



THE FRAMEWORK *remote* FOR TEACHING





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A GUIDE TO SUPPORT REMOTE TEACHING & LEARNING DURING THE 2020-21 SCHOOL YEAR

In our pursuit of excellent teaching for each and every student, we are consistently guided by our foundational beliefs about learning and our values as educators, which are reflected in the Framework for Teaching (FFT) developed by Charlotte Danielson. That said, the school year ahead will be like no other before it and, we hope, like no other after it. Having recently managed the greatest and most ubiquitous crisis our education systems have confronted in our lifetimes, our teachers now face incredible uncertainty and rapidly evolving and changing understandings of what their lives and work will be like throughout the 2020-21 school year.

Our nation and our field are simultaneously undergoing a racial reckoning that is long overdue. Our country was built on racial inequity, which is reflected in our public education system. Students, families, and communities of color have long borne the trauma of systemic racism. Now that the underlying inequity and trauma systemic racism causes are becoming more public and visible, educators must accept responsibility for acknowledging and working to heal both.

An equity imperative has always been implicit in the FFT. As Charlotte Danielson wrote, "a commitment to excellence is not complete without a commitment to equity" (2007). In this guide, and in all of our work moving forward, we will make this imperative explicit and be unapologetic in our commitment to racial justice. We must acknowledge that our approaches have allowed inequitable systems and unsupportive learning environments to too often go unchecked. Promoting excellence means not only that we focus on best practices and encourage ongoing teacher learning and development, it must mean that we prioritize understanding how practice does or does not center equity and justice - particularly as COVID-19 and systemic racism intersect and pose an ominous threat to communities of color. Good teaching cannot be blind to issues of racial justice. Excellence for some is not excellence at all.





This guide and its approach are informed by our conversations with educators, our experience as an organization, and what we've learned from our partners. We provide here our recommendations for meeting the needs of students in this time of crisis. Recent events have focused more attention on systemic racism in our systems of education and our practices as a field, which many scholars and educators have long been working to dismantle. And COVID-19 has now forced us into the type of personalized, 21st century learning that many have long championed. In this context, we have an opportunity to create even more engaging and just learning environments that support student autonomy and success.

We have focused primarily on recommendations for remote learning. While we recognize that some have already and will return to physical classrooms and school buildings, the decisions about how to set up classrooms (e.g., distance between desks) are local ones. The majority of schools will be doing some form of remote or hybrid learning (or may move in that direction at some point during the year), and many of our recommendations to prioritize family engagement and student wellbeing are applicable in all contexts during this time.

This guide, though aligned to the FFT and rooted in its enduring principles, reflects some important shifts in response to our current context:

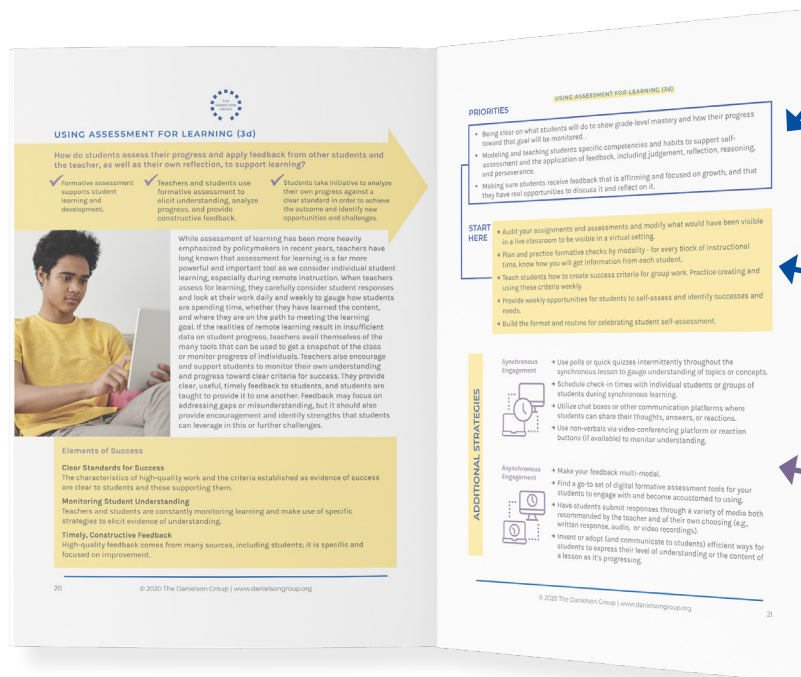
- ✓ **A Focus on Fewer Components**
All 22 components of the FFT remain incredibly important, and we plan to continue adding others to this guide. And yet, our research, observations, and conversations with experts and practitioners have led us to a narrower set in order to better support educators in the context of online learning and remote instruction.
- ✓ **Updated Components and Elements**
A third edition of the entire Framework has been under development for the last year. Some of the most exciting and relevant changes are previewed here. We think these changes are especially important to online instruction as well as our work for racial justice.
- ✓ **No Rubric**
Teachers need support, not scores. Now is not the time to be thinking about how to evaluate teacher performance in a new and fluid context. This moment compels us to pause and engage in a thoughtful reset on our approaches to teacher support. For this reason, this guide does not contain a rubric with four levels of performance. Instead, we describe priorities, actions, and strategies that align to proficient and distinguished practice, are focused on supporting students' learning and wellbeing, and can help increase student autonomy and success.

INTRODUCTION: HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Each of the eight components is presented on two pages.

The first page is descriptive and provides an explanation, including elements that help define the components.

The second page includes:



Priorities

Our recommendations for where teachers should focus their time and energy, especially during the beginning of the school year. These are the most important things to get right this fall.

Start Here

A set of actions teachers can take immediately in order to set themselves and their students up for success.

Additional Strategies

Synchronous and Asynchronous approaches and suggestions for how to engage students and their families during distance learning.

None of these lists are exhaustive, and local factors and context should also guide the priorities and initial steps taken during this school year. There are many resources available that provide recommendations and strategies for teaching well online. We will continue to share these resources and align them to the components of the FFT. Our hope is that this guide will help educators apply the common language of the FFT to our current context - to see the connection between the components of effective instruction and remote learning.



A RECOMMENDED PATHWAY

The components are not presented in the order they have always appeared in the FFT. In the past, our support has focused on working with partners as they develop practices and approaches aligned to the rubrics that meet the needs of their context. Given the shared elements of the current context, our recommended pathway implores users of this guide to prioritize student wellbeing, equity, and racial justice. Without a deep understanding of students' identities and lives in the midst of these crises, we have little chance of meeting their needs.



AN INVITATION

It is our sincere hope that much of the content in this guide will be outdated by the 2021-22 school year. And yet, we believe that our profession and our systems of education have begun a much needed transformation which will extend well beyond this year and the next. How we are able to adapt, learn, and evolve during this moment, both by creating more student-centered learning opportunities and focusing on anti-racist practices, has the potential to fundamentally reset the purpose and practice of public education in this country.

In this moment, we hope that the FFT itself and the specific guidance included here will support teachers as they continue to work relentlessly on behalf of students with dignity and grace. This moment will pass, but the principles of effective pedagogy and our commitment to equity and racial justice will not. We are always in a process of becoming, and our understanding will evolve as we learn more from you and with you about teaching online, teaching for racial justice, and teaching through uncertainty so that we can continue to share the knowledge of the field and build equitable learning environments where all teachers and students can thrive.

We invite all educators to join us in the work of applying the enduring principles of the FFT to this present moment. We will continue to work throughout the year to provide relevant, just-in-time suggestions for serving all students with hope and dignity. Stay tuned for ways to offer suggestions, give feedback, and build on what we have started here.



DEMONSTRATING KNOWLEDGE OF STUDENTS (1b)

How are each student's individual context, identity, assets, and brilliance valued and viewed as the foundation for their academic and personal success?

- ✓ Teachers know and value their students' identities, as well as their academic, social, and emotional strengths and needs.
- ✓ Teachers build on students' assets to support the development of identity, intellect, and character.
- ✓ Teachers apply their knowledge of students to advocate boldly on their behalf and foster student assumption of responsibility for learning and personal development.



Knowing and valuing students is at the heart of great teaching no matter how or where it occurs. Successful teachers are consistently guided by who their students are, which means they understand, honor, and leverage students' intersecting identities - including their racial, cultural, religious, and gender identities, among others. Teachers' knowledge of students also goes far beyond understanding their familiarity with content or their academic skills to include their social, emotional and personality strengths. In the context of remote instruction, robust profiles of students are necessary to inform instructional decision-making. Teachers need to spend significant time and effort early in the year learning about their students, their particular contexts during school time, their current wellbeing, and other specific assets and needs in relation to learning and engaging virtually.

Elements of Success

Respect for Students' Intersecting Identities

Students' lived experiences and funds of knowledge are the foundation for the development of identity, purpose, intellect, and character.

Understanding of Students' Current Knowledge and Skills

Learning experiences reflect what students bring and are designed with their current knowledge and skills in mind.

Knowledge of Whole Child Development

Students' cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development are all addressed in the design of learning environments and experiences to promote student success and autonomy.

Knowledge of the Learning Process

Learning requires active intellectual engagement and appropriate support aligned to students' individual differences and needs.

PRIORITIES

- Learning about each student's motivations, driving interests, daily schedule and context, and current level of wellbeing, especially any trauma or stress resulting from current events.
- Establishing priority goals and objectives for each student for the first quarter, inclusive of social and emotional needs .
- Tracking information about students' context, mindsets, interests, and needs.
- Providing significant time in the first month of school for structured student sharing with other students.

START HERE

- Conduct one-on-one student interviews to understand context and immediate needs. When individual interviews are not feasible, use narrative surveys or journal prompts.
- Set individual priorities for each student focused on social-emotional needs and establishing routines for learning. When possible, group students to address priority needs.
- Collaborate with other colleagues who work with your students to create a shared system for storing, tracking, and updating student profiles and priorities.

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES

Synchronous Engagement



- Begin each session with an open-ended question, prompt, or poll that allows students to make connections to the content and their own lived experience.
- Email a simple, one-question survey prior to each synchronous session that gives students the opportunity to share relevant information about their current context or wellbeing that could impact their participation or focus in the session.
- Allow students to write or discuss personal connections in small or whole groups at the end of each session.

Asynchronous Engagement



- Provide opportunities for students to request or create online groupings based on common interests or shared experiences.
- Establish a system for students to readily access their learning goals for lessons or units of study.
- Create folders or files that prompt students to share about their identity and interests related to daily lessons or units.
- Create student profiles that students own and manage as a means of building their identity and how they show up for peers and the class.
- Consider a journaling routine that supports daily reflection either online or on paper.



ENGAGING FAMILIES & COMMUNITIES (4c)

How are families and communities engaged in the learning and development of students?

- ✓ Teachers communicate respectfully with families and community members to further the academic and personal success of students
- ✓ Teachers engage families and communities, demonstrating a clear value for the role they play in student learning and personal development within school.
- ✓ Students' families and community members are key decision makers and active participants in the academic life of students and see teachers as allies in their students' development and success.



If students are to succeed in school and achieve their full potential in life, teachers must view themselves as partners in education with families and communities. A strong connection between school-based learning and students' home and community context is essential to success during remote instruction. Yes, teachers need to communicate clearly and effectively with caregivers to ensure they are informed, but it is not enough to simply communicate with them. Because the primary learning environment during remote instruction is unique to each student, teachers should engage with families in culturally competent and responsive ways to understand their circumstances and meet each students' needs.

Elements of Success

Respect and Cultural Competence

Teachers interact with families and the community in ways that respect their values and cultural backgrounds.

Learning Community Ethos and Values

Learning experiences and environments are extensions of the community and uphold its values, creating a shared vision of student success.

Standards and Curriculum

Established structures and processes keep families informed about the instructional program and bring the community into the decision-making process.

Engagement in Learning Experiences

Teachers connect students' out-of-school learning and lives to their efforts in school and take the lead in forming partnerships and relationships to strengthen those connections.

PRIORITIES

- Establishing a direct-to-family communication plan for every student that prioritizes their preferences and needs.
- Being responsive to students' at-home learning context, including space, device/internet access, and schedules.
- Providing clear, consistent access to daily and weekly schedules, meeting links, and assignments for families and caregivers.
- Helping families and caregivers learn to navigate the online tools and platforms used for instruction, especially any learning management system and video conferencing tools.

START HERE

- Make individual contact with every parent/family to establish a communication plan, including the mode and cadence of ongoing communication.
- Based on individual conversations and/or a survey, create a system to document and track home or family parameters that might impact student participation and learning.
- Be sure you understand your school or district plans for assisting families and providing resources (such as devices, free internet access, and essential school supplies).

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES

Synchronous Engagement



- Host regular virtual office hours or informal gatherings focused on building community and providing a space for families and caregivers to learn more about digital resources, ask questions, and raise concerns.
- Invite family and community members to a virtual gallery walk or presentation to highlight the work of the class.
- Ask families or members of the community to give virtual tours of their work spaces or other areas of the community.
- Invite other members of the school (e.g., the principal and social worker) and community (e.g., family members and local business owners) to join lessons to support group work, share expertise, or participate in discussions.

Asynchronous Engagement



- Acknowledge and understand the many ways in which families might engage, and examine the assumptions you may be making about their engagement with online learning.
- Create schedules (and backup schedules) to share with caregivers and students. Get input and adjust as needed through regular feedback forms.
- Create a digital resource to explain some of the terminology related to online learning that may be unfamiliar to caregivers.
- Share already available tutorials for the platforms and apps you are using and create a few of your own if necessary for specific practices or aspects of your approach.
- Through a Google Doc or other interactive tool, ask students and families to contribute ideas and resources for an upcoming unit.



CREATING ENVIRONMENTS OF RESPECT & RAPPORT (2a)

How do learning environments honor the dignity of each student and support their individual and collective flourishing?

- ✓ Learning environments are characterized by caring and respectful interactions.
- ✓ Learning environments are characterized by positive developmental relationships that are intentionally nurtured and celebrated.
- ✓ Students play an active role in creating learning environments characterized by a sense of community, where all members feel safe, valued, and connected.



Relationships are essential to student success. In the current context, an environment of respect and rapport must acknowledge and be responsive to the global health crisis and systemic racism we are confronting and their impact on the lives of students. Students need to experience safe, supportive, and challenging learning environments where each of them is valued, feels like a full member of the community, and is supported in taking risks. As with other components, the quality of learning environments is as important online as it is face-to-face. Community building and the modeling of positive relationships can be more difficult (or may feel less natural) when there is less face-to-face contact. For this reason, teachers should focus even more on strategies, lessons, and activities focused on the creation of a positive environment at the beginning of the year and embed them consistently as time goes on.

Elements of Success

Positive Relationships

Interactions, both between the teacher and students and among students, demonstrate caring and respect that honors the dignity of each member of the community.

Sense of Belonging

Teachers and students co-create a community that reflects their unique collective identity and interests as a class while honoring individual identities.

Cultural Responsiveness

Ways of interacting in the classroom are culturally responsive and supported by teachers' own cultural competence.

Positive Conflict Resolution

A clear and culturally competent approach to conflict resolution has been established and is used effectively to resolve conflict and restore trust.

PRIORITIES

- Working relentlessly to create a just and supportive classroom that acknowledges and is responsive to systemic racism and the current health crisis.
- Creating safety and space for students to learn, explore, ask questions, and voice reactions to current events. Including:
 - The space to express anger and grief as needed, especially for students of color.
 - The space to explore racial identity and the realities of systemic racism, particularly for white students.
- Modeling self-care and actively reinforcing courage, compassion, and humility through crisis and conflict resolution.

START HERE

- Reflect on your own readiness to address trauma and support students during this time; seek guidance and support when you need it.
- Thoughtfully plan for early and frequent conversations with students about justice in the context of your classroom.
- Identify resources and prepare a "day after" plan in advance so you are ready (to the extent possible) to discuss a racially charged local or national event with direct and differentiated student care.
- Understand your context. Clarify relevant district/school policies and seek to understand where your community and families stand.

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES

Synchronous Engagement



- Begin each day with a virtual morning meeting focused on building and maintaining community, trust, a sense of belonging, and student wellness.
- Set expectations and provide support for active listening and participation through the use of nonverbal cues to be used when students are not the speaker.
- Present and review student-generated norms or protocols for engagement and discussions prior to the start of the lesson.
- At the end of each lesson or synchronous session, have students self-assess their level of participation, sense of belonging, and interactions with other students.

Asynchronous Engagement



- Identify a publishing platform (ideally one that allows for speaking/recording and writing) where students can respond to prompts in order to learn more about each other and build connections and community.
- Send a morning message each day to help students transition to a school mindset.
- Address any online conflicts; explicitly model commenting respectfully, and engage via direct messages or one-on-one conversations with students who are still learning. Offer sentence stems to set students up for success.



MANAGING ROUTINES & PROCEDURES (2c)

How do routines support learning environments and experiences that reflect shared values and promote student success?

- ✓ Routines and procedures, managed primarily by teachers, support opportunities for student learning and personal development.
- ✓ Routines and procedures, largely student-directed, maximize opportunities for student learning and personal development.
- ✓ Students have voice and play an active role in designing and adjusting classroom routines and procedures to support their learning and personal development.



Though well-run classrooms can (and should) take on a variety of forms, the establishment and ongoing maintenance of routines and procedures is essential to the success of a classroom community. Because teachers' goals for students include intellectual engagement, collaboration, and autonomy, and because there are often 30 students with them at a time, routines and procedures are a must. In a classroom, a lack of routines and procedures is often readily apparent. In the context of remote instruction, the necessity for routines and procedures is equally important, but may be less obvious. Routines and procedures continue to be essential and must take into account the context in which students are engaging in learning and the support they receive at home. For younger learners especially, it is even more important when teaching online that parents and other caregivers understand and are able to support essential aspects of a well-run learning environment. The absence of routines to support remote learning can lead to lost instructional time as it might in a classroom, but may also leave some students completely disconnected and disengaged.

Elements of Success

Productive Collaboration

Collaboration is modeled, taught, and reinforced so that students work purposefully and cooperatively in groups, to support one another's success.

Student Autonomy and Responsibility

Routines support student assumption of responsibility and the development of skills, habits, and mindsets that promote student autonomy.

Equitable Access to Resources and Supports

Resources and supports are deployed efficiently, effectively, and equitably for the benefit of all students.

PRIORITIES

- Being explicit about the shift in responsibility students are experiencing.
- Modeling every expectation, routine, and procedure multiple times and in multiple settings.
- Recognizing and celebrating student autonomy and resourcefulness.
- Identifying and supporting students who are struggling to learn remotely due to specific challenges in their homes.

START
HERE

- Strategically establish a small, central set of shared routines and procedures to develop a sense of belongingness and shared identity; routines should be for whole group, small group, and independent learning blocks.
- Ruthlessly organize your materials and resources and ask others for feedback on how easy they are to navigate.
- Explore options in your native platform or in supplemental apps for students to track their own progress.
- Explicitly set expectations and teach whole group and small group etiquette for online learning (e.g., mute when others are speaking, when it's ok to use the chat feature, how to leave/return if something comes up at home). Allocate time to practice these procedures just as you would classroom procedures.

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES

Synchronous
Engagement

- Practice routines, procedures, and navigation; e.g. a scavenger hunt in which small groups have to find important documents and navigate between virtual spaces.
- Have students use emojis and "raise your hand" functions appropriately during the lesson as an established, nonverbal way to ask questions, raise concerns, or indicate understanding.
- Set up breakout rooms, whiteboards, and slideshows in advance.
- Give students opportunities to demonstrate how they are adapting shared routines (e.g. note-taking) or creating their own via screenshare or webcam.

Asynchronous
Engagement

- Create video tutorials using a web-based recording tool to help students and their caregivers navigate your particular online classroom, successfully use the available resources and supports, and upload or share additional resources.
- Introduce routines that support a daily or weekly cadence for learning, e.g. simple poll questions to take attendance each morning.
- Use clear and consistent labeling for assignments and activities, so students know where to find resources, due dates, and other important information.
- Send a daily interactive agenda home each afternoon or at the beginning of the week. Include daily activities with all the necessary links the learner will need to access. Refer to the agenda throughout the day.
- Clarify the supplies students will need to have for particular learning experiences and ensure all students have what they need.



USING ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING (3d)

How do students assess their progress and apply feedback from other students and the teacher, as well as their own reflection, to support learning?

✓ Formative assessment supports student learning and development.

✓ Teachers and students use formative assessment to elicit understanding, analyze progress, and provide constructive feedback.

✓ Students take initiative to analyze their own progress against a clear standard in order to achieve the outcome and identify new opportunities and challenges.



While assessment of learning has been more heavily emphasized by policymakers in recent years, teachers have long known that assessment for learning is a far more powerful and important tool as we consider individual student learning, especially during remote instruction. When teachers assess for learning, they carefully consider student responses and look at their work daily and weekly to gauge how students are spending time, whether they have learned the content, and where they are on the path to meeting the learning goal. If the realities of remote learning result in insufficient data on student progress, teachers avail themselves of the many tools that can be used to get a snapshot of the class or monitor progress of individuals. Teachers also encourage and support students to monitor their own understanding and progress toward clear criteria for success. They provide clear, useful, timely feedback to students, and students are taught to provide it to one another. Feedback may focus on addressing gaps or misunderstanding, but it should also provide encouragement and identify strengths that students can leverage in this or further challenges.

Elements of Success

Clear Standards for Success

The characteristics of high-quality work and the criteria established as evidence of success are clear to students and those supporting them.

Monitoring Student Understanding

Teachers and students are constantly monitoring learning and make use of specific strategies to elicit evidence of understanding.

Timely, Constructive Feedback

High-quality feedback comes from many sources, including students; it is specific and focused on improvement.

PRIORITIES

- Being clear on what students will do to show grade-level mastery and how their progress toward that goal will be monitored.
- Modeling and teaching students specific competencies and habits to support self-assessment and the application of feedback, including judgement, reflection, reasoning, and perseverance.
- Making sure students receive feedback that is affirming and focused on growth, and that they have real opportunities to discuss it and reflect on it.

START
HERE

- Audit your assignments and assessments and modify what would have been visible in a live classroom to be visible in a virtual setting.
- Plan and practice formative checks by modality - for every block of instructional time, know how you will get information from each student.
- Teach students how to create success criteria for group work. Practice creating and using these criteria weekly.
- Provide weekly opportunities for students to self-assess and identify successes and needs.
- Build the format and routine for celebrating student self-assessment.

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES

Synchronous
Engagement

- Use polls or quick quizzes intermittently throughout the synchronous lesson to gauge understanding of topics or concepts.
- Schedule check-in times with individual students or groups of students during synchronous learning.
- Utilize chat boxes or other communication platforms where students can share their thoughts, answers, or reactions.
- Use non-verbals via video-conferencing platform or reaction buttons (if available) to monitor understanding.

Asynchronous
Engagement

- Make your feedback multi-modal.
- Find a go-to set of digital formative assessment tools for your students to engage with and become accustomed to using.
- Have students submit responses through a variety of media both recommended by the teacher and of their own choosing (e.g., written response, audio, or video recordings).
- Invent or adopt (and communicate to students) efficient ways for students to express their level of understanding or the content of a lesson as it's progressing.



PLANNING COHERENT INSTRUCTION (1e)

How are learning experiences structured to provide flexible, student-centered opportunities to learn important content and develop positive habits and mindsets?

- ✓ Learning opportunities are coherent in structure and suitable for the students in the class.
- ✓ Learning opportunities are specifically tailored to meet the needs of individual students in the class.
- ✓ Learning opportunities prioritize the needs of individual students and support student assumption of responsibility for learning.



One primary responsibility of teachers is planning coherent instruction. Though teachers cannot do the work of learning for students, they can thoughtfully organize learning experiences that facilitate it. To do so successfully in the context of remote instruction, teachers must not only have a deep understanding of their content area, the standards, and curriculum, but they must use their understanding of students' readiness to learn as the basis for instructional design. Technology and online learning environments provide certain advantages by allowing even more ways for students to engage through multiple modes and means of interacting. Flexible learning and grouping of students can be facilitated through technology, with a greater variety of tasks and activities available. More is not always better, however, and these opportunities must be logically sequenced and, in some cases, students may actually benefit from a slower pace and fewer options.

Elements of Success

Tasks & Activities

Tasks and activities are specifically matched to learning outcomes and provide opportunity for higher-level thinking, encourage student agency, and create authentic opportunities to engage with meaningful content.

Flexible Learning

Multiple strategies and approaches are tailored to individual student needs to create the appropriate level of challenge and support for each student.

Collaboration

Student groups are an essential component of learning and development, and are organized thoughtfully to maximize opportunities and build on students' strengths.

Structure and Flow

Lesson and unit plans are well structured and flow from one to the next to support student learning and development.

PRIORITIES

- Meeting students where they are given widely variable learning environments and social-emotional needs.
- Holding tight to grade level expectations and challenging content.
- Aligning learning outcomes to the modified schedule to maximize fit between outcome and modality.
- Maintaining coherence for students across a variety of platforms and modes.

START HERE

- Analyze your school schedule and expectations to identify time available for synchronous and asynchronous engagement.
- Analyze your learning objectives to determine what is most suitable and critical for synchronous instruction. Consider:
 - Whole group: direct instruction, modeling, experiments, community building
 - Small group: targeted skill building, repetition, discussion, peer to peer engagement
 - One-to-one: diagnosis, assessment, encouragement
- Develop a manageable and easily accessible system for organizing schedules, materials, homework, and apps that support differentiated pathways for students.

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES

Synchronous Engagement



- Consider the rationale for synchronous learning. Keep durations brief (e.g. maximum 30 minutes for younger students), and plan to use the time purposefully for group discussions, community building, small group instruction, and collaboration.
- Clearly explain the purpose of the session in advance (e.g. via email or LMS message) and revisit it throughout the session.
- Pull together small groups of students, both heterogeneous and homogeneous, in synchronous sessions as you would in the classroom. Focus on supporting their learning by addressing individual needs and providing feedback.

Asynchronous Engagement



- Consider flipping new content acquisition and skill practice to asynchronous sessions when appropriate (video-taped lessons are great tools for direct instruction).
- Provide multiple tasks and activities for students to choose from to reach the objectives. Explain the rationale for choosing each or provide a clear pathway for students to consider.
- Carefully curate the online tools you will use: there are many, many options, but students can get app fatigue. Pick a small set to use frequently to allow students to develop comfort and have consistency.
- For major tasks or activities, find a volunteer (e.g. another teacher or a parent) to test drive the activity and ensure it will be easily navigated and understood.



USING QUESTIONING & DISCUSSION TECHNIQUES (3b)

How do students reflect, reason, and explain their thinking by asking and answering questions and engaging in dialogue with others?

✓ Questioning and discussion, framed and led by teachers, are used effectively to support student learning and development.

✓ Questioning and discussion, framed or led by teachers and students, support critical thinking, reasoning, and reflection.

✓ Students intentionally use questioning and discussion to develop their own and others' thinking, reasoning skills, and habits of reflection.



Learning is a social process, and dialogue supports the acquisition of new knowledge, critical thinking skills, and social-emotional development. It invites students to formulate hypotheses, make connections, or challenge previously held views. Many teachers and students may have more experience with online discussions than other aspects of online learning. For older students especially, email, messaging, chat, and social media apps are part of everyday life. However, selecting and implementing strategies for questioning and discussion that can strengthen online conversations is important. As in other areas, some aspects of discussion may seem easier online. There's no mute button during an in-person discussion, after all. Still, it is important for teachers to practice and develop techniques that support student thinking in synchronous and asynchronous discussions.

Elements of Success

Critical Thinking and Deeper Learning

Questions and discussions require critical thinking, have multiple answers, and are used to deepen student understanding.

Reasoning and Reflection

Questions and discussions challenge students to reason, reflect on learning, justify their thinking, and generate ideas for future inquiry.

Student Participation

Students demonstrate curiosity and engage one another through questions and dialogue, challenging each other's thinking with respect and humility,

PRIORITIES

- Creating opportunities for peer-to-peer engagement that support social, emotional, and academic development.
- Modeling curiosity and humility in dialogue with students.
- Providing multiple options for scaffolding dialogue in both synchronous and asynchronous learning experiences.

START HERE

- Co-create norms for peer-to-peer engagement with students.
- Adjust your daily and weekly schedule, challenging yourself to have students spend more time in peer discussion than any other modality (as developmentally appropriate).
- Be explicit about when students are to maintain single attention (one conversation, one focus) versus when it is acceptable to use multiple channels (chatting during a video, recording reactions on a padlet, etc.)
- Research and experiment to identify digital ways for students to generate ideas and responses individually and collaboratively that help prime their dialogue.
- Create a shared space where students can continue discussions after a lesson and offer suggestions for future topics or discussions.

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES

Synchronous Engagement



- Use an app that supports backchannel conversations during class discussions - and also allows the conversation to continue when the synchronous learning ends.
- Utilize breakout rooms to prioritize small group discussions, which are typically more effective and engaging than whole-group discussions.
- When a student responds, encourage all students to write a comment or give a thumbs up/down to express agreement or disagreement and a reason.
- Give student facilitators opportunities to "share their screen" to show their work or explanations rather than verbalizing everything.

Asynchronous Engagement



- Create spaces for offline discussions: blogs, chat spaces on LMS, shared Google docs, etc.
- To support student autonomy, create sign-up sheets for informal discussion groups (via phone or video conference platforms) based on lesson or project assignments.
- Periodically send brief surveys or emails during the day that include questions written to prompt thinking and ask students to explain their reasoning.



ENGAGING STUDENTS IN LEARNING (3c)

Do learning experiences give each student the opportunity to do the learning and engage in ways that are challenging, authentic, and relevant?

- ✓ Learning experiences engage students intellectually, requiring them to think and collaborate.
- ✓ Learning experiences support curiosity, encourage critical thinking, and include multiple ways for students to engage and represent their ideas.
- ✓ Students take initiative to increase the challenge, complexity, relevance, and rigor of learning experiences.



In order for successful learning to occur for each student, intellectual engagement is a necessity. Knowledge of students, planning for instruction, assessment, routines and procedures, and other aspects of teachers' responsibilities are ultimately about creating opportunities for students to engage with content, with one another, and with their own learning and development process. Teachers must provide rich opportunities, promote teamwork, use engaging materials, and give students time to reflect on learning - especially in a virtual environment. Busy work, such as mindlessly filling in blanks on digital worksheets, is as unproductive in online learning as it is in person. In some cases, it may be more challenging to determine whether students are engaged in online learning experiences. The cues that teachers look for may be less obvious in online environments, and it may be easier for students to fade away. It is essential, therefore, that teachers use the myriad of online resources at their disposal to support student engagement.

Elements of Success

Rich Learning Experiences

Students demonstrate agency and critical thinking in completion of tasks and activities that require high levels of intellectual engagement.

Collaboration and Teamwork

Student collaboration is a key component of learning and engagement, and students take initiative to collaborate in new or unplanned ways that further their learning and make it more engaging and meaningful.

Use of Instructional Materials and Resources

Instructional materials and resources are used effectively to support intellectual engagement and deep learning of the content.

Opportunities for Thinking and Reflection

Individual lessons, activities, and tasks, as well as instructional pathways, have multiple and effective opportunities to think, reflect, and consolidate understanding.

PRIORITIES

- Encouraging multiple ways of interacting, multiple modes of accessing information, and multiple means of representing thinking.
- Making space for student choice and interest-driven learning across all subjects.
- Celebrating and sharing student creativity, curiosity, and resilience.
- Maintaining and modeling a learning stance on engaging through technology so students feel free to explore and improve their experience.
- Deviating from plan in the face of authentic student curiosity and initiative.

START HERE

- Plan for individual and group projects that are purely interest based.
- Audit your plans and assignments for points where students might be offered more choice.
- Know your content "critical path" - what you must convey versus what you can hold lightly if spontaneous opportunities for student innovation appear.
- Find a technology friend. Students will always adopt technology faster than adults, so have someone you can learn with when a new app or feature emerges that might further engage your students.

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES

Synchronous Engagement



- Take advantage of small group synchronous sessions to gauge student engagement.
- Consider holding one-on-one meetings with students to dig into how they are engaging with asynchronous work.
- Plan synchronous screen time using a combination of audio and visual cues such as infographics and videos.
- As students engage in tasks or activities, consider how students will share their thinking and reasoning by chat, in an online document, or other written response.
- Provide opportunities for students to partake in collaborative, inquiry-based research using websites or online articles.
- Allow students to submit assignments in a variety of forms such as PowerPoint, Prezi, or pre-recorded segments.

Asynchronous Engagement



- Create a choice board to provide both structure and choice. For instance, post the board on Monday, and give students until Friday to complete it, at which time you can have a discussion to reflect on the key ideas and an assessment.
- Find or create interactive presentations that guide students through information, activities, and inquiry.
- Use a tool or platform to create an opportunity for reflection by asking students to post at the end of their day. This builds accountability and ownership, while giving students a flexible way of sharing and synthesizing.