

TEAM Best Practices Video Library

Assessment

Descriptor 4



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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 4:

Assessment plans require written tasks



Descriptor 4: Assessment plans require written tasks

Including a written component in assessment plans is essential because writing allows students to process and express their thinking in a concrete, visible way. Writing is, at its core, thinking on paper. It gives students the chance to reflect on what they’ve learned and articulate their reasoning. This is valuable for both students and educators, as it provides insight into the student’s understanding and thought process.

While writing doesn’t need to occur in every single lesson or assessment, each unit or plan of study should incorporate a meaningful writing task. These tasks can take many forms depending on the grade level or subject area, from traditional written responses and essays to drawings, musical notation, or labeled diagrams. What’s important is that the task requires students to apply what they have learned in a way that demonstrates comprehension and reasoning.

By including writing in assessment, educators create an opportunity to gather authentic evidence of student learning and ensure that students are engaging in deeper cognitive work aligned to the standard.



Evaluator Expectations

An evaluator should look for written components embedded within lesson plans, unit overviews, or observed assessment materials. This could include prompts for written reflections, explanations, constructed responses, or subject-specific tasks such as drawing and labeling in science or music notation in Fine Arts. During a classroom observation, the evaluator may see students engaging in writing activities that support their learning and demonstrate their thinking.

Evaluator Expectations

Conversations with educators, along with documentation and observation, help ensure that writing tasks are used intentionally to capture student thinking and support mastery of content.

Examples of questions:

- What opportunities have you planned for students to write about their learning in this unit?
- How do the written tasks support your understanding of student progression toward mastery?
- How do you adapt writing expectations to match students' varying abilities while still providing opportunities for them to demonstrate their thinking?

Educator Expectations

Educators should be prepared to provide evidence that demonstrates how they have intentionally incorporated writing tasks into their assessment plans to allow students to express their thinking and show understanding of the content or standards. This evidence may include written assignments aligned to the daily objective or broader learning targets, such as reflections, short answer responses, explanations, or constructed responses.

In classrooms like music, art, or physical education, writing might take the form of self-reflection, written descriptions of skills or techniques, evaluations of performances or creative works, or expressions like poetry, lyrics, or musical notation.

During conversations with the evaluator, educators should be able to explain how these writing tasks are intentionally designed to reveal student reasoning, track progress toward mastery, and support student self-evaluation of their learning. Ultimately, educators should show how they use writing as a purposeful tool to capture student thinking and provide meaningful insights into their understanding.

Evidence Capture Example

As you watch this video, note how the educator shares how she incorporates writing in her assessments. The educator plans for students to complete a written exit ticket to show mastery of the daily objective. She also plans for students to engage in self-reflection of learning by writing to compare and contrast their performance at the beginning of a unit and their performance at the end of the unit.



Video featuring 2024-2025 East Grand Division Teacher of the Year Natalie Elkins under the guidance of Kathryn Lutton, Principal at Holston Middle School, Knox County Schools

Evidence Capture Example

As you watch the video, note how the educator shares how she incorporates writing assessments for her case studies and lab activities. The educator plans for students to write to identify, explain, describe, make connections, and compare and contrast. She also shares how she will assess students at the end of the unit with an essay response question.



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



Evidence Capture Practice

- Watch the video and capture evidence of descriptor 4.
- Video featuring 2024-2025 Tennessee Teacher of the Year Bryan Kerns under the guidance of Dr. Brian Tate, Principal of Dobyns-Bennett High School, Kingsport City Schools.



**Share evidence you captured of
descriptor 4.**



Possible Evidence Captured

Example of descriptor 4 in the video:

The educator shares how students show their knowledge of the lesson through writing about the burning lab in the field.





Evidence Capture Practice

- Watch the video and capture evidence of descriptor 4.
- Video featuring 2022-2023 East Grand Division Teacher of the Year Margaret Bright under the guidance of Dr. Chad Lewis, Principal of Lenoir City Elementary School, Lenoir City Schools.



**Share evidence you captured of
descriptor 4.**



Possible Evidence Captured

Example of descriptor 4 in the video:

The educator describes how she plans for students to write an informative piece to share the knowledge gained from independent research.





Connections to Other Indicators

This descriptor is closely aligned with the following indicators:

- **Expectations:**
 - Teacher sets high and demanding academic expectations for every student.
- **Activities and Materials:**
 - Activities and materials reflect the following characteristics:
 - challenging
 - elicit a variety of thinking
 - provide time for reflection
 - Texts and tasks are appropriately complex.



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