiences using strategies that build learner self-direction and ownership of learning.
- Knows how to use a **wide variety of resources**, including human and technological, to engage students in learning.
- Knows when and how to use appropriate strategies to **differentiate instruction and engage all learners** in complex thinking and meaningful tasks.
- Understands **common misconceptions** in learning the discipline and how to guide learners to accurate conceptual understanding.

Improved Assessment Literacy

In order to meet the goal of improved instruction, teachers must have the knowledge and skills to use data to support learner success. Teachers need skills to develop a range of assessments, balance the use of formative and summative assessments as appropriate, use data to understand learner progress, adjust instruction as needed, provide feedback to learners, and document learner progress.

The teacher :

- Understands and knows how to use a **variety of self-assessment and problem-solving strategies** to analyze and reflect on ↓ assessment and knows how and when to use each.
- Understands the **range of types and multiple purposes** of assessment and how to design, adapt, or select appropriate ↓ and to provide meaningful feedback to all learners.
- Knows when and how to engage learners in **analyzing their own assessment results** and in helping to set goals for their ↓

his or her practice and to plan for adaptations and adjustments.

- Knows how to use **learner data** to analyze practice and differentiate instruction accordingly.
- Understands the differences between **formative and summative applications** of

assessments to address specific learning goals and individual differences, and to minimize sources of bias.

- Knows how to **analyze assessment data** to understand patterns and gaps in learning, to guide planning and instruction,

own learning.

- Understands the positive impact of **effective descriptive feedback** for learners and knows a variety of strategies for communicating this feedback.
- Knows when and how to evaluate and report **learner progress** against standards.

A Collaborative Professional Culture

Just as collaboration among learners improves learning, research shows that collaboration among teachers improves practice. When teachers collectively engage in participatory decision-making, designing lessons, using data, and examining student work, they are able to deliver rigorous and relevant learning for all students and personalized learning for individual students. Collaboration includes sharing responsibilities with colleagues, engaging in efforts to build a shared vision, establishing mutual expectations and ongoing communication with families, and involving the community in meeting common goals.

The teacher :

- Knows how to **work with other adults** and has developed skills in collaborative interaction.
- Knows how to contribute to a **common culture** that supports high expectations for student learning.
- Knows how to **collaborate with learners** to establish and monitor elements of a safe and productive learning environment including norms, expectations, routines, and organizational structures.

- Understands how personal identity, worldview, and prior experience affect **perceptions and expectations**, and recognizes how they may bias behaviors and interactions with others.
- Understands how **multiple forms of communication** convey ideas, foster self expression, and build relationships.
- Understands schools as organizations within a historical, cultural, political, and social context and knows how to **work with others across the system** to support learners.

- Knows how to help learners work productively and cooperatively with each other to **achieve learning goals**.
- Knows when and how to **access resources and services** and collaborate with other professionals to support student learning.

Leadership Roles for Teachers

The Utah Effective Teaching Standards set the expectation that teachers will take responsibility for the learning of all students, that they will see themselves as leaders from the beginning of their career and advocate for each student's needs, and that they will participate actively as members of a supportive learning community.

The teacher :

- Understands **laws related to learners' rights** and teacher responsibilities.
- Understands and models **high standards of ethical conduct** in relationships with colleagues, students, parents, and community members.
- Understands the demands of **accessing and managing**

information as well as taking responsibility for the quality of information and the ethics related to its use.

- Understands his or her role as a **member of a learning community** and shares responsibility for the development of a supportive learning culture.
- Knows how to build and implement a **plan for**

professional growth directly aligned with his or her needs as a growing professional using feedback from teacher evaluations and observation, data on learner performance, and school- and system-wide priorities.

- Understands appropriate and ethical assessment **principles and procedures.**