

Overview of South Carolina Teaching Standards Environment Domain Changes

WHY THE “ENVIRONMENT” DOMAIN?

The South Carolina Department of Education’s (SCDE) vision is that all students are prepared for success in college, career, and citizenship. Disproportionalities in our academic outcomes, discipline data, and college and career readiness show us there is important work to be done to reach our vision. Specifically, we must create a safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environment for all students and ensure 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 proposes the adoption of revisions made to the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET) teaching standards. The revised South Carolina Teaching Standards (SCTS) Environment domain describes expectations that optimize learning conditions for all students.

ENVIRONMENT DOMAIN REVISIONS

The changes to the Environment domain indicators make more explicit what it looks like for teachers to use responsive and inclusive practices to create a safe and rigorous learning environment.

- **Expectations Indicator:** emphasizes teachers’ intentional modeling, encouragement, and reinforcement to promote student learning and motivation.
- **Engaging Students and Managing Behavior (formerly Managing Student Behavior) Indicator:** emphasizes the connection between engagement, choice, and student behavior. Studies show that there is no disruption in learning when students are actively engaged in high quality instruction.
- **Environment Indicator:** emphasizes the physical setup, which optimizes student learning through a positive and inclusive environment by encouraging risk-taking, interaction, and collaboration among students, while ensuring all students have access to appropriate resources. Particularly during the COVID,-19 pandemic, creating safe physical and virtual spaces for learning and collaboration has been essential.
- **Respectful Culture Indicator:** emphasizes promoting a safe space for learning for all students, including the respectful relationship between teachers and students and an atmosphere of mutual respect between students.

HOW THESE CHANGES HELP TEACHERS

Changes in the Environment domain are designed to help teachers build a positive and inclusive classroom environment and foster student ownership of behavior and learning. Teachers can also more clearly understand what it looks like to create a classroom where every student is empowered to be successful.

RUBRIC CONNECTIONS

Although minor revisions have been made to the Environment domain, it is important to note that the SC Teaching Standards are interconnected. There are many indicators in the Instruction and Planning domains that are deeply connected to safe, inclusive learning environments.

Revised SCTS Environment Indicator	SCTS Instruction & Planning Indicators
Expectations	Teacher Knowledge of Students, Lesson Structure and Pacing, Motivating Students, Academic Feedback, Instructional Plans, Assessment
Engaging Students and Managing Behavior	Presenting Instructional Content, Motivating Students, Student Work
Environment	Questioning, Presenting Instructional Content, Standards and Objectives, Academic Feedback, Student Work
Respectful Culture	Motivating Students, Thinking, Problem-Solving, Student Work

RESOURCES

- NIET (2021). [South Carolina Teaching Standards Revised Environment Domain](#)
- NIET (2020) For a closer look at the changes to the Environment domain, See [this 27 minute video](#) from NIET.