



TEAM Observation Considerations Alternative Education

The Tennessee Department of Education works to help districts ensure that quality alternative learning environments are created for students. According to the Governor’s Advisory Council for Alternative Education (AE), alternative schools are non-traditional academic programs or schools designed to meet the student’s educational, behavioral, and social needs. Alternative Educators are tasked with ensuring their students make progress on grade level standards and are well prepared to transition back into a more traditional school setting.

Through the collaborative process of observation, feedback, and support, every teacher can see areas where he/she can improve student learning, and every observer can support a rigorous vision of excellent instruction throughout a school. While this document focuses on specific connections for alternative school educators, the approach to using the TEAM rubric remains the same for any content area.

In this document you will find resources and information on:

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Observer Considerations: Pre-Conference

The educator’s lesson plan should serve as the foundation for the pre-conference. Using the planning and environment rubrics to guide pre-conference questions helps focus the conversation on student outcomes and provides evidence for instructional practice. Encourage educators to discuss the components of the plan and how that plan supports successful student outcomes. Observers should consider the pre-conference the first stage of collecting evidence of instructional practice.

Possible Pre-Conference Question on Instructional Practice	Planning or Environment Rubric Connection	Instructional Rubric Connection
How do you plan for instruction that addresses the individualized needs of the student while meeting the requirements of multiple state content standards? How do you incorporate students’ behavioral and social needs?	Instructional Plans	Standards and Objectives Motivating Students Presenting Instructional Content Lesson Structure and Pacing Activities and Materials Grouping Students Teacher Content Knowledge Teacher Knowledge of Students
In what ways have you planned for students to demonstrate skills like analysis, drawing conclusions, and interpreting information? What techniques do you plan to use to actively engage students in this learning? What are some of the ways you work with traditional educators to support students’ academic success?	Student Work Assessment	Motivating Students Presenting Instructional Content Activities and Materials Questioning Academic Feedback Teacher Content Knowledge Thinking Problem Solving
What are some techniques you use to establish the environment of your alternative school classes? What types of cues do you use to redirect less than desirable behaviors? How do you use transition plans to support students and ensure barriers to returning to traditional school are mitigated? In what ways do you communicate that student success is central to the program?	Expectations Managing Student Behavior Environment Respectful Culture	Motivating Students Lesson Structure and Pacing Questioning Academic Feedback Teacher Content Knowledge Teacher Knowledge of Students

Teacher Considerations: Pre-Conference

During a pre-conference, alternative education teachers should be prepared to share how they ensure lesson alignment to content level standards, how students will engage with the curriculum, how the success of the lesson will be measured, and how individual student needs are supported. In an AE setting, these needs may include social and behavioral needs as well as academic needs. Alternative education teachers have an obligation to become familiar with the TEAM rubric, so they can articulate the connections between their instructional practice and the best practices for which they are responsible.

Considerations for Lesson Plans	Rubric Connections
Alignment and Rigor of Content and Standards	Instructional Plans Assessment Standards and Objectives Teacher Content Knowledge Teacher Knowledge of Students
Instructional Plan	Student Work Lesson Structure and Pacing Questioning Activities and Materials Teacher Content Knowledge Assessment Thinking Problem Solving
Instructional Technique	Managing Student Behavior Environment Expectations Motivating Students Presenting Instructional Content Grouping Academic Feedback Presenting Instructional Content Teacher Knowledge of Students
Differentiation	Teacher Content Knowledge Teacher Knowledge of Students Questioning Grouping Academic Feedback Expectations Respectful Culture
Student Engagement	Student Work Motivating Students Lesson Structure and Pacing Questioning Teacher Knowledge of Students Thinking

Observer Considerations: Evidence Collection

Evidence for practice performance levels may come from pre-conference conversations, classroom observation, or conversations with the teacher after the observation but prior to the post-conference. In all cases, the observer should seek to understand the teacher’s approach to student supports and, more importantly, the students’ responses to the instructional practices implemented during instruction. Observers should gather evidence on how the teacher manages the learning lift between the teacher and the students.

Indicator	Possible Evidence
Instructional Plans	Pre-conference notes should provide evidence on how the lesson aligns and sequences student activities to the standards. Notes should reflect how the teacher articulates what students know coming into the lesson and the support planned for learners that are at different levels of experience or skill. Observers should note how frequently the teacher indicates opportunities for students to reflect and provide/be provided feedback for improvement. Observers should seek evidence of how adept alternative education teachers are at both identifying the progression of students toward the standards and navigating resources related to the standards themselves. Additionally, AE teachers may have specific IEP or 504 implementations to consider and should be able to speak to these. AE teachers may also have some specific intake practices that inform instructional plans. These, too, should be discussed and may serve as evidence of teacher practice.
Student Work	Pre-conference notes should capture the planned student work, which in alternative settings may be supplied by the content teacher from the home school. Notes should reflect how the teacher plans to support students’ abilities to analyze and draw conclusions about how accurately the students are applying techniques/strategies/skills. In an alternative classroom, this support might involve one-on-one debriefs or helping a student capture questions that will be communicated with the content teacher. Student work may also be based on progress to behavioral or social goals.
Assessment	Observer notes should capture the ways students demonstrate mastery of or progression toward a standard, and what will happen if they do or do not master the content. Observers should note what types of resources alternative educators provide to build student independence, confidence, and problem solving. Observers should capture evidence on the data available for each student and how that data is used to adjust instruction. In an alternative education setting, this may include discipline or other non-traditional data in addition to academic data. Note how the various data points on each student are used in the development of transition plans. Note how effectively formative and summative data sources are used to track student progress.
Expectations	Observer notes should reflect how the teacher creates academic entry points for each student based on skill level. This tool might be a rubric or progression chart used by the teacher to document starting and ending skill

	<p>level. Observers should seek evidence of opportunities for every student to have successful progress toward the standards. This evidence might occur through grouping, in the way the teacher provides feedback to students, or students giving feedback to each other. In some alternative classrooms, this feedback might be one-on-one conversations or whole group instruction. AE students may have specific behavioral or social expectations.</p>
Managing Student Behavior	<p>Observer evidence might include notes on how students manage classroom space, engage with classroom rules/expectations, deal with frustration, and interact with other students. Seek information on how students monitor selves, space, and disruptions. Note how the teacher interacts with students in each situation. Seek evidence for student implementation of behavioral and social skills. Seek evidence that students are self-managing behavior for classroom success and that instructors are communicating behavior standards clearly.</p>
Environment	<p>Seek evidence that students know how their space may be used for individual and group work, if allowed. Note how students handle receiving feedback or instruction. Capture evidence on student-to-student engagement, if allowed, and how adeptly the teacher supports student progression. Capture evidence of how well students understand the rules of the classroom and abide by them. Capture evidence of how students track their own progress toward transition goals.</p>
Respectful Culture	<p>Note how the students interact with the teacher and how well they implement behavioral and social skills. Look for the frequency of feedback and the level of support in all aspects of instruction, including how effectively the teacher uses prevention strategies. Watch for the number of students not engaged or on task. Note when students aid or critically support classmates. Note how successfully students are advocating for themselves and the support they need. Seek evidence of the students' role in shaping the environment of the classroom. Note how well the instructor incorporates the use of rewards or celebrations of individual or group accomplishments. Note how conflicts are resolved among students.</p>
Standards and Objectives	<p>Capture evidence of how effectively students connect daily skills to broader ideas. In an alternative classroom, this connection might look like aligning skill practice to skill mastery. Seek evidence of how clearly students know what is expected of them for each lesson and what resources they need to be successful. In an AE setting, this could include behavioral objectives.</p>
Motivating Students	<p>Capture evidence of how often the teacher and students actively engage. Seek evidence for how effectively the teacher supports students to see relevance of daily content to other parts of their lives, including the behavioral and social expectations. Capture evidence on how the teacher and/or classmates reinforce and reward individual effort and progress to academic standards or transition plan goals. Capture evidence that indicates the level of student independence when engaging with lessons.</p>
Presenting Instructional Content	<p>Evidence notes should reflect how well students are able to follow instructions and execute tasks. Seek evidence on how students manage space, equipment, and movements through small group activities. Note how the students implement the assigned task and any confusion on how</p>

	to begin or progress. Note if students are modeling the skill(s) for each other or if the same instructions must be provided multiple times. Keep in mind that student to student engagement may be managed differently in an AE classroom, but systems should be used to build social relationships by supporting collaboration and teamwork.
Lesson Structure and Pacing	Seek evidence for student and teacher awareness of time needed vs. time spent in transitions, class changes, or tasks. Seek evidence that students are encouraged to assess their own skill set, reflect, and make changes in a timely manner. Capture the amount of time students are actively engaged/not engaged in their lesson/task. Note how effectively classroom procedures help students progress independently.
Activities and Materials	Look for evidence that the tasks are aligned to the rigor of the standard and that academic support and resources are available as needed. Seek evidence that students are given multiple ways/opportunities to demonstrate progress toward skill mastery of both the content and behavioral expectations. Capture data on the appropriateness of the technology/resources used to meet the requirements of the standard. Seek evidence of self-directedness through the task and self-monitoring of behavior. Seek evidence of how well all students complete assignments and tasks. Capture evidence of how effectively life skills are incorporated into the lesson and if students can demonstrate those skills.
Questioning	Capture question and answer sessions between teacher and students, as well as between students, for evidence of the question types that are being used. Capture evidence of teacher wait time and purposeful application of student knowledge to answer questions about the content. Capture the types of questions students ask as an indicator of how deeply they understand assignments.
Academic Feedback	Capture evidence of the corrections and adjustments provided by the teacher as well as interactions in which students are supporting each other. Capture frequency of feedback, type of feedback, and repetitiveness of the feedback shared. Note if the instructor provides more or different feedback to different individuals. Seek evidence that the feedback aligns to the rigor of the standard and expectation of the task. Note if feedback is motivational only. Capture evidence that social and behavioral skills are included. Capture evidence of the effectiveness of teacher cues to self-correction and self-direction.
Grouping Students	Note the composition of the student groups and their applicability to ensuring success. Seek evidence that all students, when in small groups, have a role and if the teacher or classmates ensure the expectations of all roles are met. Note how other groupings, such as whole group instruction, are used to support student progress to the standards. Seek evidence on the data used to determine instructional grouping. Capture evidence on when groups are not used and why. Note when systems are used to support collaboration and teamwork.
Teacher Content Knowledge	Seek evidence of how students demonstrate understanding the connections between the assignment and the standard. Note when the teacher uses specific AE instructional strategies such as cueing behavior or

	<p>student progress conversations. Look for evidence of the teacher helping students make the connections between isolated skills to larger content specific ideas. Capture data on the appropriateness of the technology and resources used to meet the requirements of the standard.</p>
<p>Teacher Knowledge of Students</p>	<p>Capture evidence of the instructor providing a specific solution to an individual student's issue with task mastery. Seek ways the teacher connects to students' lives/cultural identities and incorporates that information into the instruction. This connection might include regular communication with parents or the student support team. Note differentiation provided by multiple access points or multiple ways to demonstrate mastery. Note how frequently the instructor makes connections between student action and student success, or if the students do this for themselves. Capture how the teacher monitors progress toward transition goals or other goals captured in IEPs or 504 plans.</p>
<p>Thinking</p>	<p>Capture evidence of how successfully students self-analyze their progress and self-identify areas of improvement. Seek evidence that students are exploring different ways to accomplish a task for better results. Look for evidence of how effectively a teacher is supporting students to generate and apply strategies to meet all types of individual goals.</p>
<p>Problem Solving</p>	<p>Seek evidence of how well a teacher provides students the opportunity to engage in several types of problem solving. This evidence might include conversations about how actions today might impact future outcomes, making informed decisions on the validity of a resource, or identifying strategies to meet the requirements of a behavior or transition plan.</p>

Observer Considerations: Preparing for the Post-Conference and Using the Performance Level Guide

After the observation, observers should ask clarifying questions as needed **prior** to the post-conference. These questions might happen immediately after the observation or occur later after reviewing evidence notes. Questions might include:

- How were the groups created for this lesson and how often do they change?
- What are some techniques you use to address students that resist engagement?
- How do you communicate expectations for mastery with students at various levels or working on unrelated subjects?
- What are some ways you ensure social and behavioral expectations are being met?
- What types of individualized support are you able to offer for students that struggle to meet the rigor of a standard or behavioral standards?
- How were you monitoring students' use of technology throughout the day?
- In what ways do you support students to know which resources to use when?
- What are some ways you communicate with the students' home schools, parents, or supporting agencies to ensure everyone is working collaboratively to support the students?

Observers should **always** analyze student work after every lesson in any classroom. For an AE class, this analysis might involve reviewing student work from different subjects or grade levels. Consider:

- Do the activities in which students were engaged assess the standard being taught?
- To what extent does the student work provide evidence of mastery of the lesson's objective?
- In what ways does student work require thinking and/or problem solving? What are some actions taken to reinforce that?
- How does the educator use the data collected during the day to inform future lessons?
- How does the teacher capture data on the progression of each student toward the variety of academic and non-academic goals?

Using the Performance Level Guide

Observers should use the performance level guide and appropriate general educator rubric to support alignment of evidence (coding) to scores. Each performance level has nuanced differences, described below. This guide helps identify the expertise with which practice is implemented. Note that both consistency and impact are considered when determining performance level.

Performance Level Guide

1	Significantly Below Expectations: A teacher at this level has limited knowledge of the instructional skills, knowledge, and responsibilities described in the rubric and struggles to implement them. He/she has little to no impact on student outcomes .
2	Below Expectations: A teacher at this level demonstrates some knowledge of the instructional skills, knowledge, and responsibilities described in the rubric but implements them inconsistently . His/her impact on student outcomes is below expectations .
3	At Expectations: A teacher at this level understands and implements most of the instructional skills, knowledge, and responsibilities described in the rubric. His/her impact on student outcomes is meeting expectations .
4	Above Expectations: A teacher at this level comprehends the instructional skills, knowledge, and responsibilities described in the rubric and implements them skillfully and consistently . He/she makes a strong impact on student outcomes .
5	Significantly Above Expectations: A teacher at this level exemplifies the instructional skills, knowledge, and responsibilities described in the rubric and implements them adeptly and without fail . He/she meets ambitious teaching and learning goals and makes a significant impact on student outcomes . Performance at this level should be considered a model of exemplary teaching .

After evidence gathered throughout the observation process has been coded and scored, the observer will **design the post-conference**. This conference should focus on three things:

- Identified areas of reinforcement and refinement.
- Resources for the teacher to use as they hone their refinement area practice.
- A follow-up plan for the leader to support teacher progress and success.

More detailed support for post-conferences may be found in the [Teacher Evaluation Handbook](#).

With additional questions, please contact TEAM.Questions@tn.gov.