

The 4.0 Rubric Explained

Introduction

The South Carolina Teaching Standards (SCTS) 4.0 rubric provides a framework for identifying, understanding, and reflecting on effective teaching practices. Instructional expectations are organized in a way that allows teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators to not only reflect upon these practices, but to make informed decisions regarding teaching and learning based on observations and conversations. This is not a once and done or a critique of every lesson that is taught but is instead an ongoing cycle of planning, critical thinking, and deep questioning that should continue throughout the teacher's career. Teachers are encouraged to use this rubric as a tool for self-reflection and continuous professional growth, highlighting specific areas they can work to refine throughout their career.

The Four Domains

The SCTS rubric is organized into four domains: **Instruction**, **Planning**, **Environment**, and **Professionalism**. Each domain represents a critical element of effective instructional practice. Furthermore, these domains work together in ensuring an ongoing cycle of impactful instruction. Here are a few key aspects from each domain:

- **Instruction:** This domain focuses on how teachers implement and deliver instruction, including student engagement, questioning, and feedback.
- **Planning:** This domain looks at the intentionality when planning, including knowledge of standards, clear learning objectives, and assessment.
- **Environment:** A positive classroom environment supports student learning. Therefore, this domain examines classroom culture, teacher-student relationships, and organization of the classroom itself.
- **Professionalism:** This domain takes a closer look at the professional responsibilities that exist beyond delivering instruction such as teacher reflection, ongoing professional development, and relationships with families and other members of the school community.

Indicators

Each domain is broken down into indicators that describe specific aspects of instructional practice. Indicators clarify expectations of effective teaching practices, encouraging consistent application and ensuring teachers understand what each indicator “looks like” within that domain and

how that aligns with scoring. Furthermore, the indicators view teaching practices from multiple angles rather than through a narrower viewpoint. For example, the Instruction domain focuses on lesson format and how educators engage students in purposeful learning throughout the lesson. Below are some examples of indicators that can be found within this domain:

- **Motivating Students:** The teacher consistently reinforces and rewards effort.
- **Presenting Instructional Content:** Presentation of content always includes visuals that establish the purpose of the lesson
- **Questioning:** Teacher asks various high-quality questions aligned with instructional goals.

Performance Levels

The rubric outlines four levels of performance for every indicator. These performance levels are: *Exemplary*, *Proficient*, *Needs Improvement*, and *Unsatisfactory*. These performance levels provide alignment, clear expectations, and ensure observations and feedback are fair and consistent. The performance levels are:

- **Exemplary:** This is the highest level of performance, indicating that the teacher is consistently demonstrating effective instructional practices.
- **Proficient:** The teacher meets expectations for effective teaching and learning.
- **Needs Improvement:** While some aspects of effective teaching practices are present, the teacher is still developing.
- **Unsatisfactory:** This performance level indicates that there is little to no evidence that the teacher is meeting expectations.

Remember: These levels are designed with teacher professional growth in mind, acknowledging that proficiency and effectiveness will continue to develop throughout the teacher’s career. Therefore, teachers are not expected to master all areas at once.

In conclusion, the South Carolina Teaching Standards (SCTS) 4.0 rubric organizes expectations for teaching and learning into domains, indicators, and performance levels, creating a common language for all educators. This ensures that all users are not only aware of what is expected, but have a clearer understanding of effective teaching methods, observable evidence, and actionable next steps. While the rubric is a part of the evaluation process, its primary purpose is to support teachers in continuous growth, improvement, and professional reflection.