

## Observing in a Blended Learning Classroom

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Observing in a blended learning setting is different than observing in a traditional setting. Specifically, it is much easier to identify effective classroom management than it is to know if students are learning since students are working on multiple lessons at any given time and since deep engagement with content is more difficult to detect on a computer. It is more difficult to parse out whether students' individual plans are aligned to appropriate grade level standards since observers aren't looking at just one lesson. You may see a student appear engaged in a virtual lesson but in reality they may just sit quietly without progressing through the lesson at an appropriate pace.

Most schools and districts utilize a specific rubric when observing teachers. Any good rubric will work well when observing in a blended learning setting, but most will need to be modified. On the pages that follow, we have modified TNTP's Core Rubric for blended learning considerations. You can use this rubric or use as a guide to modify the rubric used in your school.

# TNTP CORE TEACHING RUBRIC

## A TOOL FOR CONDUCTING COMMON CORE-ALIGNED CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

Thank you for your interest in the TNTP Core Teaching Rubric! TNTP Core describes excellent instruction aligned to the Common Core, and provides a common language to articulate what it looks like in practice. Even in schools and districts not adopting Common Core standards, this short but comprehensive tool can train focus on the essential components of instruction that can be identified in a classroom observation. By rating only four performance areas, TNTP Core allows observers and teachers to [focus on feedback and development](#). It is not a comprehensive evaluation system, but should be one of [multiple measures of performance](#).

Schools are encouraged to pilot this rubric and customize the language to fit local context. Consider the following guidance:

- To maintain focus, we don't recommend adding more than one additional performance area.
- The current selection of teacher actions and skills was developed based on TNTP's experience training and developing teachers. Be flexible in adding and adjusting the Core Teacher Skills, and encourage observers and teachers to create their own additions in the field. After observers and teachers agree on a Core Teacher Skill to focus on, they should then discuss and agree on the specific and bite-sized action that the teacher will take within the next week.
- We reserve the Exemplary rating for teachers demonstrating truly exceptional practice. A teacher rated Effective is meeting all performance expectations. Exemplary descriptors are based on teachers who have won our national Fishman Prize for Superlative Classroom Practice.

Even the best rubric will fail to help teachers develop if it is not implemented with care. Thoughtful introduction and deliberate training with ongoing practice will ensure that all stakeholders share an understanding of the rubric's meaning and use. Principals, coaches and teachers should also be well trained on the rubric and its use, and have opportunities to practice observing instruction together to ensure consistent, accurate ratings.

Take what you learn from a pilot to inform ongoing training and norming. And please tell us what you learn, at [info@tntp.org](mailto:info@tntp.org).

The TNTP Core Teaching Rubric is used to describe and assess teacher performance across four performance areas:

- **STUDENT ENGAGEMENT:** Are all students engaged in the work of the lesson from start to finish?
- **ESSENTIAL CONTENT:** Are all students working with content aligned to the appropriate standards for their subject and grade?
- **ACADEMIC OWNERSHIP:** Are all students responsible for doing the thinking in this classroom?
- **DEMONSTRATION OF LEARNING:** Do all students demonstrate that they are learning?

Each performance area has three components:

1. **Essential Question:** The core question to answer about the particular performance area. In an effective teacher's classroom, the answer to each Essential Question is "yes."
2. **Descriptor Language:** Descriptions of the essence of each performance area, used to differentiate five levels of performance: Exemplary, Effective, Developing, Minimally Effective, and Ineffective. The TNTP Core Teaching Rubric uses descriptors that focus primarily on student actions and responses.
3. **Core Teacher Skills:** A non-exhaustive list of the teacher skills and behaviors that contribute to the student outcomes in each performance area. After observing and rating a lesson, we recommend that you select or identify one or two Core Teacher Skills to prioritize for the next development cycle.

When observers use the TNTP Core Teaching Rubric, they select the rating where the combination of descriptors most closely describes the observed performance, using a preponderance of evidence for each performance area. Observers do not rate the teacher on Core Teacher Skills; those are included only for coaching and development



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## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT | Are all students engaged in the work of the lesson<sup>1</sup> from start to finish?

1. INEFFECTIVE	2. MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE	3. DEVELOPING	4. EFFECTIVE	5. EXEMPLARY
<p>Very few or no students complete instructional tasks, volunteer responses and/or ask appropriate questions.</p> <p>Very few or no students demonstrate a clear understanding of behavioral expectations and/or directions through their actions.</p> <p>Students do not execute transitions, routines and procedures in an orderly manner.</p> <p>Students are left without work to do for a significant portion of the class period.</p>	<p>Some students complete instructional tasks, volunteer responses and/or ask appropriate questions.</p> <p>Some students demonstrate a clear understanding of behavioral expectations and/or directions.</p> <p>Students execute transitions, routines and procedures in an orderly and efficient manner only some of the time and/or require substantial direction from the teacher.</p> <p>Students are idle while waiting for the teacher or left with nothing to do for one or two minutes at a time.</p>	<p>Most students complete instructional tasks, volunteer responses and/or ask appropriate questions.</p> <p>Most students demonstrate a clear understanding of behavioral expectations and directions.</p> <p>Students execute transitions, routines and procedures in an orderly and efficient manner most of the time, though they may require some direction from the teacher.</p> <p>Students are idle for short periods of time (less than one minute at a time) while waiting for the teacher to provide directions, when finishing assigned work early, or during transitions.</p>	<p>All or almost all students complete instructional tasks, volunteer responses and/or ask appropriate questions.</p> <p>All or almost all students follow behavioral expectations and/or directions.</p> <p>Students execute transitions, routines and procedures in an orderly and efficient manner with minimal direction or narration from the teacher.</p> <p>Class has a quick pace and students are engaged in the work of the lesson from start to finish. Students who finish assigned work early engage in meaningful learning without interrupting other students' learning.</p>	<p><i>All descriptors for Level 4 are met, and at least one of the following types of evidence is demonstrated:</i></p> <p>Students assume responsibility for routines and procedures and execute them in an orderly, efficient and self-directed manner, requiring no direction or narration from the teacher.</p> <p>Students demonstrate a sense of ownership of behavioral expectations by holding each other accountable for meeting them.</p>

<sup>1</sup> **BL: Never think “lesson” in a blended learning context. Always think “lessons.” It will take more time and more post-observation follow-up (through teacher conferencing and data-mining) to know if most or all students are engaged in their lessons.**

## Core Teacher Skills

### Maintaining High Behavior Expectations

- Providing specific, concrete, sequential, and observable directions for behavior and academics
- Addressing all negative and off-task student behavior immediately and in a way that does not slow or disrupt lesson momentum
- Issuing logical and appropriate consequences as needed without hesitation, such that consequences are successful in changing student behavior
- Using voice and presence to maintain authority and convey caring for students
- Investing time in knowing individual students and in forming relationships to best support their learning
- Developing an active interest in students' well-being and demonstrating that interest through his/her engagement with students

### Maximizing Instructional Time

- Using efficient techniques for starting and ending lessons
- Using efficient routines and procedures
- **BL: Responding to student requests without interrupting instruction (Learning is happening through multiple modalities. Some interruption should be expected.)**



## ESSENTIAL CONTENT | Are all students working with content aligned to the appropriate standards for their subject and grade?

1. INEFFECTIVE	2. MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE	3. DEVELOPING	4. EFFECTIVE	5. EXEMPLARY
<p>The lesson does not focus on content that advances students toward grade-level standards or expectations and/or IEP goals.</p> <p>Most of the activities students engage in are not aligned to the stated or implied learning goal(s) or to each other.</p> <p>Instructional materials students use, such as texts, questions, problems, exercises and assessments, are not appropriately demanding for the grade/course and time in the school-year, based on guidance in the standards and/or students' IEP goals (ex. Lexile level and complexity of text).</p>	<p>The lesson partially focuses on content that advances students toward grade-level standards or expectations and/or IEP goals.</p> <p>Only some activities students engage in are aligned to the stated or implied learning goal(s).</p> <p>Some instructional materials students use, such as texts, questions, problems, exercises and assessments, are not appropriately demanding for the grade/course and time in the school-year, based on guidance in the standards and/or students' IEP goals (ex. Lexile level and complexity of text).</p>	<p>The lesson focuses on content that advances students toward grade-level standards or expectations and/or IEP goals.</p> <p>Most activities students engage in are aligned to the stated or implied learning goal(s) and move students toward mastery of the grade-level standard(s) and/or IEP goal(s).</p> <p>Most instructional materials students use, such as texts, questions, problems, exercises and assessments, are appropriately demanding for the grade/course and time in the school-year, based on guidance in the standards and/or students' IEP goals (ex. Lexile level and complexity of text).</p>	<p>All lessons focus on content that advances students toward grade-level standards or expectations and/or IEP goals.</p> <p>All activities students engage in are aligned to their stated or implied learning goal(s) and are well-sequenced and build on each other to move students toward mastery of the grade-level standard(s) and/or IEP goals.</p> <p>All instructional materials students use, such as online programs, texts, questions, problems, exercises and assessments, are high-quality and appropriately demanding for the grade/course and time in the school-year, based on guidance in the standards and/or students' IEP goals (ex. Lexile level and complexity of text).</p>	<p><i>All descriptors for Level 4 are met, and the following evidence is demonstrated:</i></p> <p>Students make connections between what they are learning and other content across disciplines.</p> <p>Students independently connect lesson content to real-world situations.</p>

## Core Teacher Skills

### Planning Effectively

- **BL: Allocating instructional time to address the most important content for the grade or course**
- Developing and clearly communicating a well-framed, standards-aligned and appropriately rigorous objective to describe the goal(s) of the lesson
- Developing and/or using appropriately demanding instructional materials, such as online programs, texts, questions, problems, exercises and assessments
- Developing a vision for student success and standards-aligned, big goal(s) that are ambitious, measurable and appropriate for all students
- **BL: Developing and/or using a long-term, sequential plan that leads to mastery of the most important content for the grade or course**
- Developing and/or using daily lesson activities that are well sequenced and move students toward mastery of grade-level standards
- Developing and providing accommodations and modifications as needed to ensure all students are able to attain learning goals
- Considering students' IEP goals and other specific learning needs in developing learning goals and preparing lessons (where applicable)
- Anticipating common student misunderstandings given the content, and ensuring strategies are in place to overcome those misunderstandings
- **BL: Using instructional time smartly to maximize individual student needs**
- **BL: Ensuring students are moving at an appropriate pace through their learning goals in order to meet long-term goals in a timely manner.**
- **BL: Developing plans in coordination with other teachers working in the BL model.**

**Note to observers:** When assessing the content of the lesson, your goal is to first examine what students are being asked to do during the lesson, and with what materials. Then, compare this to the expectation of the relevant Common Core or state standard for that particular subject/grade to assess whether or not the students are working with appropriately rigorous content.



## ACADEMIC OWNERSHIP

Are all students responsible for doing the thinking in this classroom?

1. INEFFECTIVE	2. MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE	3. DEVELOPING	4. EFFECTIVE	5. EXEMPLARY
<p>Very few or no students provide meaningful oral or written evidence to support their thinking.</p> <p>Students complete very little of the cognitive work during the lesson, such as reading, writing, discussion, analysis, computation, or problem solving; the teacher completes all or almost all of the cognitive work.</p> <p>Students respond negatively to their peers' thinking, ideas, or answers.</p> <p>No students or very few students try hard to complete challenging academic work or answer questions.</p>	<p>Some students provide meaningful oral or written evidence to support their thinking.</p> <p>Students complete some of the cognitive work during the lesson, such as reading, writing, discussion, analysis, computation, or problem solving, but the teacher or a very small number of students complete most of the cognitive work.</p> <p>Students do not respond to their peers' thinking, ideas, or answers, or do not provide feedback.</p> <p>Some students try hard to complete challenging academic work and answer questions.</p>	<p>Most students provide meaningful oral or written evidence to support their thinking.</p> <p>Students complete an appropriately challenging amount of the cognitive work during the lesson, such as reading, writing, discussion, analysis, computation, or problem solving, given the focus of the lesson.</p> <p>Students respond to their peers' thinking, ideas or answers, and provide feedback to their classmates.</p> <p>Most students try hard to complete academic work and answer questions, even if the work is challenging.</p>	<p>All or almost all students provide meaningful oral or written evidence to support their thinking. <b>(BL: May not happen during independent virtual time)</b></p> <p>Students complete an appropriately challenging amount of the cognitive work during the lesson, such as reading, writing, discussion, analysis, computation, or problem solving, given the focus of the lesson.</p> <p>Students respond to and build on their peers' thinking, ideas or answers. <b>(BL: May not happen during independent virtual time)</b></p> <p>Students routinely provide constructive feedback to their classmates and respond productively when a peer answers a question incorrectly or when they do not agree with the response.</p> <p><b>BL: All or almost all students consistently try hard to complete academic work and answer questions, even if the work is challenging.</b></p> <p><b>BL: Students know how their virtual work fits their larger learning goals.</b></p>	<p><i>All descriptors for Level 4 are met, and at least one of the following types of evidence is demonstrated:</i></p> <p>Students synthesize diverse perspectives or points of view during the lesson.</p> <p>Students independently show enthusiasm and interest in taking on advanced or more challenging content.</p>

## Core Teacher Skills

### Maintaining High Academic Expectations

- Promoting student persistence to get correct, defended responses
- Using an appropriate tone when responding to student answers
- Requiring that students use complete sentences, correct grammar and academic language
- **BL: Circulating during independent virtual learning time to probe for deeper understanding**
- **BL: Demanding that students think through difficult problems**

### Building Thinking Skills

- Structuring and delivering lesson activities so that students do an appropriate amount of the thinking required by the lesson
- Posing questions or providing lesson activities that require students to cite evidence to support their thinking
- Providing opportunities for students to respond to and build on their peers' ideas
- Providing support necessary for students to complete instructional tasks requiring higher-order thinking skills
- Providing individualized instruction so that all students can access content and participate in the class



## DEMONSTRATION OF LEARNING | Do all students demonstrate that they are learning?

1. INEFFECTIVE	2. MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE	3. DEVELOPING	4. EFFECTIVE	5. EXEMPLARY
<p>Questions, tasks or assessments do not yield data that allow the teacher to assess students' progress toward learning goals.</p> <p>Students have very few or no opportunities to express learning through academic writing and/or explanations using academic language.</p> <p>Very few or no students demonstrate how well they understand lesson content and their progress toward learning goals.</p> <p>Student responses, work and interactions demonstrate that most students are not on track to achieve stated or implied learning goals.</p>	<p>Questions, tasks or assessments yield data that only partially allow the teacher to assess students' progress toward learning goals.</p> <p>Students have few opportunities to express learning through academic writing and/or explanations using academic language.</p> <p>Some students demonstrate how well they understand lesson content and their progress toward learning goals through their work and/or responses.</p> <p>Student responses, work and interactions demonstrate that some students are on track to achieve stated or implied learning goals.</p>	<p>Questions, tasks or assessments yield data that allow the teacher to assess students' progress toward learning goals.</p> <p>Students have some opportunities to express learning through academic writing and/or explanations using academic language.</p> <p>Most students demonstrate how well they understand lesson content and their progress toward learning goals through their work and/or responses.</p> <p>Student responses, work and interactions demonstrate that most students are on track to achieve stated or implied learning goals.</p>	<p>Questions, tasks or assessments yield data that allow the teacher to assess students' progress toward learning goals and help pinpoint where understanding breaks down.</p> <p>Students have extensive opportunities to express learning through academic writing and/or explanations using academic language.</p> <p>All students demonstrate how well they understand lesson content and their progress toward learning goals through their work and/or responses.</p> <p>Student responses, work and interactions demonstrate that all or almost all students are on track to achieve stated or implied learning goals.</p>	<p><i>All descriptors for Level 4 are met, and at least one of the following types of evidence is demonstrated:</i></p> <p>Students self-assess whether they have achieved the lesson objective and provide feedback to the teacher.</p> <p>Students monitor their own progress, identify their own errors and seek additional opportunities for practice.</p>

## Core Teacher Skills

### Leading Instruction

- Conveying or providing accurate content and all content necessary for students to achieve the learning goal(s)
- Using explanations of content that are clear, coherent and support student understanding of content
- Differentiating instruction as needed in response to student learning needs, including enrichment and extra support
- **BL: Using a mix of learning opportunities to teach and re-teach content**
- **BL: Aligning virtual instruction and offline instruction**

### Checking for Understanding of Content

- Accurately checking for whether students understand the key content needed to master the lesson at key moments in the lesson (e.g. during direct instruction, before independent practice, at a transition and with an exit ticket at the end of a lesson)
- Developing and/or using informal and formal assessments that yield useable data on students' progress toward grade-level standards

### Responding to Student Misunderstanding

- Providing feedback that affirms correctly understood content and student progress toward the lesson objective, and clarifies misunderstood content

## TNTP Core Classroom Walk-Through Tool — Blended Learning Considerations

The TNTP Core Walk-Through Tool is a companion to the full TNTP Core Teaching Rubric and is aligned to the same vital performance areas. This tool can be used alone to guide peer-to-peer feedback, personal reflection and non-evaluative coaching. Observers who have experience with the TNTP Core Teaching Rubric may also use the Walk-Through Tool as a note-taking and feedback resource for all classroom observations.

When you visit a classroom, ask yourself the four Essential Questions and record your notes and/or evidence in the box below. A solid “yes” to an Essential Question merits a “4” rating.

**1. Are all students engaged in the work of the lesson(s) from start to finish?**

RATING:

**Tips for Observing Engagement during Virtual Instruction:**

- Students may demonstrate engagement during online time with an attentive posture, note-taking, avoiding distractions by other students, asking questions, and maintaining pace.
- Students are moving through virtual lessons at an appropriate pace.
- Students know that they can ask a teacher in the room a question about their virtual lesson.
- Students are actively using scratch paper or online tools that provide space for them to work through problems during math lessons.
- Students engaged in a research or writing assignment demonstrate meaningful progress as classroom time progresses.
- When asked, students can explain to you what they are working on.
- When asked, students know how their virtual lesson fits into their larger learning goals for the day/week/unit. Spend adequate time observing each learning environment to confirm that the engagement level is consistently strong throughout the class.

**Post-Observation Follow-up:**

- Data shows that students completed lessons and lesson assessments at a pace that is consistent with high expectations set during planning.
- Confirm that the teacher has a plan in place for technology failures and other disruptions to plans for lesson delivery.

**2. Are all students working with content aligned to the appropriate standards for their subject and grade?**

RATING:

What did you see students doing, reading and working with? What work do the grade-level standards call for?

**Tips for Observing Alignment in a Blended and/or Personalized Environment:**

- If a group of students is working on the same lesson, focus on alignment on that lesson during the observation. Follow-up on other smaller group and independent work content in a separate observation or post-observation.
- Remember that a benefit of blended learning is that students are able to work on content that matches their readiness. However, all content should be in service to progressing along grade-level standards. Take note of content that seems misaligned to discuss in the post-observation follow-up.

**Post-Observation Follow-up:**

- Focus in on specific students from your observation to get a good sense of how teachers are making decisions about content for each student. Ask:
  - How did you decide what students would be working on during this time?
  - How are you making decisions about which students to pair/group?
  - What standard/learning objective does this content align to?
  - What will this student/these students be doing next?

**3. Are all students responsible for doing the thinking in this classroom?**

RATING:

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### Tips for Observing Student Ownership in a Blended Environment

- When asked, students know how their work is connected to their larger learning goals.
- When asked, students understand why they are placed in a particular group or learning environment and how that grouping is best positioned to support their learning.
- Students move quickly and seamlessly between virtual and live instruction, exhibiting a sense of direction and purpose.
- Students actively work to find solutions to problems before asking the teacher(s). When asked, students can identify a problem they have encountered with a lesson. They can explain how they worked to solve it and at what point, if necessary, they asked their teacher for help.
- When students seek help from their teacher, the teacher consistently directs the inquiry back to them, primarily in the form of additional questions that facilitate their problem-solving process. This may include inquiry that encourages them to seek answers through the online tools available to them, in which case the follow-up effort may be observed.
- Teachers are using data generated from online programs to make strategic decisions about lesson content and delivery to students based on the results.

### Post-Observation Follow-up:

- Ask to see evidence that students are providing meaningful oral or written evidence to support their thinking.
- Probe to determine whether virtual time reinforces small-group and large-group learning time and vice versa to help clarify whether students own the content.

**4. Do all students demonstrate that they are learning?**

RATING:

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### **Tips for Observing Student Learning during in a Blended and/or Personalized Environment:**

- Demonstration of student learning can be more difficult when students are working on a variety of content. Focus your observation on the largest group of students working on the same content.
- Ask to see a students' individual dashboard if it exists. Follow up with students during and after class time to ask how their lesson fits in with their larger learning goals.

### **Post-Observation Follow-up:**

- Spend time reviewing formative assessment data with teacher(s) to determine whether students demonstrated understanding. Comparing that data with baseline data from the beginning of the school year or the beginning of a unit may help the observer gauge progress made.

## **5. Are teachers demonstrating collaboration?**

### **Tips for observing Collaboration:**

- Teachers in a shared space have a shared set of student rules and expectations.
- Teachers have a clear understanding of what all adults in the room are doing during the lesson time.
- Students have a clear understanding of the role that each teaching is playing in the classroom and know when and whom to consult to problem solve.

### **Post-Observation Follow-up:**

- Teachers use collaborative language during post-observation conversations. "Teacher B is working with students on X and so I'm working on Y."

## Follow-up Questions

What, if anything, keeping you from answering 'yes' to any of the four Essential Questions above?

What specific skill or technique will you and the teacher practice and develop over the next cycle?

