

TEAM Best Practices Video Library

Instructional Plans

Descriptor 2



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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 educator's 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:

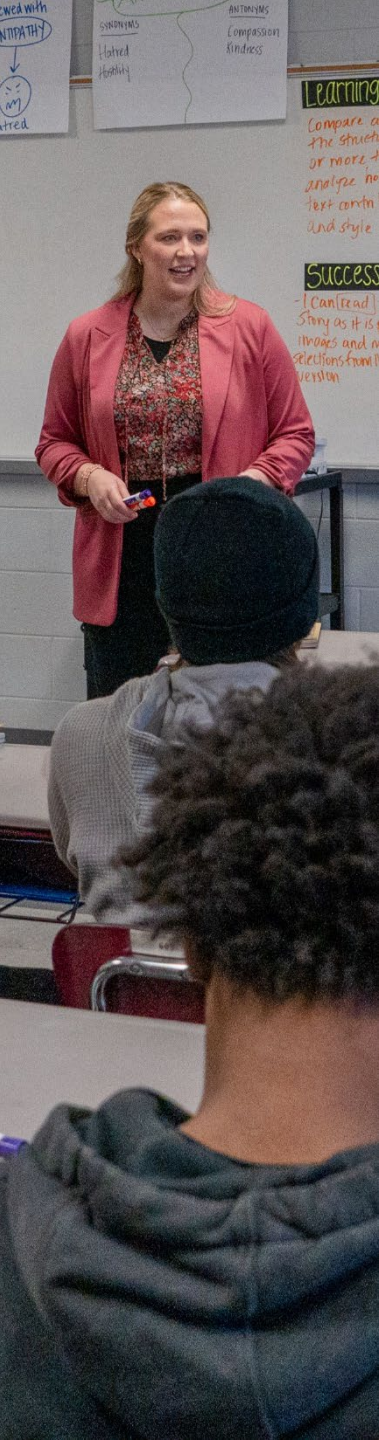
Planning Conference Discussions: These discussions are essential for understanding the teacher's planning process and should inform the planning scores. Explicit and direct questioning opens opportunities for educators to discuss their planning process and the evidence that may not be visible during 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.



Instructional Plans



Instructional Plans

Instructional plans are crucial for ensuring effective and efficient learning experiences. They are based on state standards, local curriculum resources, and analysis of formative and summative student assessments. Teachers need to be incorporating these elements into their daily, weekly, and unit planning.

Evaluators should establish a system for providing regular feedback on an educator's planning process. Instructional planning questions and conversations should aim to elicit a comprehensive understanding of the planning process, encouraging educators to articulate their strategies for delivering quality instruction and implementing best practices.

Benefits of Strong Planning Processes:

- Better-managed classrooms
- More effective learning experiences
- Higher student engagement

Educators should adjust scripted lessons and incorporate student knowledge to meet individual and group needs. Effective planning starts with the end in mind, developing lesson objectives that align with standards, planning activities, and materials to ensure student success.



Descriptor 2a:

Instructional plans include activities, materials, and assessments that are aligned to state standards



Descriptor 2a: Instructional plans include activities, materials, and assessments that are aligned to state standards

This descriptor ensures that all instructional components work together to help students master state standards.

Educators should:

- design engaging and relevant activities that are aligned with the state standards and support the instructional goals.
- select materials that directly support the learning goals.
- develop assessments that accurately measure student progress towards mastery.



Evaluator Expectations

Evaluators are looking for evidence that all instructional components cohesively support student mastery of targeted state standards. Evidence should demonstrate how educators design engaging and relevant activities that align with these standards and support instructional goals. Look for materials that directly reinforce the learning objectives and assessments that accurately measure student progress.

Example questions:

- How did you decide which activities, materials, and assessments to include in your plan?
- How do the activities and assessments in this unit of study relate to the mastery of this standard?
- How do the resources support the learning goals based on the standard?

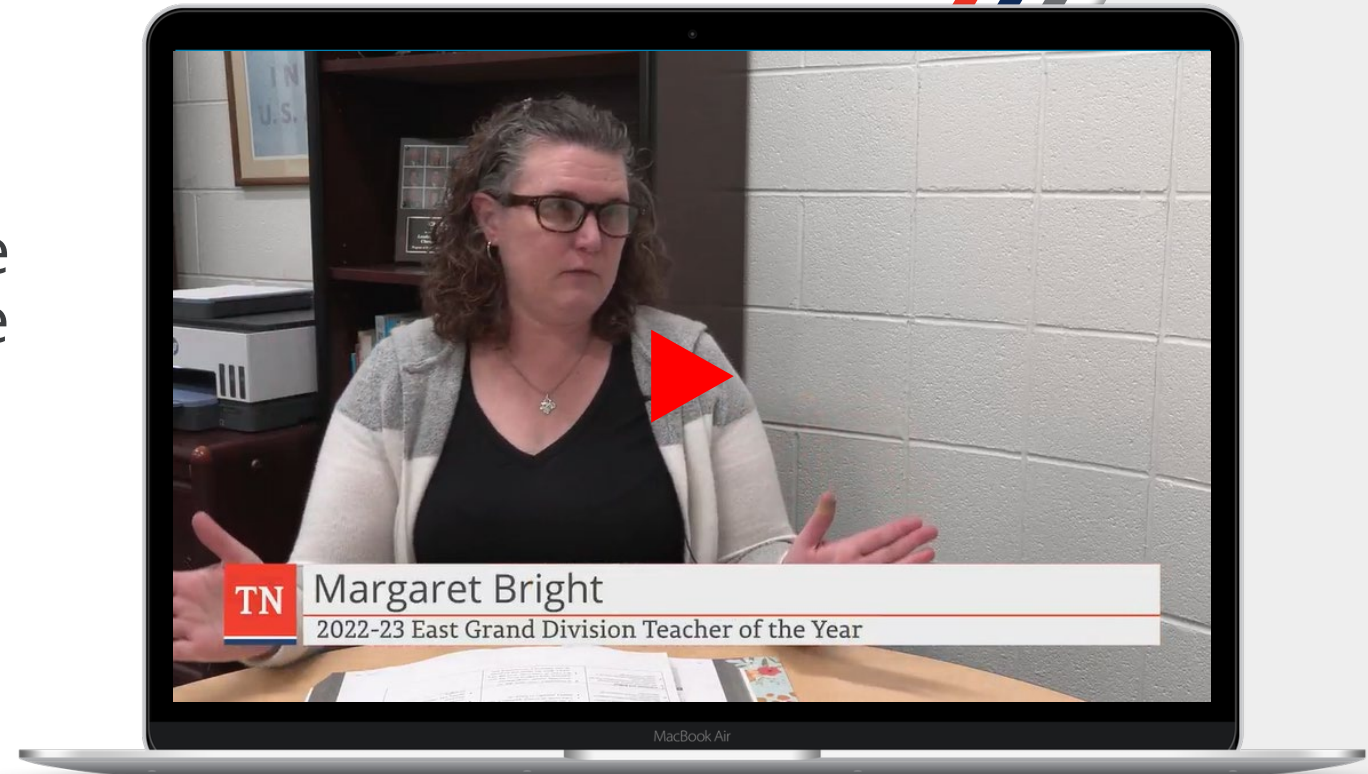
Educator Expectations

Educators should provide evidence that all instructional components cohesively work together to help students achieve goals based on state standards.

They should discuss how they chose the activities, materials, assessments, and student tasks included in their lesson plans and clarify how these components relate to the mastery of the standard. Additionally, they should explain how the resources support the learning goals and how the assessments measure progress toward the standard. Evidence should reflect thoughtful planning and alignment with the targeted standard, demonstrating a clear connection between instructional materials and state content standards.

Evidence Capture Example

As you watch this video, note how the educator communicates to the evaluator several standards she will be covering in her lesson and how the students' tasks are aligned to each of those standards. She addresses how she references above and below grade level standard expectations to plan appropriate activities aligned to the progression of the standard.



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, Lenoir City Schools

Evidence Capture Example

As you watch this video, note how the educator addresses his broad standards for his Career and Technical Education (CTE) classroom. He describes how he focuses on the standard of providing students the skills to prepare them to be effective in the industry (Fire Management). He focuses on the needed skills used in real life scenarios and applies them to the classroom activities to ensure students are supported in their mastery of the standard.



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



Evidence Capture Practice

- Watch the video and capture evidence of Descriptor 2a.
- Video featuring 2024-2025 Northwest Core Region Teacher of the Year Sherri Brawner under the guidance Lee Lawrence, Principal of Gleason School, Weakley County Schools



**Share evidence you captured of
Descriptor 2a.**

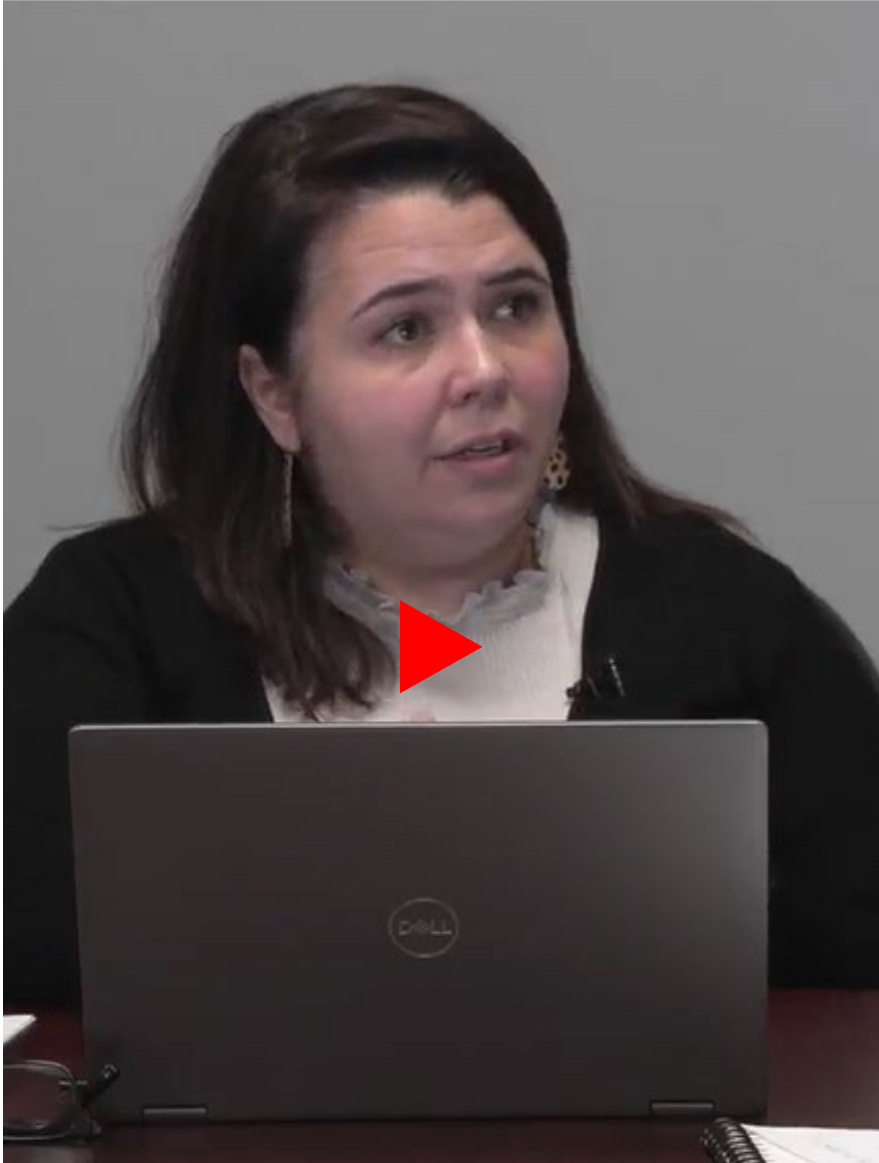


Possible Evidence Captured

Examples of Descriptor 2a in the video:

- The educator uses her state standards guide as a tool to identify the standards expectations.
- The educator shares that the guide provides ideas for activities that align with state standards, including a writing task.
- Note how she uses the standards guide to align her tasks to the state standards for each lesson.





Evidence Capture Practice

- Watch the video and capture evidence of Descriptor 2a.
- Video featuring 2023-2024 South Central Core Region Teacher of the Year Emily Fowler under the guidance Penny Love, Principal of Culleoka Unit School, Maury County Schools



**Share evidence you captured of
Descriptor 2a.**



Possible Evidence Captured

Examples of Descriptor 2a in the video:

- The educator notes each of the standards she referenced when planning her activities for the upcoming observation lesson.
- The educator describes how her student tasks connect to the communication standards for her Spanish class.





Connections to Other Indicators

This descriptor is closely aligned with the following indicators:

- **Standards and Objectives:**
 - Learning objectives are communicated, connected to the state standards, and referenced throughout lesson.
 - Sub-objectives are aligned to the lesson’s major objective.
 - Expectations for student performance are clear.
 - There is evidence that students demonstrate mastery of the daily objective that supports significant progress towards mastery of the standards.
- **Activities and Materials:**
 - Planned activities and materials are challenging and support the lesson objectives.
- **Teacher Content Knowledge:**
 - Teacher implements subject-specific instructional strategies to enhance student content knowledge.
- **Expectations:**
 - Teacher sets high and demanding academic expectations for every student.



Descriptor 2b:

Instructional plans include activities, materials, and assessments that are sequenced from basic to complex



Descriptor 2b: Instructional plans include activities, materials, and assessments that are sequenced from basic to complex

This descriptor ensures that students encounter increasing levels of rigor as they progress through the unit, preparing them for more complex tasks. Educators should start with foundational activities and materials that introduce basic concepts and then gradually increase the complexity to deepen understanding and skills. Similarly, educators should begin with basic assessments to gauge initial understanding and then assign more complex assessments as students advance to ensure they are ready for higher-level tasks.

Educators should:

- identify the basic knowledge and skills students need at the beginning of the unit
- plan a sequence of activities and assessments that build on each other, moving from basic to more complex
- ensure that each step in the sequence prepares students for the next, reinforcing and expanding their understanding



Evaluator Expectations

Evaluators are looking for evidence that students encounter increasing levels of rigor as they progress through the unit. Note how lessons start with foundational activities and materials that introduce basic concepts, gradually increasing complexity to deepen understanding and skills. Assessments should also progress with the complexity of the lessons. Evaluators should focus on how educators identify the basic knowledge and skills needed at the beginning of the unit, plan a sequence of activities and assessments that build on each other, and ensure each step prepares students for the next, reinforcing and expanding their understanding.

Example questions:

- How do you plan to build from basic skills to more complex understanding of the content throughout this unit of study?
- Which sub-objectives need to be taught for students to master a standard?
- How do you plan to scaffold the sub-objectives so that students reach mastery of the standard?

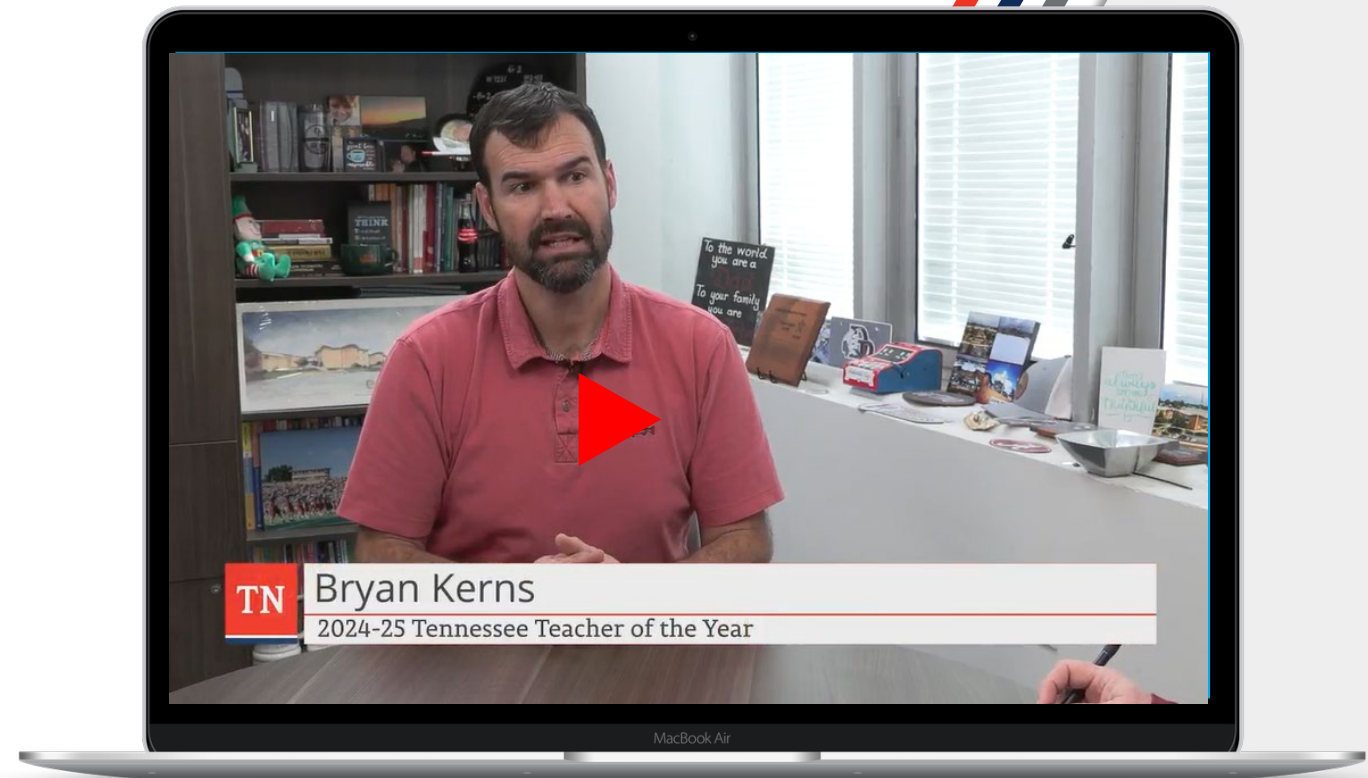
Educator Expectations

Educators should provide evidence of a structured approach to increasing rigor throughout the unit. This includes starting with foundational activities and materials that introduce basic concepts, and then gradually increasing complexity to deepen understanding and skills.

Evidence should show how activities, materials, and assessments progress in complexity, ensuring students are ready for higher-level tasks. Educators should be prepared to discuss how they have broken down the skills needed to master the standard, organized these skills from basic to complex, and scaffolded sub-objectives to ensure students reach mastery. This thoughtful planning and progression should be clearly documented and articulated during evaluation discussions.

Evidence Capture Example

As you watch this video, note how the educator describes the progression of rigor for the planned activities and how they move from defining fuel, to identifying the fuel types, to applying the knowledge of fuel types to real life fire scenarios in East TN.



Video featuring 2024-2025 Tennessee Teacher of the Year under the guidance of Dr. Brian Tate, Principal of Dobyns-Bennett High School, Kingsport City Schools

Evidence Capture Example

As you watch this video, note how the educator describes the progression of language acquisition. She begins with motions tied to words to teach essential vocabulary and grammar. She then uses the knowledge of the vocabulary to engage in immersion texts to deepen their understanding of the target language.



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



Evidence Capture Practice

- Watch the video and capture evidence of Descriptor 2b.
- 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



**Share evidence you captured of
Descriptor 2b.**



Possible Evidence

Examples of Descriptor 2b in the video:

- The evaluator's guiding question leads the educator to successfully give a description of her activities.
- The educator describes how her activities for her unit of study are sequenced from the basic concept of labeling and vocabulary to a more complex understanding of how components of terminology tie together in terms of physiology.





Evidence Capture Practice

- Watch the video and capture evidence of Descriptor 2b.
- Video featuring 2024-2025 East Grand Division Teacher of the Year Natalee Elkins under the guidance of Kathryn Lutton, Principal at Holston Middle School, Knox County Schools



**Share evidence you captured of
Descriptor 2b.**



Possible Evidence

Example of Descriptor 2b in the video:

- The educator shares how in her unit of study, students' activities progress from the basics of learning individual notes to more complex activities that require students to apply this knowledge to the learning of chords.





Connections to Other Indicators

This descriptor is closely aligned with the following indicators:

- **Presenting Instructional Content:**
 - Content features logical sequencing and segmenting.
- **Activities and Materials:**
 - Texts and tasks are appropriately complex and challenging.
- **Teacher Content Knowledge:**
 - Teacher displays accurate content knowledge of all the subjects he or she teaches.
 - Teacher implements subject-specific instructional strategies to enhance student content knowledge.
 - Teacher highlights key concepts and ideas and uses them as bases to connect other powerful ideas.
- **Thinking:**
 - The teacher thoroughly teaches different types of thinking.
- **Problem Solving:**
 - The teacher implements activities that teach different problem-solving types.
- **Questioning:**
 - Questions are sequenced with attention to the instructional goals.



Descriptor 2c:

Instructional plans include activities, materials, and assessments that build on prior student knowledge



Descriptor 2c: Instructional plans include activities, materials, and assessments that build on prior student knowledge

Effective planning processes consider how instructional plans build on previous lessons. By consistently linking new content to prior knowledge, teachers help students build a cohesive understanding of the subject matter.

When thinking about the scope and sequence, teachers should consider what was taught in previous lessons, how it was assessed, and the activities used. They should then make connections to the target lesson and its activities. This continuous connection helps students see how each lesson builds on the previous one, reinforcing their understanding of the standard throughout the unit.



Evaluator Expectations

Evaluators are looking for evidence that activities, materials, and assessments are designed to build on students' prior knowledge and skills. They examine how educators ensure students are prepared for new content by connecting it to what has already been learned. Evaluators look for how previously learned skills and knowledge are linked to the current lesson components to challenge students and promote growth.

Examples of questions:

- What should students already know or be able to do in order to be successful in this lesson?
- How does this lesson build on prior knowledge of previous lessons?
- What previous lesson skills and content are used to further challenge students to grow in this unit or study or lesson?

Educator Expectations

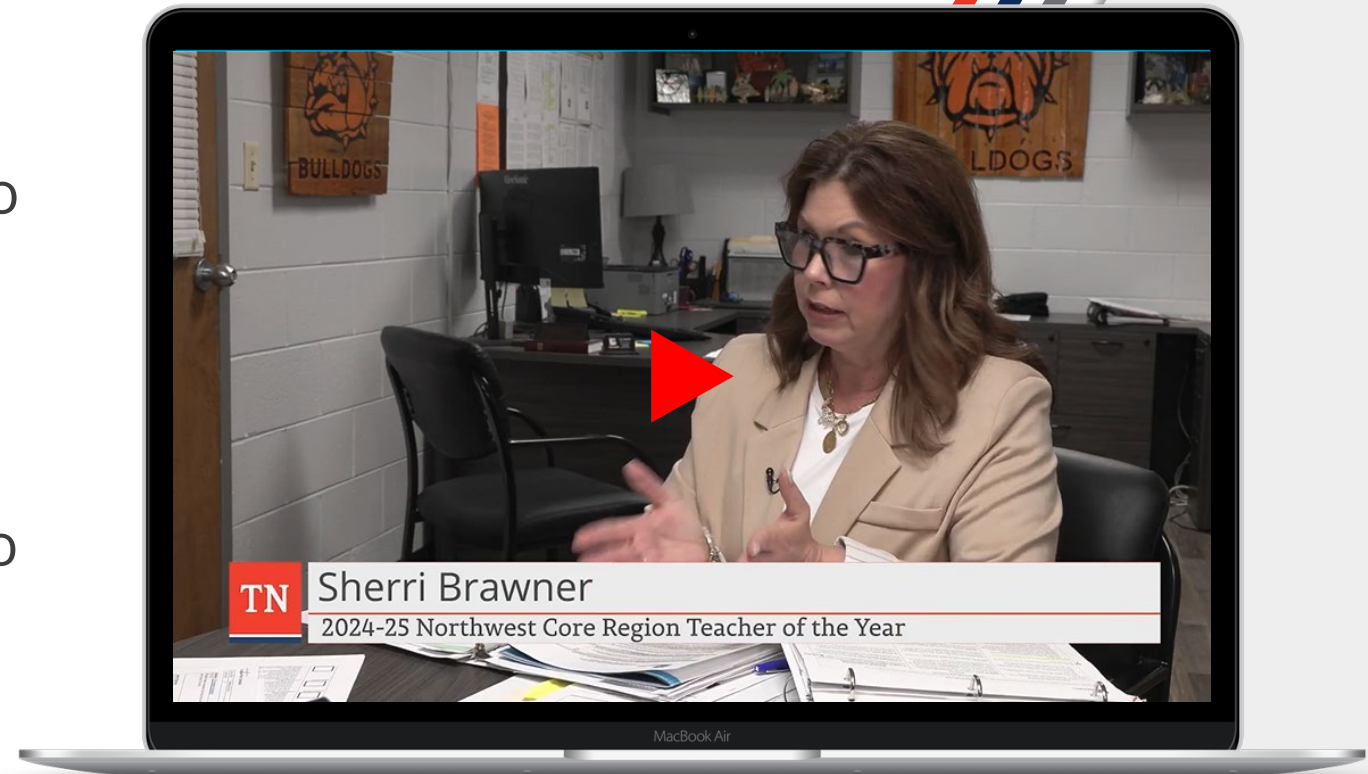
Educators should provide evidence demonstrating how activities, materials, and assessments are designed to build on students' prior knowledge and skills. Educators should communicate how they have considered the scope and sequence of previous lessons, including assessments and activities, and how these elements connect to the current lesson.

Educators should be prepared to discuss:

- what students should already know and be able to do to be successful in the lesson,
- how the lesson builds on the prior knowledge from previous lessons, and
- how previous lesson skills or content are used to further challenge students.

Evidence Capture Example

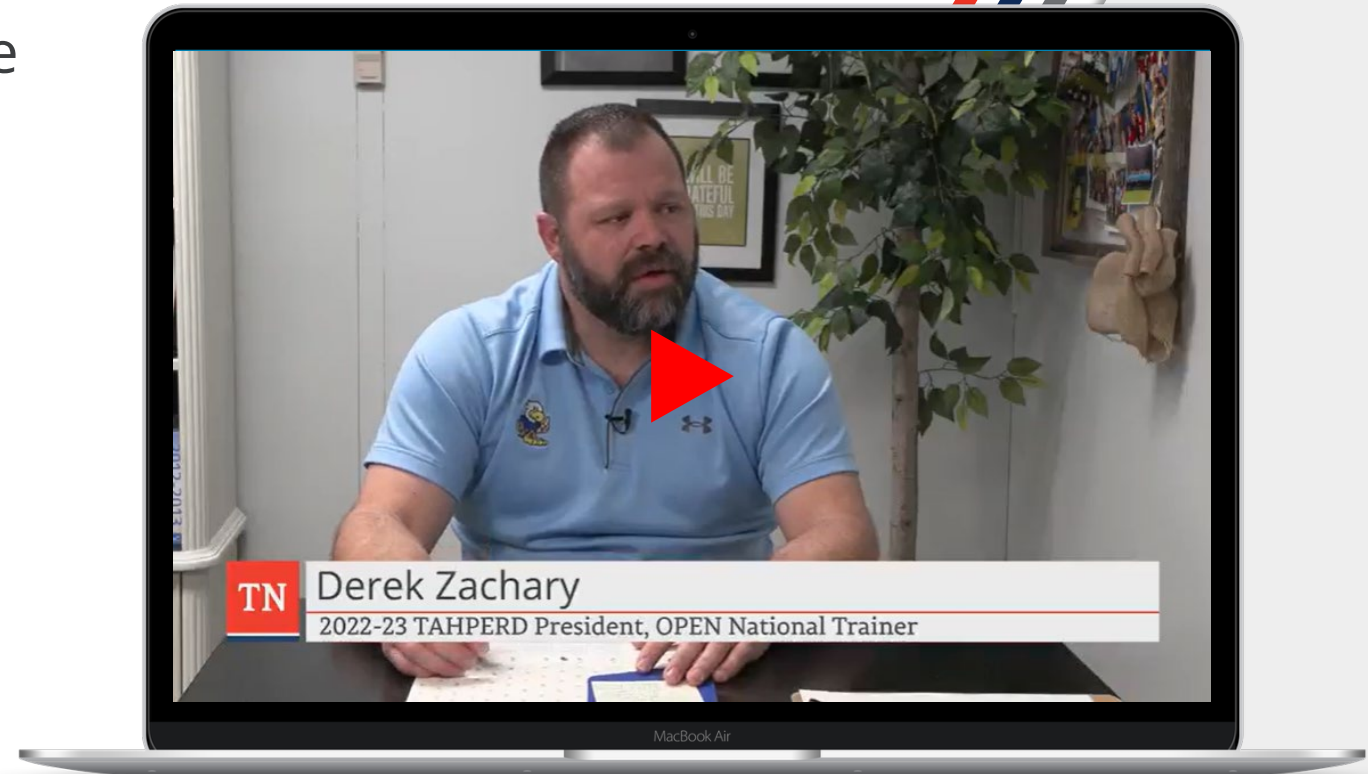
As you watch this video, observe how the educator begins by discussing her reinforcement of students' prior knowledge of point of view from the previous year. She then explains how she integrates multiple standards into a culminating project that revisits the concept of point of view. Building on the students' understanding of biographies, the educator guides them from researching biographies to crafting their own autobiographies.



Video featuring 2024-2025 Northwest Core Region Teacher of the Year Sherri Brawner under the guidance Lee Lawrence, Principal of Gleason School, Weakley County Schools

Evidence Capture Example

As you watch this video, observe how the educator begins by discussing how students were introduced to the standards in centers before they were explicitly taught. He was able to assess the students' level of prior knowledge before planning his unit lessons. The educator then shares how he makes connections to other discipline areas such as health, math, and ELA in his dribbling lessons.



Video featuring 2022-2023 TAHPERD President/ OPEN National Trainer Derek Zachary under the guidance of Dr. Melissa Palk, Principal of Northeast Elementary School, Putnam County Schools



Evidence Capture Practice

- Watch the video and capture evidence of Descriptor 2c.
- Video featuring 2023-2024 Shelby County/Municipals Core Region Teacher of the Year Stephanie Thomas under the guidance of Corrie Martin, Principal at Lakeland Preparatory School, Lakeland School System.



**Share evidence you captured of
Descriptor 2c.**



Possible Evidence

Examples of Descriptor 2c in the video:

- The educator shares how her planning process begins with evaluating the students' past experiences and knowledge with the content and then builds her activities and materials based on prior knowledge and what they still need to progress towards mastery.
- She discusses how she incorporates the students' work in SGA and their interest in real life politics into their writing tasks.





Evidence Capture Practice

- Watch the video and capture evidence of Descriptor 2c.
- Video featuring 2024-2025 Mid-Cumberland Core Region Teacher of the Year Ellie Lee under the guidance of Dr. Takisha Ferguson, Principal at Smyrna Middle School, Rutherford County Schools



**Share evidence you captured of
Descriptor 2c.**



Possible Evidence

Examples of Descriptor 2c in the video:

- The educator explains how she begins by teaching the meaning of a word in its noun form and introduces various suffixes. She then builds on the students' understanding of suffixes and word meanings to help them determine the meaning of the same word in different parts of speech.
- She then guides the students to apply their knowledge of word manipulation to craft more expressive and engaging pieces of writing.





Connections to Other Indicators

This descriptor is closely aligned with the following indicators:

- **Presenting Instructional Content:**
 - Content features logical sequencing and segmenting.
- **Activities and Materials:**
 - Selected activities and materials are relevant to students' lives.
- **Motivating Students:**
 - The teacher organizes the content so that it is personally meaningful and relevant to students.
- **Teacher Content Knowledge:**
 - The teacher highlights key concepts and ideas and uses them as bases to connect other powerful ideas.



Descriptor 2d:

Instructional plans include activities, materials, and assessments that provide appropriate time for student work and lesson and unit closure



Descriptor 2d: Instructional plans include activities, materials, and assessments that provide appropriate time for student work and lesson and unit closure

This descriptor highlights the importance of thoughtful planning and pacing in instructional plans, ensuring that students have sufficient time to engage with the material and demonstrate their understanding. By allocating adequate time for all aspects of the lesson, teachers can create a structured and supportive learning environment that promotes student success.

Teachers must not only plan the sequence of activities in a lesson but also plan for the sequence of lessons in a unit, understanding how long each part of the unit will take. This involves estimating the time needed for instruction, practice, and assessment, adjusting as necessary.

Lesson closure is also a critical component. Teachers should plan how they will close each lesson and the unit as a whole to ensure that students have time to reflect on their learning and make connections to future lessons. This helps reinforce the material and prepares students for the next steps in their learning.



Evaluator Expectations

Evaluators are looking for evidence of thoughtful planning of lesson pacing. They seek to understand how educators plan the sequence of activities within a lesson and across a unit, estimating the time needed for each part and adjusting as necessary. This includes explicit instruction, student practice and application, and assessment. Additionally, they look for how educators plan for lesson closure and reflection, ensuring students have time to consolidate their learning and make connections to future lessons.

Examples of questions:

- How have you ensured there is enough time for presenting the content and completion of student work?
- Share how you have allotted time for explicit instruction, student practice and application, and assessment.
- How have you planned for lesson closure and reflection?

Educator Expectations

Educators should provide evidence of how they thoughtfully pace their activities, materials, and assessments. This includes explaining how they organize the presentation of content and allocate time for explicit instruction, student practice, application, assessment, and reflection.

They should describe their approach to sequencing activities within a lesson and throughout a unit, including how they estimate the time needed for each part and make adjustments as necessary. Additionally, educators should share their approaches to lesson closure and reflection, making sure students have the chance to reinforce their learning and link it to upcoming lessons.

Evidence Capture Example

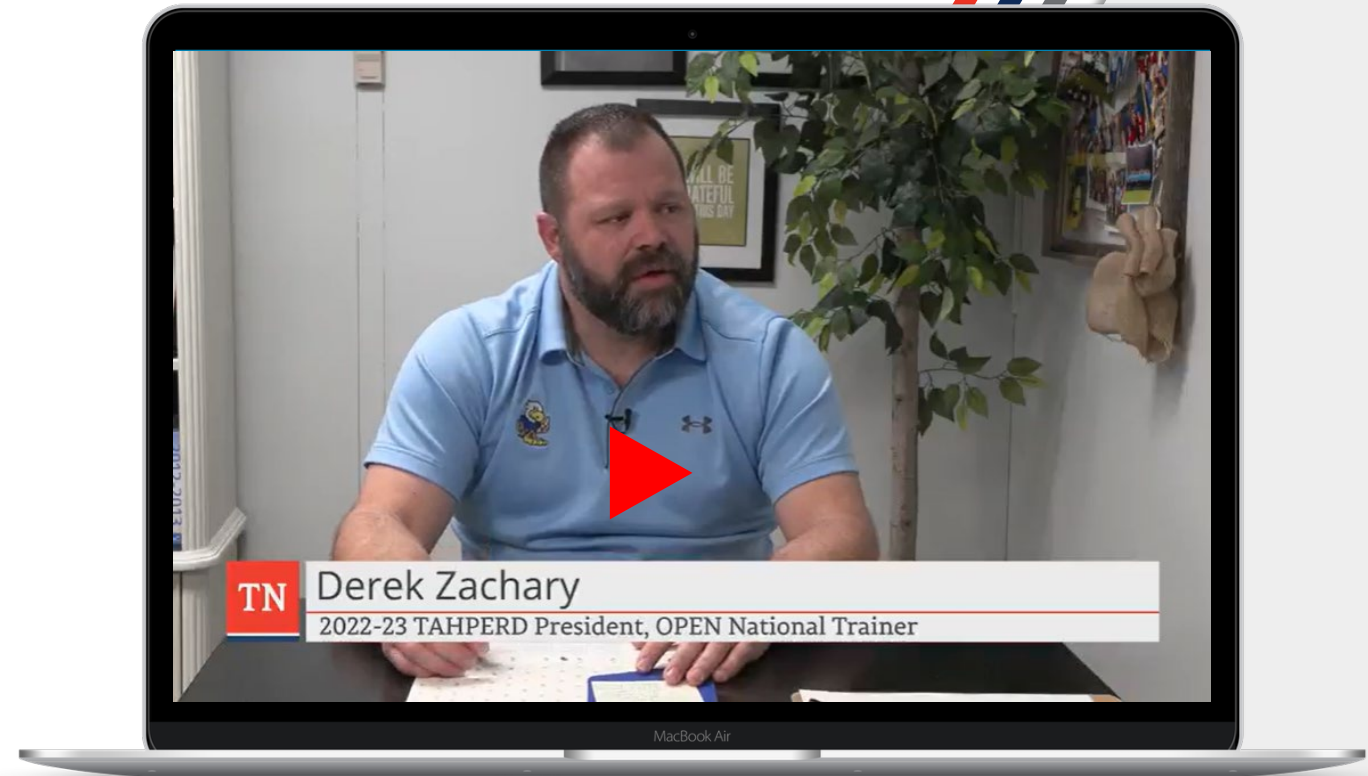
As you watch the video, pay attention to how the educator explains her approach to planning and sequencing student activities within lessons to ensure sufficient time for skill development throughout the unit. The educator could extend her answer to include how she incorporates time for student reflection at the end of her lessons or unit of study.



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 Example

As you watch the video, listen for how the educator plans time to share exemplars, teach and practice skills, and provide opportunities for student self-reflection. The educator could have extended his response to include how he specifically incorporates time for unit closure.



Video featuring 2022-2023 TAHPERD President/ OPEN National Trainer Derek Zachary under the guidance of Dr. Melissa Palk, Principal of Northeast Elementary School, Putnam County Schools



Evidence Capture Practice

- Watch the video and capture evidence of Descriptor 2d.
- 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 2d.**



Possible Evidence

Examples of Descriptor 2d in the video:

- The educator describes how she deconstructed the unit goal into essential skills required to complete the final writing piece.
- Her planned lessons allocate time for students to learn and practice skills needed for the unit's closing assessment.





Evidence Capture Practice

- Watch the video and capture evidence of Descriptor 2d.
- Video featuring 2024-2025 East Grand Division Teacher of the Year Natalee Elkins under the guidance of Kathryn Lutton, Principal at Holston Middle School, Knox County Schools



**Share evidence you captured of
Descriptor 2d.**



Possible Evidence

Examples of Descriptor 2d in the video:

- The educator determines the time needed for student work based on students' mastery of assessments throughout the unit.
- She acknowledges the use of student self-reflection and adjusts lesson timing according to students' needs.
- She plans lessons with the end goal in mind, breaking down skills and allocating time effectively to ensure mastery of objectives.





Connections to Other Indicators

This descriptor is closely aligned with the following indicators:

- **Lesson Structure and Pacing**
 - The lesson's structure is coherent with a beginning, middle, and end.
- **Activities and Materials:**
 - Selected activities and materials provide time for reflection.
- **Grouping (level 5):**
 - Instructional groups facilitate opportunities for students to set goals, reflect on, and evaluate their learning.



Feedback Survey

- Follow the QR code or the use 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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