TEAM Best Practices Video Library

Assessment

Descriptor 1

Summer 2025

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General Educator Rubric:

Planning Domain

Planning Domain

The Planning Domain is designed to evaluate how effectively teachers prepare and think through the steps for instruction. This domain emphasizes the planning and implementation of the unit or lesson plan rather than the written plan itself. Evaluators should look for evidence of planning in the lesson plan, classroom observation, and planning conference discussions.

Key Considerations:

- **Lesson Planning:** While written plans are important, the primary focus is on how teachers plan for instruction. A detailed, multi-page lesson plan is not necessary; instead, evaluators should consider how well the teacher's planning translates into effective classroom practice. Planning scores should be based on teacher process, evidence collected during observation and conversation, teacher implementation of the plan, student work samples, and assessment samples.

- **Planning Conference:** A pre-conference should occur before an announced observation. This meeting helps the evaluator gather information from the educator about the planning process before observing a lesson. If the observation is unannounced, then the evaluator should have a planning conference after the classroom observation to discuss the educators planning process.

Planning Domain

Indicators:

Instructional Plans:
- Evaluators should assess the strategies teachers use to align their instruction with state standards. This includes both lesson and unit plans.
- Look for evidence that the teacher has thoughtfully prepared to meet the learning objectives.

Student Work:
- Consider the tasks and activities students are engaged in. Student work should provide insight into how well the teacher's planning supports student learning.
- Evaluators should look for evidence that student work is challenging students to use a variety of thinking and problem-solving skills.

Assessments:
- Assessments are crucial for understanding student learning. Evaluators should examine how teachers use assessments to support and enhance student learning.
- Evidence of effective assessment practices can be found in both the planning and execution phases.

Planning Domain
Evaluation Process:

Planning Conference Discussions: These discussions are essential for understanding the teacher's planning process and should inform the planning scores. Explicit and direct questioning opens opportunities for educators to discuss their planning process and the evidence that may not be visible during classroom observations. Evaluators can request a meeting after the instruction to gather additional evidence about the teacher's planning process. This is particularly important for understanding how the teacher plans for the entire unit, not just the observed lesson.

Classroom Observations: During observations, evaluators should focus on how the teacher's plans are implemented in the classroom. This includes looking at student engagement, student work, and assessment outcomes.

Post-Conference: The post-conference should serve as an opportunity for educators to engage in self-reflection regarding their planning and execution. Evaluators should pose thought-provoking, open-ended questions that encourage educators to critically examine the planning practices that have successfully enhanced student learning, as well as identify areas for improvement to further advance student progress toward mastery.

Assessment

Assessment

Assessment is more than just a measure of learning; it's a driving force behind meaningful instruction. When educators plan assessments thoughtfully, they create opportunities to better understand what students have learned and how to support them moving forward. Effective assessment begins before instruction even starts. It is embedded in the planning process and reflects the goals of the unit and the standards students are expected to meet.

The most important question educators should ask when designing assessments is: "What do I want my students to be able to do as a result of my teaching?" And just as importantly: "How will I know they've learned it?" The answers to these questions inform not only the content of assessments but also how the results will be used.

Assessment

Assessments should not be confined to the end of a unit. Performance checks should take place throughout the unit and throughout the school year to gauge progress and guide instruction in real time.

A strong assessment plan incorporates multiple methods of measuring student learning. This could include projects, presentations, written responses, experiments, or essays. Assessments should routinely include written components that give students the opportunity to reflect, organize, and articulate thinking in a tangible product. To ensure assessments are used effectively, educators must be clear in the measurement criteria, detailing exactly what success looks like for students.

Assessment data, both formative and summative, should guide lesson planning, intervention efforts, and decisions about future instruction.
In the end, assessment is a tool for growth. When thoughtfully planned and strategically used, it becomes a roadmap to increased achievement and deeper learning.

Assessment

Benefits of Effective Assessment Plans:

- **Aligns instruction with learning goals:** Ensures assessments measure what students are actually expected to learn, based on standards and curriculum.
- **Clarifies expectations for students:** Provides clear targets and success criteria, helping students understand what they need to achieve.
- **Informs instructional decisions:** Guides teachers in adjusting instruction, pacing, and strategies based on assessment data.
- **Supports differentiated instruction:** Identifies students' strengths and needs, allowing for targeted interventions and enrichment.
- **Monitors progress over time:** Ongoing performance checks track growth and provide early warnings when students fall behind.
- **Raises overall student achievement:** When assessments are planned and used effectively, they drive continuous improvement in teaching and learning.

Descriptor 1:

Assessment plans are aligned with state content standards

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At the heart of effective instruction is a clear focus on the standards, the roadmap that outlines what students should *know and be able to do*. The state standards are the foundation for all teaching, learning, and assessment.

Each standard defines an outcome, something observable and measurable. That is the *what*. Educators must also think about the *how*. How will they know if students have reached mastery of the standard? How will they gather meaningful evidence of learning?

In planning assessments, educators should take the standard and ask:

- What should students know and be able to do?

- What should it *look like* if they can do that?

- How can I design an assessment that allows students to show exactly that?

Descriptor 1: Assessment plans are aligned with state content standards

The intentional connection between instruction, assessment, and the standard ensures that every task has purpose and every result has meaning. It empowers teachers to make informed instructional decisions and guarantees that students are working toward meaningful, measurable learning goals.

If an assessment doesn't directly connect back to the standard, it becomes irrelevant. No matter how creative, engaging, or rigorous the task may be, if it is not assessing the right thing, it is not helping students move forward. An assessment that is not aligned to the standard is, at its core, invalid.

Evaluator Expectations

An evaluator should seek clear, intentional alignment between the assessment tasks and the learning expectations outlined in the standards. This includes reviewing assessment materials such as rubrics, test questions, prompts, or performance tasks to determine whether they directly reflect the skills, knowledge, and rigor described in the standard.

The evaluator will also look for evidence in lesson plans or unit overviews that shows the standard was unpacked and used to guide what students are being asked to demonstrate.

Evaluator Expectations

The evaluator should ask questions that help clarify the educator's thinking and planning process and determine how intentionally they are using standards to drive both instruction and assessment.

Examples of questions:

- How will you assess the students' knowledge and mastery of the lesson objectives?
- How did the standard influence the way you designed this assessment?
- Can you walk me through how this assessment task measures the specific expectations of the standard?

Educator Expectations

An educator should be prepared to explain how each assessment task in the unit aligns to state standards. Rubrics and scoring guides can be effective when they include criteria that mirror the language and expectations of the standards. Educators might also provide sample student work with reflections on how it demonstrates mastery of target standards.

During a discussion, educators can articulate how they unpacked the standards to identify key skills and knowledge, and how those elements informed the design of their assessments. They might describe how they ensured alignment not only to the content of the standards but also to the intended level of cognitive demand. Together, these pieces offer a comprehensive picture of an educator who is intentionally using the standards as a foundation for assessment planning.

Evidence Capture Example

As you watch this video, note how the evaluator's question leads the educator to describe her backwards planning design. She shares how she uses the expectations of what the students are required to know from the standards to build her assessments.

Video featuring 2024-2025 West Grand Division Teacher of the Year Jenny Kiesel under the guidance of Corrie Martin, Principal of Lakeland Preparatory School, Lakeland School System
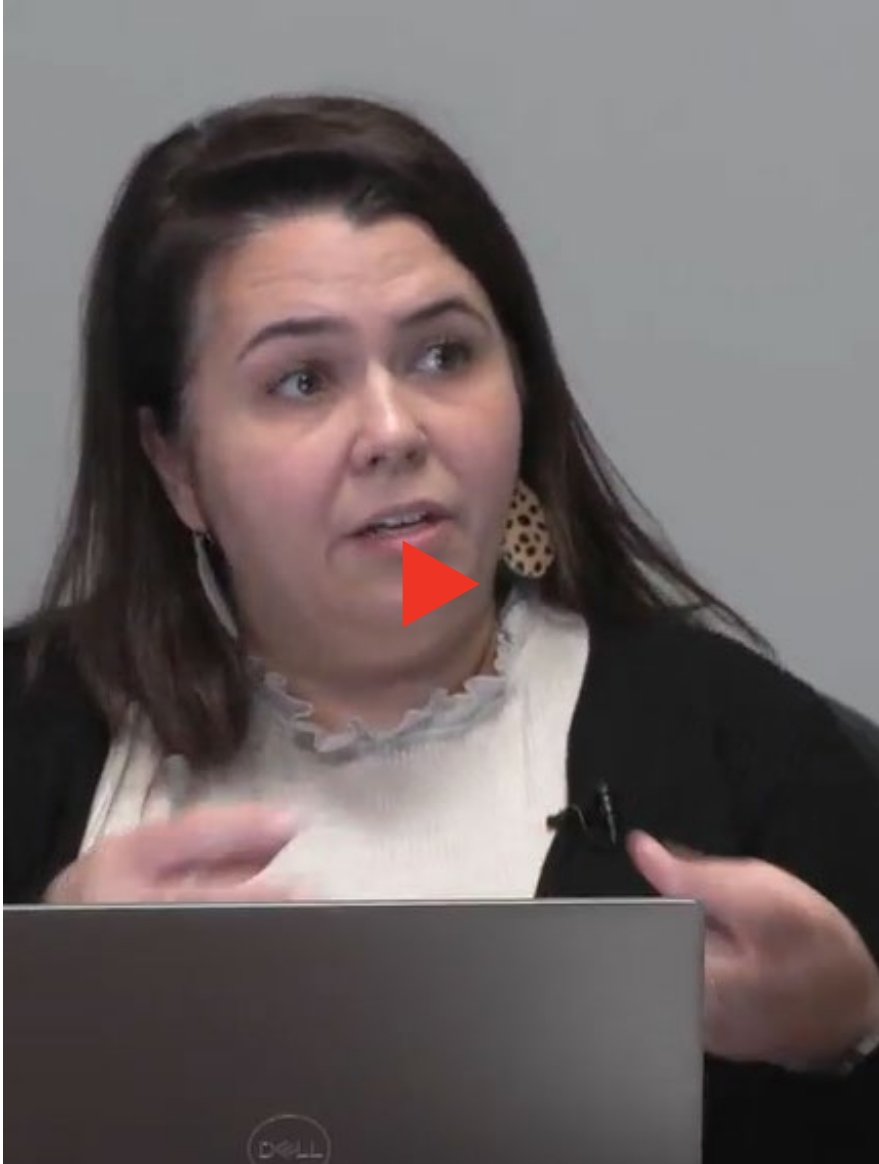
Evidence Capture Example

As you watch this video, note how the educator shares how she uses several types of assessments to determine if students are able to master the state standard focused goal of writing an argumentative speech using rhetorical devices.

Video featuring 2023-2024 Shelby County/Municipals Region Teacher of the Year Stephanie Thomas under the guidance of Corrie Martin, Principal of Lakeland Preparatory School, Lakeland School

Evidence Capture Practice

- Watch the video and capture evidence of descriptor 1.

- Video featuring 2023-2024 South Central Core Region Teacher of the Year Emily Fowler under the guidance of Penny Love, Principal at Culleoka Unit School, Maury County Schools

Share evidence you captured of descriptor 1.

Possible Evidence Captured

Example(s) of descriptor 1 in the video:

- The teacher explains the different communication standards she has used to build her assessments to measure progress towards mastery including:
  - Interpret and express specific and general time in the target language
  - Demonstrate understanding, interpret and analyze what is heard on a variety of topics in the target language
  - Interact and negotiate meaning in spoken or written conversation to share vital information, and present information on multiple topics considering the intended purpose and audience

Connections to Other Indicators

This descriptor is closely aligned with the following indicators:

- **Standards and Objectives:**
  - Learning objectives are communicated, connected to the state standard(s), and referenced throughout lesson
  - Sub-objectives are aligned to the lesson's major objective
  - There is evidence that students demonstrate mastery of the daily objective that supports progress towards mastery of the standard(s).
- **Expectations:**
  - Teacher sets high and demanding academic expectations for every student.

Feedback Survey

- Follow the QR code or use the link below to access the form for the feedback survey.
    - https://stateoftennessee.formstack.com/forms/planning_rubric_video_library
- Please use the form to reflect on today's learning and provide feedback about this resource.

Thank You!

Email questions to TEAM.Questions@tn.gov .

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