

Best Practices for Implementing TEAM Processes in a Distance Learning Environment

Frequently Asked Questions

In spring 2020, teachers across our nation moved from traditional classroom settings to distance instruction in a matter of days. As teachers made necessary shifts to their instructional practices, leaders were required to make a similar shift in the support provided through feedback and coaching. Because observers must apply the TEAM model with fidelity and provide educators with meaningful feedback in unique situations, the following document is designed to support teachers and leaders through distance learning observation and coaching sessions. It is intended to support observation practices already in use, with a specific focus on supporting teachers as they develop and deliver distance learning. As always, supporting and coaching teacher practice is the foundation of observation and should be the focus of every instructional support conversation.

Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. Are observations required for teachers providing distance learning?*

According to State Board of Education (SBE) policy [5.201](#), all classroom teachers and non-instructional, licensed staff shall be observed with a state board approved observation model. This includes teachers providing distance or virtual learning. Synchronous focused observations should be planned after both the teacher and students have had ample opportunity to develop relationships through the distance learning environment.
- 2. Why should observations be conducted during distance learning?*

Coaching, providing feedback, and continuous improvement have always been at the core of observation. Providing feedback allows teachers to experience growth and support that ultimately leads to gains in student achievement and opportunities. In situations where teachers are moving to distance learning environments, this support is critical to ensure student success.
- 3. When should observations start if we are beginning the school year with distance learning?*

Synchronous focused observations should be planned after both the teacher and students have had ample opportunity to develop relationships through the distance learning environment. This may take longer than in a traditional setting. Likewise, should you experience a transition back to in-person instruction, teachers should be allowed time to establish classroom practices and procedures prior to conducting in-person observations.
- 4. Are all observations announced this year?*

According to State Board of Education policy [5.201](#), at least half of all observations must be unannounced. While not recommended, if an observer **must** do an unannounced virtual observation with no pre-conference, observers are encouraged to take full advantage of the time between the observation and post-conference to ask clarifying questions such as the ones shared in part II of this document. Observers may wish to have informal conversations, receive schedules, and informally observe virtual classrooms to familiarize themselves

with how virtual lessons unfold before completing a formal observation. School leaders should always have links and access to teachers' online lesson sessions. If possible, unannounced observations should be strategically scheduled for the portions of the year when in-person instruction is more likely to occur.

5. *We have added faculty to support a safe learning environment, but we now have additional observations to complete. What actions might we take to allow us to meet pacing for all teachers?*

While state board policy [5.201](#) requires that all observers must be certified, it does not stipulate the role an observer must hold. Consider having mentor teachers, lead teachers, or instructional coaches certified to conduct observations support with walk-through observations and feedback. Additionally, central office personnel such as instructional supervisors can support by conducting either in person or virtual observations. Initial Teacher Evaluator Training registration information may be found on the [TEAM website](#) under the training tab and will remain open through March 2021.

6. *If an individual teacher is conducting both in-person and virtual lessons, which should I observe?*

We encourage observers to prioritize in-person instruction for observation purposes. However, providing teachers feedback and support in all instructional environments has intrinsic value.

7. *When gathering evidence in a distance learning setting, is it appropriate for the teacher to submit artifacts to support practices that might be difficult to see in a virtual setting?*

Observers should use the time between the synchronous lesson and post-conference to ask clarifying questions and seek more information about the lesson implementation. This may include gathering artifacts from the teacher that support practices implemented during the lesson.

8. *Where can my teachers and I find support if we are not comfortable with what distance learning looks and sounds like?*

Please see the professional development resources found [here](#) for more information on best instructional practices for distance learning. These valuable resources will support both teachers and leaders with distance learning practices.

9. *Must the entire observation occur within a single point of student engagement?*

No. Virtual observations should encompass all types of student engagement (for example, live lessons and message board responses) as well as large and small group sessions (for example, break out rooms or small group meetings) associated with the lesson objective. These points of engagement may occur over multiple days and evidence of teacher practice may be gathered over multiple technology platforms. Evidence collection may span up to three days if necessary.

10. *From what point in the observation does the five day requirement for scheduling post-conferences start?*

Post-conferences should be scheduled within five days after all student engagement associated with the lesson has been completed, which may not be on the same day as the synchronous lesson.

11. *Will the number of required observations (pacing) be different this year?*

While pacing must be met to ensure LOE generation, any school district or charter school using the TEAM model may choose to allow observers to flexibly combine domains during classroom observations provided the requisite minimums are met.

12. *What happens if observation pacing is not met?*

If observation pacing is not met, teachers will not generate a level of overall effectiveness score (LOE). This may impact other areas such as, but not limited to, differentiated pay increases and observation pacing for the following year.

13. *Will teachers still be required to make achievement and growth measure selections or implement district evaluation flexibilities such as student growth portfolios?*

Teachers are required to complete measure selection and implement any observation flexibilities chosen by the district, such as, but not limited to, portfolio implementation. Teachers providing distance instruction directly or through a third-party vendor also must complete measure selection.

14. *Will evaluation weightings be impacted by distance learning?*

Evaluation weightings will not change this year due to distance learning.

15. *How should the professionalism rubric be scored?*

The professionalism rubric should be scored in accordance with traditional practice.