

A DEVELOPMENTAL CONTINUUM OF TEACHER ABILITIES

Aligned with the
California Standards for the Teaching Profession

Introduction to the Developmental Continuum of Teacher Abilities

Dear Educator,

We hope that this introduction will help you understand the use of the Developmental Continuum of Teacher Abilities. The Continuum describes teaching practice and professional development throughout a teacher's career.

The Continuum was initially developed in 1992 for use by the Santa Cruz New Teacher Project to support the reflective practice of beginning teachers. It has been updated several times to reflect the diversity of California's students and to meet the changing needs of teachers. The most recent revision also aligns the Continuum with the *California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP)*, the document now being used to define and support effective teaching throughout the state. The Continuum has been used successfully as part of an ongoing collaboration between beginning teachers and their support providers or advisors to assess practice and set goals for professional development over time. Recently, the Continuum has also been used by veteran teachers as part of alternative teacher evaluation in a number of school districts.

The Continuum presents a holistic view of teaching. Its organization corresponds to the six standards in the CSTP: Engaging and Supporting All Students In Learning; Creating and Maintaining an Effective Environment for Student Learning; Understanding and Organizing Subject Matter for Student Learning; Planning Instruction and Designing Learning Experiences for All Students; Assessing Student Learning; and Developing as a Professional Educator. The six standards are meant to be considered as a whole and not in any particular sequence or order. Each standard contains more specific elements of teaching practice. They are interrelated and work together to provide a complete picture of effective teaching practice.

The Continuum is organized to describe five levels of development. These levels are labeled **Beginning, Emerging, Applying, Integrating, and Innovating**. Each level addresses what a teacher should know and be able to do in the different Continuum standards. The levels do not represent a chronological sequence in a teacher's growth, but each row describes developmental levels of performance. A teacher may be at a beginning or emerging level of practice in some places on the Continuum and at advanced levels in some others, no matter how many years she/he has been in the profession.

For example, in the domain for **Creating and Maintaining Effective Environments**, a teacher may be at the **Emerging** level in *Establishing a climate that promotes fairness and respect* and at the **Integrating** level in *Using instructional time effectively*. Because a teacher's growth is developmental, one may return to an earlier level temporarily if there are changes in a teacher's career, such as new course content, grade level, school or student demographics.

How to use the Continuum:

To use the Continuum, you read across each row of descriptors from left (beginning) to right (innovating) as the descriptors become more complex and sophisticated. As you move from left to right, locate the descriptor that best defines your current classroom practice. Any practice described on the left of the Continuum is carried across to those on the right even if not explicitly stated.

The Continuum provides a common language for setting and discussing goals for professional development within an environment of collegial support. The Continuum is a guide for self-reflection, assessment and conversation between teachers, advisors/support providers, and administrators. It is intended to help teachers interpret their teaching and make informed decisions about their ongoing development as a professional. In the Santa Cruz New Teacher Project, the Continuum serves as the entry point for developing an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) with which teachers identify and work toward professional goals. The Continuum is not meant to be used as a rubric to define performance standards or expectations. It is not an isolated observation instrument but is best used as one component of a comprehensive process of assessing the development of teaching practice. In some settings, it may be part of a teacher evaluation process and is appropriately used within a peer coaching relationship with a colleague or administrator.

The Continuum has proven to be a powerful tool as teachers identify their areas of growth, move from assistance to autonomy, and become lifelong learners. We hope that the Continuum will help you assess your own teaching and plan your professional development.

Glossary of Terms:

- **Continuum:** a document describing different levels of practice or knowledge along various stages of development.
- **Descriptor:** an individual cell or "box" corresponding to the developmental levels in the Continuum.
- **Domain:** one of six areas of teaching practice that comprises the Continuum.
- **Element:** an area or sub-domain of teaching practice within any of the six Continuum domains.
- **Level:** the levels of teacher development that represent what a teacher should know and be able to do, i.e.:
 - Beginning:** a level of professional development in which the teacher relies on ongoing assistance from more experienced colleagues for support, guidance and survival, and is trying to internalize and apply what she/he has learned about teaching.
 - Emerging:** a level of development in which the teacher still relies on more experienced colleagues for support but is moving toward becoming more self-directed and independent in her/his practice.
 - Applying:** a level of development in which the teacher is able to teach independently, internalizes and easily applies what she/he has learned about teaching.
 - Integrating:** a level of development in which the teacher is fully skilled, confident and able to integrate complex elements of instruction, curriculum and professional development into that practice. The integrating teacher moves beyond the classroom in her/his teaching, collegial relationships and professional growth activities and is often a leader among peers.
 - Innovating:** a level of development in which the teacher is consistently innovating and creating in all areas of teaching and professional development. A leader in school, district and local community, the innovating teacher contributes to the broader education community through staff development, classroom-based research, articles in professional journals, etc.