

Best Practices for Implementing TEAM Processes in a Distance Learning Environment Educator Strategies and Additional Observer Questions

In the distance learning environment, educators and observers have additional responsibilities to ensure positive student outcomes. **All indicators on the TEAM rubric continue to measure the effectiveness of instructional practice and the integrity of each indicator should be kept intact regardless of the environment for instruction.** The document below is designed to complement the understanding teachers and observers already have for each TEAM indicator and to provide observers with questions to guide evidence collection in the virtual environment.

Domain: Instruction

STANDARDS AND OBJECTIVES
<p>Educator Strategies: Communicate the lesson objective and success criteria clearly, in writing, and in a way easily and consistently accessible to students (slide, document, rubric header, etc.). Allow students a way to self-identify success prior to submitting work. Gather evidence of mastery via online platforms (online quizzes, discussion board posts, chat responses etc.). Clearly connect lesson activities to the standard to ensure that students understand that the purpose of the lesson is directly connected with growth towards standard mastery.</p> <p>Observer Questions: How effectively does the educator share the expectations for the lessons and success criteria through the learning platform? In what ways does the educator seek and provide feedback on mastery, including online formats such as chats, class discussions, message boards, etc.? How are students being engaged in ways that allow each learner to demonstrate understanding of the grade level, standards-aligned objective? How are the lesson activities connected to standard mastery? What evidence exists that demonstrates student understanding of the connection between lesson activities and standard mastery?</p>
MOTIVATING STUDENTS
<p>Educator Strategies: Clearly organize materials in a way that allows the learner to easily access the materials in order and at the right time in the lesson, such as files with numbered documents or a “start here” document. Create engagement and activate personal interest through technology such as short videos, student surveys, and meaningful key questions to segue into the lesson and/or connect to current topics. Allow students choice in the means by which they demonstrate mastery through the virtual platform such as video/audio recordings, blog posts, etc. Allow time for students to share their work with the class or in small groups in the virtual environment. Use technology to track student interactions (i.e., message board responses, chats, polls). Create a system of recognition and/or rewards that might include platform rewards (i.e., emojis, point systems, special camera filters, etc.) and more concrete rewards such as a parent/guardian phone call, email, or text, or class recognition.</p> <p>Observer Questions: What steps does the teacher take to ensure each student voice is heard through the distance learning environment? How are message boards, small group discussions, chats, student polls, and written or recorded reflections regularly incorporated? How does the teacher leverage technology such as message boards, discussion posts, and chats to allow students to make personal connections to the learning and to other big ideas? What systems of recognition and reward are in place and how do students respond to the system?</p>

PRESENTING INSTRUCTIONAL CONTENT

Educator Strategies: Strategically use videos and images to illustrate key ideas. Shares exemplars and carefully model metacognition so students have a clear model for successful task completion. Ensure models and exemplars are available to students outside of instruction time. Use technology to provide students the opportunity to interact with the content (i.e., labeling diagrams, completing virtual experiments, interactive response activities). Present content in a variety of ways through the use of presentation software, videos, and tutorials, but also through inquiry-based learning and student-led activities.

Observer Questions: How frequently does the teacher summarize the lesson and effectively model the thinking process? Are students given clear, step-by-step, written instructions and frequent opportunities to self-check and demonstrate understanding? How effectively does the teacher provide examples, illustrations, and analogies for new concepts to ensure each learner's understanding is assessed, regardless of instructional medium? What strategies for content presentation are employed? How does the teacher ensure that all information is relevant and that students are not distracted by non-essential information?

LESSON STRUCTURE AND PACING

Educator Strategies: Embed links to/create files for materials needed within the lesson documents. Develop clear, step-by-step instructions to ensure students understand the expectation of assignments and success criteria. Provide student access to real-time support through office hours. During instruction, ask explicit, pre-planned questions to encourage students to reflect on their learning throughout the lesson. Use technology to create small groups for differentiated support. Use timing features within technology tools to support pacing and timing of lesson. Provide timelines for completion and support students in self-assessing their progress against expected progress. Ensure that differentiation is available for students that complete tasks at various intervals.

Observer Questions: How effectively does the teacher use available technology to create breakout/small group sessions, allowing differentiation of support? How does the teacher leverage technology (i.e., chats, video calls, phone calls, office hours) to support student-to-student interaction and engage students individually so feedback is personal, relevant, and targeted? Is the educator consistently and effectively using technology to keep students that complete tasks at different rates engaged to minimize lost instructional time? How do students demonstrate an understanding of timelines and deadlines associated with tasks and assignments? How do students demonstrate their understanding of the order of the lesson? What do students do if they complete tasks at various paces?

ACTIVITIES AND MATERIALS

Educator Strategies: Create multiple pathways for students to demonstrate mastery through a menu of standards-aligned options that integrate well into the virtual environment. Allow students to give and provide feedback to each other via online tools and platforms, both prior to submission and as part of submission requirements. Create and share rubrics for each assignment with clearly outlined success criteria. Provide students with clear, step-by-step instructions for task completion. Use technology to ensure all students can access learning materials (i.e., high contrast documents, adjustable fonts, closed captioning) and build cumulative projects to enhance student engagement at each stage of content mastery. Ensure that tasks and texts meet grade level complexity expectations.

Observer Questions: How effectively is the teacher using the instructional materials adopted by the district? How does the teacher engage students and deliver content as it was designed to effectively meet the demands of the standard(s)? How effectively are students able complete tasks and meet the expectation of the grade level standard? How does the educator differentiate the standards-aligned materials for students with various learning and/or access needs?

QUESTIONING

Educator Strategies: Strategically intersperse reflective questions throughout the lesson. Plan sequences of questions that propel student thinking forward, and give time for students to develop and discuss their own questions through online collaboration. Design lessons or activities around student-developed questions and model higher-order thinking questioning. Use technology such as polls, virtual hand raising, and chat boxes to encourage question and answer sessions among classmates and the instructor. Create “Frequently Asked Questions” documents to provide student support outside of synchronous sessions and office hours.

Observer Questions: How purposefully does the educator implement questioning to assess and advance student learning? Are students effectively engaged in small groups to encourage student discussion? What supports has the educator created that encourage students to ask (and answer) higher-order thinking questions? How effectively does the educator manage wait time and use questioning to focus students on the standards-aligned materials selected by the district? In what ways does the educator use questioning to push students to a deeper understanding? How effectively does the educator encourage student-developed questions in response to the text(s) being used? How effectively does the educator use scaffolded questions to support learners in a deeper understanding of the content?

ACADEMIC FEEDBACK

Educator Strategies: Use technology features such as chats, message boards, shared documents, and collaborative document review tools to provide written feedback and collaborate with students as they progress through assignments. Use peer review to allow for student-to-student feedback before submitting assignment for teacher review. Ensure feedback is focused on academic progression, given frequently, and can be used by students to progress to mastery.

Observer Questions: How does the teacher model/set expectations for student interaction and feedback? Are students able to give useful feedback? How is the educator, within all synchronous engagement, providing feedback and ensuring student-to-student feedback is aligned to the lesson objectives? How effectively are students able to implement the feedback they receive to deepen their understanding of the content? How is the educator adjusting instruction based on student feedback?

GROUPING STUDENTS

Educator Strategies: Develop clear, concise instructions for virtual group work with specific roles/responsibilities for the individuals within the breakout group. Use groups when appropriate and consider group composition intentionally and purposefully. Provide breakout groups with a rubric that aligns the task to the standards/objectives and allows group members to self-assess the work product. Plan for students/small groups to share work with the greater group and utilize technology for peers to provide feedback and ask questions (chat features, document review tools, etc.).

Observer Questions: How does the teacher ensure each virtual group is well-managed and on task? How does the teacher model/set expectations for both completing the task and self-assessing the quality of the product created? How effectively does the teacher manage student movement to breakout rooms/groups and back to the main room? How does the teacher assess individual student engagement along with group success? What factors were considered when forming groups?

TEACHER CONTENT KNOWLEDGE

Educator Strategies: Develop lesson modules aligned to the expectations of the standard so that each segment targets a specific learning objective. Design sessions to support each component of the lesson (i.e., understanding of the text, analyzing supporting documents, and strategies to complete the assigned task). Sequence sessions so that they deepen student understanding by progression. Utilize technological supports (virtual tours, virtual experiments, etc.) to provide a variety of options for students to develop work products that demonstrate mastery. Provide pathways for remediation and enrichment.

Observer Questions: How does the teacher know which resources are needed to support student mastery? By what means are students engaged with the educator and peers in order to share and explain new learning/understanding? How effectively does the teacher implement strategies to probe individual student thinking and to identify/correct student misconceptions via chats, message boards, or other virtual interactions?

TEACHER KNOWLEDGE OF STUDENTS

Educator Strategies: Use technology solutions (closed captioning, high contrast texts, etc.) to support student access for all learners. Use multiple platforms so students can access content on various device types. Provide content in multiple forms to increase accessibility (language translations, audio recordings, video recordings, etc.). Provide students with support tools such as timers, helpful websites, and technology support that encourage engagement. Develop differentiated strategies for student engagement.

Observer Questions: How is the teacher using small/breakout groups to support student mastery? Are students given ample opportunity for think and response time? How does the teacher use technology to adjust content and/or the entry point to that content so that each student has access to new learning? How does the teacher provide opportunities for students to share their thinking and explore personal connections to that content in small or whole group settings? What strategies are in place for students that may be reluctant to engage? How does the teacher determine engagement? How does the educator incorporate available technology and programs to create breakout/small group sessions, allowing differentiation of support?

THINKING

Educator Strategies: Incorporate and design lessons that include specific thinking routines. Model thinking aloud for students throughout the lesson via audio/video recordings or record screen sharing sessions to support student thinking. Provide opportunities via chat, message boards, or interactive documents for students to provide feedback on each other's thinking. Support students' thinking strategies by modeling active listening and notetaking skills in the virtual environment. Signal key pieces of information to support student success. Model the processes by which students can identify and verify the authenticity of key pieces of information from videos, websites, and other technology platforms.

Observer Questions: How does the teacher use technology to provide opportunities for students to share their thinking with the group? How does the teacher support peer feedback on technology platforms? What thinking routines does the teacher model? How effectively does the teacher help individual students identify what strategies work best to support their own thinking and learning?

PROBLEM SOLVING

Educator Strategies: Design student tasks that require the generation of ideas through analysis and allow for creative solutions. Support student problem solving by carefully modeling the steps of sequential thinking to solve the problem. Construct questions to generate multiple responses and encourage students to use multiple resources (videos, websites, texts, anchor documents, etc.) in creating responses. Design group activities that require students to collaborate to identify a problem and find a solution.

Observer Questions: How does the teacher allow for multiple interactions with the content, both individually and as a group? What tools are provided that allow students to explore content in multiple ways? How effectively does the teacher allow students to virtually experiment or design and test for solutions? How are students encouraged to identify a problem and find creative solutions to complete tasks and assignments?

Domain: Environment

EXPECTATIONS

Educator Strategies: Create and share class standards for virtual learning; post and review regularly. Define and communicate engagement expectations for lessons and tasks. Share exemplars for tasks and assignments that are available to students at all times. Help students identify ways to monitor their progress within a lesson. Clearly communicate timelines and deadlines along with avenues of support for meeting these (helpful websites, office hours, supporting documents, etc.). Support students to follow through with their work by providing timely and constructive feedback.

Observer Questions: How does the teacher leverage virtual learning norms to encourage student initiative and independence? How does the teacher define, communicate, and support engagement? How efficiently are students able to navigate the various learning platforms/resources and how effectively are these platforms/resources used to support task and assignment completion? How effectively are students able to give and get feedback on assignments to meet the demands of the standard?

MANAGING STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Educator Strategies: Create and share norms for virtual learning and online behavior; post and review regularly. Identify ways to monitor student progress, using private chat/individual communication feature to redirect students as needed. Clearly communicate timelines and deadlines along with avenues of support for meeting these. Support students to follow through with their work by providing timely and constructive feedback.

Observer Questions: How does the teacher leverage virtual learning norms to encourage student initiative and independence? How efficiently are students able to navigate the various learning platforms and how effectively are they used to support task and assignment completion? How effectively are students able to give and get feedback on assignments to meet the demands of the standard?

ENVIRONMENT

Educator Strategies: Communicate early and often with both students and parents. Share procedures, contact information, syllabus, access to information for virtual tools, office hours, and key school/district policies in an easily accessible place. Host online orientation meetings for students and parents that include an overview of the platforms and technology required for the class. Ensure parents and students have access to information through assistive technologies such as closed captioning or language translations. Provide opportunities for students to share ideas for additional technology for the virtual environment.

Observer Questions: How proficient is the teacher with the virtual learning tools being utilized? How effectively is the teacher communicating with students about the platforms? Do students have easy access to technical support as needed? What strategies are in place if not? How effectively does the teacher use the online systems to monitor student progress and provide just-in-time support? Are students engaging successfully with the technology used in the virtual classroom? What strategies are in place if not?

RESPECTFUL CULTURE

Educator Strategies: Set online learning expectations including “netiquette,” academic integrity, online safety, and compliance to district policies (including cyberbullying). Provide purpose and involve students in setting the expectations for the virtual classroom. Demonstrate how to appropriately comment and provide feedback when engaging online. Provide students with models for using online editing tools, sentence starters for message board discussions, and tools that allow all student voices to be heard in a discussion. Share clear behavioral expectations for independent small group discussions, particularly when the topic might be provocative.

Observer Questions: How do students show respect for each other in person, by message board, chat, etc.? How does the teacher ensure all students express their ideas in constructive ways? How do students exhibit an awareness of others’ needs in the online environment? How efficiently and effectively does the teacher deal with poor online behavior? How does the teacher seek student input and incorporate student opinions into the virtual environment?

Domain: Planning

INSTRUCTIONAL PLANS

Educator Strategies: Create a readily accessible file to share documents that clearly align lessons to standards, including rubrics to identify and measure success criteria, exemplars for tasks and assignments, and documents that provide step-by-step instructions to support student learning. Ensure all virtual platforms, tools, and reference materials are working smoothly and students have full access to each. Provide access to content in multiple ways and be sure all necessary accommodations are available (i.e., closed captioning, audio recordings, high contrast settings). Use technology to embed activities within the lesson that collect student reflections on progress and learning. Provide students with office hours or other means for individual support such as re-teaching or enrichment.

Observer Questions: How does the teacher ensure individual student needs are addressed in the distance environment? How effectively does the teacher leverage technology to ensure access for all students to grade level standards? How is student success supported by the organization of the virtual learning environment?

STUDENT WORK

Educator Strategies: Share lesson information prior to synchronous sessions to prepare students for new learning. Communicate instructions and success criteria for all tasks, assignments, and activities clearly through step-by-step instructions, flowcharts, rubrics, etc. Make exemplars readily available. Provide students with avenues for feedback from both peers and the teacher prior to final submission. Ensure students have multiple opportunities to express thinking through writing (i.e., chats, message boards, presentations) and to receive feedback. Encourage self-analysis of work products by providing clear success criteria through rubrics, checklists, flowcharts, etc. Design assignments that require students to articulate their reasoning, insights, and personal connections. Analyze student work to ensure that task development reflects the standard and moves the student towards mastery. Reflect and adjust future assignments based on student work and standard mastery alignment.

Observer Questions: How does the teacher utilize the virtual platform to provide students pre-work to scaffold new learning? How effectively do students show mastery of the content through virtual assignments? How are students able to express their thinking through writing as a part of the digital learning experience? How are students accurately self-analyzing work products prior to submission? How does student work align to the standard and rigorous grade level expectations?

ASSESSMENT

Educator Strategies: Provide clear criteria for success with exemplars, models, and samples. Provide project-based assessments that allow student choice (i.e., video submissions, online tests, presentations, portfolios, and podcasts that utilize online tools and resources). Ensure assessments propel students to the next stage of learning and are used to inform future instruction.

Observer Questions: How does the teacher utilize the virtual platform to assess new learning and plan for future instruction? How effectively are students showing mastery of the content through virtual assessments? How do you know? How often are students given choice in how they demonstrate mastery?