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.

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.

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.