

OBSERVATION DOCUMENT: ONLINE EDUCATORS

PRE-OBSERVATION QUESTIONS

1. How do you modify and supplement curriculum, and why?
2. What types of communication do you use? With whom? How do you decide which medium to use?
3. How do you monitor pacing and ensure students stay on track?
4. How do you address issues of academic integrity and “netiquette”?
5. How do you assist struggling learners?
6. What is your connection with other online educators?

KEY AREAS FOR EVIDENCE

1. Instruction—Presenting Instructional Content and Lesson Structure and Pacing
 - Online educator strategically augments or modifies content and activities to meet individual needs of students.
 - Online educator implements instructional design best practices (see iNACOL best practices – www.inacol.org) when augmenting or modifying course content.
2. Instruction—Questioning, Thinking and Problem Solving
 - Student work clearly displays a high level of questioning, thinking, and problem-solving.
 - Online educator provides effective prompts in web-based communications and adds/modifies content based on student feedback and performance in order to enhance student learning.
3. Instruction—Grouping
 - When appropriate, small groups are used to maximize student learning.
 - There are clearly established norms and procedures for working in groups that students can easily articulate.
4. Instruction—Academic Feedback and Motivating Students
 - Feedback may be given synchronously (real-time) or asynchronously (delayed) via message boards, text messages, social media, phone calls, e-mails, etc. while complying with each LEA’s internet safety policy.
 - Feedback is consistently differentiated, models appropriate conversational tone and “netiquette”, and encourages student participation.
5. Planning—Instructional Plans, Student Work, and Assessment
 - Online educator provides alternate means of assessment, instructional plans, or student work when necessary to meet the needs of diverse learners.
 - Instructional plans, student work, and assessments are easily accessible to students, parents, and administration within a secure system. (NOTE: Security of the system is a system-wide responsibility, and as such, teacher should be held responsible for the accessibility of work, not the security of the site).
6. Environment—Respectful culture
 - Online educator appropriately uses content-specific terminology, maintains appropriate instructor-to-student conversational tone, and conforms to appropriate digital “netiquette”.
 - Students appropriately mirror educator actions to maintain a culture of respect.

EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE/ARTIFACTS

Discussion boards	Social media (course wikis, blog comments)
Messages (to Students and Parents)	Additional references or links to resources
Content and content modifications	Posted office hours
Grade book	Communication logs
Announcements	Synchronous class meetings via video, chat room, face-to-face
Syllabus/Pacing Guides	Creation of review paths and re-teaching tools
Feedback on assignments	Online learning environment norms

OBSERVATION SUPPORT: ONLINE EDUCATORS

Most of the content and structure are produced by the curriculum provider, and there is no physical classroom. Evidence of student learning is not always readily apparent in the lessons or modules and may take further exploration to identify (Ex. Speaking with online educator or students). Opportunities for grouping may depend on enrollment policies, and may include use of social media, collaborative projects, etc. Feedback is individualized and is provided through digital communications rather than face-to-face.

I. INSTRUCTION

EXAMPLE—PRESENTING INSTRUCTIONAL CONTENT/LESSON STRUCTURE AND PACING

Instruction—Presenting Instructional Content/Lesson Structure and Pacing:

Online educator creates an online lecture for students that they are able to sign in to. Online educator has detailed script for lecture that features high-level checks for understanding, focused standards-based content, and ample opportunity for student engagement and thought. Online educator incorporates online assignments that align with lesson objectives, course instructional content, and assessments. Online educator requires timely student response, but ensures students are given a suitable amount of time to complete and submit assignments at their own pace depending on their specific needs. Students respond to checks for understanding and ask clarifying questions via community message boards that allow them to meaningfully engage with their virtual classmates. Online educator appropriately adjusts future instruction based on data gathered from formative assessment.

EXAMPLE—QUESTIONING/THINKING/PROBLEM-SOLVING

Instruction—Questioning/Thinking/Problem Solving:

Online educator bases a part of students' grades on participation in online discussion boards or social media networks designed to facilitate discussion. Online educator creates moderated online forum for questions and responses. Students post questions and reflections based on readings or activities, and respond to instructor and peer communications. Online educator evaluates student postings to ensure higher levels of understanding. Online educator provides additional prompts as needed to promote higher levels of learning.

EXAMPLE—GROUPING

Instruction—Grouping:

Online educator assigns group projects that require teamwork, communication, and collaboration, but do not always require in-person contact. Educator forms groups based on like interests, learning styles, personalities, etc. Educator outlines explicit rules for group work (Ex. Communicating via email, professionalism, respect, humility, etc.). Students work to come up with an action plan for their group work that they submit to online educator. This allows them to come up with a pacing plan that suits their individual needs. Online educator checks in with students periodically and asks targeted questions to help students improve the quality of their work. Educator responds to students' questions quickly and thoroughly via systematically approved digital communications. Online educator provides students with appropriate support and time to successfully complete group projects. Online educator provides students with the opportunity to evaluate the performance of their fellow group members, and uses student group evaluation feedback to improve the effectiveness of group project guidelines and procedures.

Observation Guidance Documents

EXAMPLE—ACADEMIC FEEDBACK AND MOTIVATING STUDENTS

Instruction—Academic Feedback and Motivating Students:

Online educator consistently provides clear, targeted, and rigorous written feedback for all students on a variety of assignments ranging across instructional styles. This commentary is often provided using track changes and comments to edit student work. Online educator allows appropriate time for students to internalize commentary and feedback and request clarification as needed. When appropriate, online educator allows students to revise assignments in order to improve student learning.

II. PLANNING

EXAMPLE—INSTRUCTIONAL PLANS/STUDENT WORK/ASSESSMENT

Planning—Instructional Plans/Student Work/Assessment:

Online educator implements instructional plans that allow for instructional differentiation based on individual student needs throughout all phases of the lesson. Online educator implements assessments that are aligned to state standards, but include alternate means of assessment when necessary to meet the needs of diverse learners. Online educator clearly aligns assessment to student work and independent/guided practice. Online educator implements standards and rigor in the construction of individual lesson plans. Online educator utilizes an online system for students, parents, and administration to access student work, assessments, and grades.

III. ENVIRONMENT

EXAMPLE—RESPECTFUL CULTURE

Environment—Respectful Culture:

Within a “Getting Started” announcement, discussion forum, or other digitally approved method of communication readily available to all students, online educator defines communication, “netiquette”, and internet safety procedures. Online educator effectively facilitates an open discussion of these norms with students.