

# Back to School RI: Adapting SY20-21 Evaluation Practices to Support Educators

Office of Educator Excellence & Certification Services

October, 2020

# Introduction

As schools worked to safely reopen in the fall of 2020, RIDE worked collaboratively with professional associations to develop [evaluation options](#) from which LEAs must choose for SY20-21. These options afford LEAs flexibility while also maintaining the integrity of local evaluation systems. RIDE hopes these options support the prioritization of high-quality feedback on professional practice for educators doing such critical work.

Regardless of which options LEAs choose, it is likely that at some point, if not already, LEAs will require shifts of the mode of instructional delivery (i.e. in-person to distance learning) as a result of local public health data. We continue to grapple with the idea that teaching and learning in a virtual learning environment provokes questions about the ways in which evaluation practices can adapt and evolve in this relatively new instructional space. And now more than ever, educators deserve to engage in the formal evaluation processes which afford them instructional support and opportunities for high-quality feedback. Through this lens, we have put together the following guidance and resources from national organizations that LEAs may consider implementing within local evaluation policies and agreements.

## Professional Practice

Observation of professional practice is a critical component of any educator evaluation system. At this point in time, evaluation systems have been designed around observing in-person instruction. This includes the rubric language, critical attributes, and possible examples of what instruction looks and sounds like in practice. Knowing that many schools will likely be in a virtual learning environment at some point in the year, it is important to consider appropriate adaptations of the system that will maintain the integrity of the overall evaluation process in 2020-21.

LEAs have varied local requirements for conducting virtual observations. For those preparing to engage in this process, formalizing the policies and procedures for virtual observations set the stage for LEAs to have common language and practices for observations and feedback in support of educators' continued growth. Toward this end, all RI LEAs should be sure to align relevant practices in the [Back to School RI: Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment Reopening Guidance SY20-21](#) document. Here, RIDE has provided *Best Practices for Distance Learning K-12* (pp. 3-6) and *Developing Norms for Distance Learning* (pp. 7-10) which can act as a level-setting of expectations for classroom management and instruction in virtual learning environments.

In the following section, some of these practices and norms have been aligned to RI Model Evaluation & Support System professional practice rubric components as critical attributes or possible examples for distance learning to bring coherence to local contexts:

**Domain 2: Classroom Environment.** The following suggested examples, aligned to the [RI Model teacher rubrics](#), are [integrated from various sources](#), and can act as a starting point for local conversations about a synchronous, virtual learning classroom environment. While these possible examples and/or critical attributes can help to clarify what a component looks and sounds like in practice, ***the rubric language remains unchanged and is still what should be used to measure the preponderance of the collected evidence for scoring and feedback purposes.***

Component	Possible Critical Attributes/Examples
<p><b>2a: Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher and students encourage each other to participate actively through verbal and non-verbal communications observed in the video, audio, and/or in the chat functions</li> <li>Teacher demonstrates caring about students’ lives beyond the class and school contexts</li> <li>Students adhere to classroom agreements about virtual learning (i.e. when to use cameras and when to (un)mute audio)</li> </ul>
<p><b>2b: Establishing a Culture for Learning</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher uses screen-sharing feature to showcase and/or provide feedback on students’ work</li> <li>Consistent use of the chat and digital tools (hand-clapping/thumbs-up reactions, discussion boards, raising hand, whiteboard function, chat, etc.) – by teacher(s) <i>and</i> students – to convey high expectations for all students, effort &amp; work quality, as well as precise use of content-specific language during discussions</li> </ul>
<p><b>2c: Managing Classroom Procedures</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With minimal prompting, transitions from teacher-led whole-group to teacher-led small group discussions are smooth.</li> <li>Students take initiative in the use of established signals/digital responses at appropriate times to avoid simultaneous talking (i.e. reactions, hand-raising, chat, (un)muting)</li> <li>Teacher makes clear to all students how assignments are to be completed and submitted virtually</li> <li>Students know where and how to access all materials required for (a)synchronous instruction</li> </ul>
<p><b>2d: Managing Student Behavior</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Virtual learning environment demonstrates respectful and consistent behaviors set by classroom rules and norms</li> <li>Teachers uses online platform controls in response to student behavior (muting/unmuting students, turning off video, exiting/admitting students to session, etc.)</li> <li>Teacher uses private chat function to check in with students during the lesson (note: this can be provided as a transcript to the evaluator after an observation as evidence, as it would be observed by the evaluator during the lesson)</li> </ul>

- Students hold each other accountable for synchronous classroom norms

**Domain 3: Instruction.** The following suggested examples, aligned to the [RI Model teacher rubrics](#), are integrated from various sources, and can act as a starting point for local conversations about synchronous instruction in a virtual learning environment. While these possible examples and/or critical attributes can help to clarify what a component looks and sounds like in practice, ***the rubric language remains unchanged and is still what should be used to measure the preponderance of the collected evidence for scoring, rationales, and feedback purposes.***

Component	Possible Critical Attributes/Examples
<b>3a: Communicating with Students</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers uses presentation and/or whiteboard functions to explain content and alignment to larger curriculum</li> <li>• Teacher and students using grade-level, content-specific vocabulary in oral and written discussions via chat in whole-group and/or breakout sessions</li> <li>• Students share ideas and strategies with others via chat and/or through screen-sharing</li> </ul>
<b>3b: Using Questioning/Prompts and Discussion Techniques</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher uses open-ended questions and invites students to participate using digital tools (hand-clapping/thumbs-up reactions, discussion boards, raising hand, whiteboard function, chat, etc.) to increase engagement with the content</li> <li>• Students engage in higher-order thinking during discussions and make use of oral and written discussions through digital tools</li> <li>• Students react to and invite peers into a digital discussion using norms that engage all students in the session</li> </ul>
<b>3c: Engaging Students in Learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using a balance of audio and video, based on the norms of the learning space, all students are engaged throughout the lesson</li> <li>• Teacher makes use of appropriate digital learning tools during instruction to engage all students in grade-level content</li> <li>• Pacing of the lesson allows time for students to engage with the content, and each other, before moving to asynchronous work</li> <li>• Students are provided with mechanism to reflect on the lesson and share their learning with the teacher and/or peers via discussion, survey, and/or polls</li> </ul>
<b>3d: Using Assessment in Instruction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher makes use of digital formative assessments frequently to make adjustments to lessons, and respond to students' needs (i.e. polls, surveys, assignments)</li> <li>• Teacher makes clear the assessment criteria for discussions and (a)synchronous assignments for all students</li> <li>• Feedback is evident, and frequent, from teachers and students throughout the lesson and focused on improvement</li> <li>• Teacher makes lesson adjustments, where needed, in an attempt to reach all students' needs during the session (i.e. internet/WiFi issues)</li> </ul>



**High-quality Feedback.** Feedback helps educators improve their practice by identifying strengths (i.e. practices they should continue) and areas for improvement (i.e. changes to their practice that they should prioritize). Effective feedback should be prioritized, specific, actionable, supportive in tone, and be delivered in a timely manner. Evaluators should consider the ways in which they may need to adjust their process for developing and delivering feedback in a virtual learning environment. Additionally, the aforementioned examples in this section could be leveraged to provide high-quality feedback in a virtual learning environment. We encourage you to revisit some of our [feedback resources here](#).

## Student Learning

Regardless of the mode of instruction (i.e. virtual, hybrid, or in-person), it is critical for educators to hold high expectations for all students. These high expectations should be reflected during instruction and in the goals set for student learning. As part of the preparation and planning for 2020-21, educators and administrators should continue to refer to RIDE's best-practice guidance documents for the 2020-21 school year. This includes planning for [multilingual learners](#), [differently-abled students](#), and all students' [social-emotional learning & mental health](#) as part of a holistic approach through any instructional delivery method in the coming year. Moreover, these guidance documents may provide additional considerations when creating learning expectations for all students.

**SLO/SOO Flex.** In 2019-20, RIDE released [student learning options for teachers](#). One option was *SLO/SOO Flex*, which can be used with teachers, support professionals (SPs), and building administrators (BAs). Anticipating the shifts in the modes of instructional delivery, we developed [a narrated presentation](#) on the ways in which this flexible approach to traditional SLOs/SOOs could accommodate, and minimize disruption to, the potential instructional shifts in 2020-21. This SLO Flex presentation illustrates two options of what this model could look like in practice and the minimal adaptations in policy and procedures required to utilize this model. Moreover, the presentation is designed for LEAs to use with teams of educators to consider, plan, and draft SLOs that reflect their student needs and goals for SY2020-21. This is an optional resource for those LEAs seeking a flexible and responsive option for schools and districts that already have strong evaluation systems and processes in place for both evaluators and educators.

**SOO Option for BAs.** In 2019-20, LEA superintendents and leaders had the option to employ [the multi-year differentiated evaluation cycle for experienced BAs](#). This multiyear cycle provided space for BAs to focus on longer-term, system-level goals as part of their continuous improvement work. The 2019-20 data show that 15% of BAs were evaluated in a multi-year cycle across 14 LEAs. Additionally, all BAs – regardless of evaluation type – had the option to use a SOO in place of one SLO to add flexibility to the variety of systems-level work and student outcomes

within their purview. While we have not yet gathered nor released exemplars of possible BA SOOs, we hope to gather some from LEA partners in 2020-21 and then share widely

***SLO/SOO Resources.*** As a reminder, you can review any of our existing [asynchronous modules on SLOs & SOOs](#) for each evaluation type within our *Best Practices Resource Suite*. Additional examples of SLOs & SOOs can be found on our [student learning webpage](#).

## Professional Responsibilities

Whether instructing from school or from a virtual learning environment, this component of the evaluation system will likely remain unchanged in local practice. It is still worth considering the following:

***Evidence collection.*** Consider the ways in which you currently gather evidence of professional responsibilities through everyday interpersonal interactions in addition to the submission of artifacts. This is an area for LEA teams to be explicit about what artifacts will be requested for all staff being evaluated, and which practices can be seen in practice or through virtual learning environments.

***Professional Growth Goals (PGGs).*** Virtual learning has thrust educators into a new professional landscape with relatively little time to adapt. Through educators' learning in the spring of 2020, and into the start of the 2020-21 year, it is a good time to set professional growth goals that align with the new demands of distance learning, as well as school- and district-level professional learning goals. Likely, this information will be found in [LEA Professional Learning Plans \(PL Plans\)](#). Educator PGGs should reflect relative areas for growth to enhance practice and contribute to learning environments where students can thrive and meet their intended learning outcomes.

## Conclusion

At RIDE, we continue to believe that [evaluation systems](#) are an integral part of a comprehensive talent management system which seeks to develop, support, and grow educators through observation of practice and high-quality feedback. Moreover, while we assert that there is no single way to approach evaluation practices in this new virtual learning environment, the 2020-21 school year does provide an opportune time to revisit the components of existing evaluation policies to ensure that practices align with expectations for instruction and student outcomes.

For LEAs that would like technical assistance with caseload management, or any questions about the resources in this guidance document, please email [edeval@ride.ri.gov](mailto:edeval@ride.ri.gov).

For LEAs who use Frontline’s Educator Evaluation Management (EEM) system, and need technical assistance with data collection, please email [pgsupport@frontlineed.com](mailto:pgsupport@frontlineed.com) for support.

## Resources

- [National Standards for Quality Online Teaching](#)
- [NEE's Adaptability and Growth: Evaluating Effective Teaching in Remote Learning Environments](#)
- [New Leaders' Virtual Look-Fors for School Leaders: Supporting Instruction During COVID-19 Online & Remote Teaching](#)
- [TNTP's Blended Core Teaching Rubric](#)
- [Hendy Avenue’s Best Practices in Remote Instruction Look-for](#)
- [Hendy Avenue's DREAM Charter School Look-fors](#)
- [Hendy Avenue's Guiding Evaluation Questions](#)