

Distance Learning Companion to the TNTP Core Rubric

We created this companion to help observers gather evidence aligned to the TNTP Core Rubric during distance learning observations or virtual observations of in-classroom lessons. Evidence can look different in different distance learning models, so we hope the following guidance will help observers know what to look for. Teachers and coaches can also use this tool when setting goals and development areas for a teacher's practice during distance learning.

This companion starts by defining the key terms used throughout. Then it lays out tips and considerations for an observer before, during, and after the observation. Finally, it provides observer guidance by performance area. That section includes guidance on how to gather evidence of each performance area during various types of instruction. We are not changing the [TNTP Core Rubric](#) itself, but instead providing guidance on how to use the rubric in various instructional settings.

We know this year has brought many new challenges to teachers, students, and schools, but we hope that this companion, along with the TNTP Core Rubric, will help you maintain a strong vision and high expectations for instruction and classroom culture, just as you would during any other school year. That includes putting the right supports in place for students with learning and thinking differences, multilingual learners, and other students facing substantial challenges during this time. We do not want to lose sight in this moment of what must be true for **all students** in schools, as defined by our rubric.

Key Terms

In this document we refer to several types of instruction:

- **Distance Learning:** This refers to any model where teachers and students are not physically together in the same classroom. This could look like:
 - Teachers and students all at home learning through technology (Zoom or Google Meet)
 - Teachers in their classroom and students at home all learning through technology
 - Teacher in the physical classroom with some students, and other students at home. The students at home are logged into technology so they can view the lesson occurring in the classroom.
- **Synchronous virtual instruction:** This is when all students and the teacher join a live call, usually via Zoom or Google Meet. An observer might join this lesson live, or the observer might view a recording of this lesson that occurred synchronously for teachers and students.
- **Asynchronous instruction:** This is instruction that can be viewed or completed at any time without any real-time interaction between teacher and students. For example, a student might complete an assignment independently or view an instructional video clip provided by the teacher. Many distance learning models rely heavily on a combination of synchronous and asynchronous content and therefore it will most likely be necessary for the observer to consider some asynchronous content as evidence when observing.
- **Live or recorded in-classroom lesson observation:** This is when the teacher and students are all physically together in a classroom for the lesson. However, for safety purposes, the observer is not in the classroom. The observer is either watching the lesson live via a Zoom, Google Meet, or FaceTime feed, or they are watching a recording of this lesson. This type of lesson would most closely resemble how we traditionally gather evidence during a lesson using the Core Rubric, with some constraints due to social distancing in the classroom, and/or limitations of viewing the lesson through a video.

- **Hybrid model:** Some schools are using a combination of several forms of instruction listed above. In this case, the observer would need to determine the form of instruction to observe that is best aligned with the goals for teacher development. We recommend observing a teacher in each of the instructional models they use throughout the year.

Observer Protocol

Review these tips and considerations as you plan your observation. Some are coded for the performance area they are most connected to (COL= Culture of Learning, EC= Essential Content, AO= Academic Ownership, DOL= Demonstration of Learning)

BEFORE THE OBSERVATION

Logistics

- Observer would need:
 - o Links and permission to join lesson
 - Zoom or Google Meet links for live lesson
 - Day and time of observation
 - o Or a recording of the lesson
- Joining a lesson live vs viewing a video will allow you to see evidence that is more challenging to see in a recording, such as:
 - o The chat box
 - o Number of students present in the class
 - o Any breakout room conversations
- Be prepared with whatever permission you need to join the synchronous lesson live. This is most likely easier to obtain than permission to record the lesson, however both must be determined with the district or school. (At TNTP, verify legal permissions for recording with your program staff.)

Lesson Content and Materials

Consider meeting with the teacher and/or having them answer these questions and provide supporting materials:

- Ask the teacher to describe the current context of their distance learning and/or instructional setting (EC)
 - o What is the daily/weekly model for instruction and/or distance learning?
 - o What are school expectations and guidance regarding synchronous/asynchronous time?
 - o What digital tools and platforms do you plan to use in this lesson to engage students?
 - o How many students are expected to be in the class? What are the policies regarding appearing on/off camera?
- Ask for a lesson plan that includes (EC):
 - o Grade level, content area
 - o Lesson objective and standards addressed
 - o Information on students with IEPs and their IEP goals, accommodations and/or modifications

- o Number of ELLs and their proficiency levels
- o Synchronous and asynchronous content (if applicable)
- Ask for access to materials used in lesson: student handout or reading, slides, any text or problems included in lesson (EC):
 - o We recommend that observers create a system for the teacher to submit **all material related to that specific lesson**, whether they are delivered synchronously or asynchronously. The materials might include a video students watched asynchronously prior to the live lesson, or an assignment they are completing after to demonstrate their learning. They should not submit everything from the unit, just from that specific lesson. The system for submission could be via a Google folder, or email.
 - o This could also include granting access to the Google Classroom or other Learning Management Systems if possible. If a teacher does this, they should indicate only what is being used for this specific lesson.

DURING THE OBSERVATION

- Tech tip: If possible, the observer could join the lesson using a device like an iPad and take observation notes using their laptop. If this is not possible, it is recommended to open one window on your computer for the lesson and open another window next to it to type your observation notes.
 - o During the live lesson, focus on gathering as much evidence as you can about what is happening live. You can review additional documents and artifacts after the lesson is complete.
- Teachers should introduce the observer to the students—students will immediately recognize a new name in the room and wonder who it is. If teacher prefers, the observer may want to briefly appear on camera to say hello, but then turn off their camera and remain muted throughout the observation.
 - o If the observer is a coach who is visiting the lessons on a regular basis, and possibly providing coaching in the moment, then the teacher and coach should set their own parameters for this.

AFTER THE OBSERVATION

- The observer will need student work samples from the observation lesson. These could be collaborative electronic documents, or scanned photos of written work. These should include all work students completed during the lesson, or if necessary, the assignment they completed asynchronously after the lesson to demonstrate their learning. (DOL)

TNTP Core Rubric Distance Learning Guidance by Performance Area

Culture of Learning

Reminder: All evidence should be used to answer the same essential question we answer for any observation: *Are all students engaged in the work of the lesson from start to finish?*

Tips for Synchronous Virtual Lesson Observation

- Look for evidence of clear directions like visuals on slides or handouts for lesson activities. Directions should be stated by teacher in addition to being posted.
- Reference the chat feature for student engagement in grades where it is developmentally appropriate based on the age/point in the school year, etc. (For example, an observer should not expect to see the chat being used in kindergarten. Students might be engaging by holding up fingers, doing a gesture, holding up a whiteboard, materials, etc.)
- Lesson pacing should still be maintained through preparation and consistent use of tools such as breakout rooms, slides, collaborative documents, etc. Any established predictable rhythm and routines will also contribute to and be evidence of effective lesson pacing.
- Reference collaborative documents for evidence of student engagement.
- Number of students on/off video **should not** be used as the sole piece of evidence of to assess engagement, especially if there are district or school expectations that allow students to remain off camera.

Tips for Asynchronous Instruction

- An observer will need to see evidence of whether students are completing tasks they were assigned to complete asynchronously.
- It would be challenging, if not impossible, for an observer to evaluate the other descriptors in this performance area for work that is only completed asynchronously.

Tips for Live or Recorded In-Classroom Lesson Observation

- Teachers should test recording lessons to determine the best location for their device for different types of lessons. Ensure students are visible and students and teacher can be heard on the recording.
- If teacher is recording alone, they should check in with their device and ensure recording is continuing at different points during lesson.
- Students sitting by themselves and not in groups due to social distancing should not be considered when gathering evidence of a culture of learning.

Tips for either setting:

- Observer must know how many students are present in the lesson to score this performance area.
- Observer should look for evidence of how the teacher is promoting safety, belonging, and connection to the teacher and other students despite the limitations of distance learning.

Essential Content

Reminder: All evidence should be used to answer the same essential question we answer for any observation: *Are all students working with content aligned to the appropriate standards for their subject and grade?*

Tips for Synchronous Virtual Lesson Observation

- Observer needs access to materials used in lesson (slides, Google Classroom, Nearpod collaborative handouts, text), including those not visible on the screen during the lesson. These should be shared with the observer prior to the lesson (see notes on this in the table above: “before the lesson”)
- Observer might also need access to asynchronous content students viewed before the synchronous lesson, such as a video of read aloud, a story they read, etc.
- When considering whether lesson activities are “well-sequenced,” the observer should consider evidence of the decisions the teacher made to deliver content both synchronously and asynchronously given the time block of the lesson, as determined by the school. For example, if the teacher has a limited time with the students synchronously, it will be especially important to have access to any asynchronous work completed both before and after the lesson.

Tips for Asynchronous Instruction

- If instruction is solely asynchronous, an observer should look for evidence in this area in the materials the students are to complete, including texts, problem sets, and the instructions for how/when to complete them.

Tips for Live or Recorded In-Classroom Lesson Observation

- Observers will need access to the materials used in the lesson because they are not in the classroom. This means the teachers should take a picture or scan the materials prior to the lesson to share with the observer. This can include texts used, worksheets, tasks, and anything else used by the teacher or student that would be difficult or impossible for the observer to view from the recording.

Tips for either setting

- All lessons should still be planned with a focus on ensuring students have access to grade-level content. For guidance on ensuring lessons are planned with a focus on accelerating student learning (vs remediating), you can refer to [this guide](#) or this [curriculum specific guidance](#) for some curriculum.
- All lessons must still be planned with the individual needs of students in mind and to ensure the appropriate supports and goals are met. This includes students with IEPs, considerations for students based on language proficiency, etc.

Academic Ownership

Reminder: All evidence should be used to answer the same essential question we answer for any observation: *Are all students responsible for doing the thinking in the classroom?*

Tips for Synchronous Virtual Lesson Observation

- An observer should look for evidence of the teacher purposefully planning any asynchronous content to ensure a high level of student engagement and ownership during synchronous lesson. For example, was time minimized presenting new content that is better suited for asynchronous delivery, like a longer video? Ideally, during the synchronous time students should have multiple opportunities to discuss in partnership, small group or whole group using Zoom breakout room feature if possible.
 - If using Zoom: observer will need access to visit breakout room conversations to gather additional evidence of Academic Ownership (note: if the virtual lesson is recorded, you cannot see breakout room footage). Observer will need to be set as a “cohost” if using Zoom to do this.

Tips for Asynchronous Instruction

- If instruction is solely asynchronous, this performance area can be assessed through a review of the tasks students are asked to complete, the questions asked of them, as well as any opportunities to interact with colleagues and/or the teacher via discussion board, google doc, etc. An observer would need access to all the tools being used to gather this evidence.

Tips for Live or Recorded In-Classroom Lesson Observation

- To hear conversations in small groups or partnerships, a teacher might want to have an additional adult move the camera closer during the lesson.
- Observer should consider social distancing constraints and how this affects the opportunities for students to work in partnerships and groups.

Demonstration of Learning

Reminder: All evidence should be used to answer the same essential question we answer for any observation: *Do all students demonstrate they are learning?*

Tips for Synchronous Virtual Lesson Observation

- Observers should look for various ways a teacher might ask students to demonstrate their learning (for example, written in chat, verbally, use of signals or motions, drawing, etc).
- Refer to questions asked during the lesson and student responses in the chat, or in a collaborative document. This includes results from polls, Nearpod, etc.
- Observer will need access to student work samples after the lesson, including both digital and written documents.
- Consider how to ensure observer can visit breakout rooms to see small group or partner discussion (see guidance under Academic Ownership).
- Consider using screen shot/capture to get image of student work being shared live (note: if used this cannot feature the student's face in the screenshot).

Tips for Asynchronous Instruction

- If instruction is solely asynchronous, evidence should be gathered from the work students complete. An observer would need access to all the online platforms to see their work, or for the teacher to upload/email the work for review.

Tips for Live or Recorded In-Classroom Lesson Observation

- Observer will need access to student work samples after the lesson (see chart above for more details under "After the lesson").

Tips for either setting

- Observer should pay attention to how the teacher is giving students feedback, possibly verbally, through the chat, whole group or privately.