

# Assessing Distance Learning in Action

## Quality Review Tool for Distance Learning Implementation

### Introduction

This document is one in a series designed to support Connecticut districts as they create and implement continuity of learning plans that will assure high-quality, equitable distance learning. It is a tool districts can use **to assess the quality of their distance learning implementation** and **to identify features that need to be more robust** to support equitable learning outcomes.

The tool is designed around the quality distance learning standards in the planning guide, “[Actualizing Connecticut Classrooms for Continuous Learning: Guidance and Tools for High-Quality, Equitable Distance Learning](#).” These standards span the creation and maintenance of a strong **Instructional Core, Positive Learning Environment**, and **Systems for Improvement**. Both documents build on CSDE’s guidance on Fall 2020 school reopening and draw on comprehensive research—including extensive conversations with Connecticut superintendents, principals, educators, and families—into how districts and schools in the state and nationally met the challenges and opportunities posed by the Spring 2020 transition to distance learning.

### Suggested Use

This evaluation tool details a set of indicators aligned to each of the eight quality standards for distance learning. To make the best use of this tool, your district will want to determine its process for conducting the quality review, including:

- When and how often evaluations will occur
- Who will conduct the evaluation
- How evaluators will be oriented to the tool and norm on its use
- How evaluators will collect evidence for each domain

- How evaluators will determine final ratings
- How the evaluation results will be used
- How evaluation results will be communicated to students, families, staff, and the public

**S 1.1** Use engaging, standards-aligned, coherent, and culturally responsive<sup>1</sup> and sustaining<sup>2</sup> **curricula that supports student-centered e-learning**; that cultivates digital fluency and citizenship skills; and that meets the learning needs of students with IEPs, English Learners, students who experience homelessness, and other marginalized populations.

**To collect evidence to inform ratings:**

1. Review curricula, instructional unit overviews, and a sample of weekly individual learning plans across grades and subjects, looking closely for strategic alignment with the Connecticut Core learning standards and culturally responsive and sustaining content.
2. Interview instructional staff, take a virtual tour of the online learning environment and class materials, and observe virtual classes
3. Review student assessments and student work across grades and subjects, looking closely for how the curricula and tasks utilize digital technology and can be refined for student needs.

Indicator	Rating	Evidence
<p><b>1.1(a)</b> Curricula and academic tasks are strategically aligned to Connecticut Core learning standards.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary <input type="checkbox"/> Well Developed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Under-developed	
<p><b>1.1(b)</b> Curricula and academic tasks embed the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary <input type="checkbox"/> Well Developed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Under-developed	
<p><b>1.1(c)</b> Curricula and academic tasks support the cultural and linguistic competence of students' communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary <input type="checkbox"/> Well Developed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Under-developed	
<p><b>1.1(d)</b> Curricula and academic tasks utilize digital technology that supports learning goals and enhances the learning experience; that is easy to navigate; and that promotes digital literacy, communication skills, ownership of learning, and self-monitoring.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary <input type="checkbox"/> Well Developed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Under-developed	

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<p><b>1.1(e)</b> Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data so that individuals and groups of students, including students with IEPs, English Learners, students who experience homelessness, and other marginalized populations, have access to the curricula and tasks and are cognitively engaged.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary <input type="checkbox"/> Well Developed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Under-developed</p>	
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**S 1.2** Use **student-centered pedagogy** that reflects a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best remotely that is informed by Connecticut Core standards and evidence-based distance-learning practices, that is aligned to the curricula, that effectively uses technology, that is engaging, and that differentiates instruction to meet the needs of all learners.

**To collect evidence to inform ratings:**

1. Review instructional units and weekly individual learning plans and observe virtual classes across grades and subjects, looking closely for strategic alignment with the Connecticut Core learning standards, culturally responsive and sustaining practices, use of technology, and learner-centered pedagogy.
2. Observe virtual classes, interview instructional staff, and review student assessments, student work, and student, staff, and family surveys across grades and subjects, looking for culturally responsive and sustaining practices, use of technology, and learner-centered pedagogy.

Indicator	Rating	Evidence
<p><b>1.2(a)</b> Across the vast majority of virtual classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and develop the skills expressed in the Connecticut Core learning standards.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary <input type="checkbox"/> Well Developed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Under-developed	
<p><b>1.2(b)</b> Across the vast majority of virtual classrooms, teaching practices are learner centered, empowering and supporting students to connect with families, educators, communities, and others; to develop and reflect on their understanding of their needs, strengths, and interests; to take ownership of their learning; and to progress at their own pace based on demonstrated mastery.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary <input type="checkbox"/> Well Developed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Under-developed	
<p><b>1.2(c)</b> Across the vast majority of virtual classrooms, teaching practices embed the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary <input type="checkbox"/> Well Developed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Under-developed	
<p><b>1.2(d)</b> Across the vast majority of virtual classrooms, teaching practices develop the cultural and linguistic competence of students' communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary <input type="checkbox"/> Well Developed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Under-developed	

<p><b>1.2(e)</b> Across the vast majority of virtual classrooms, teaching practices effectively use technology to engage students and develop digital fluency, communication, and citizenship skills.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary <input type="checkbox"/> Well Developed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Under-developed	
<p><b>1.2(f)</b> Across the vast majority of virtual classrooms, teaching practices (including questioning, scaffolding in English and/or native languages where appropriate, and routines) strategically provide multiple entry points and high-quality supports and extensions into the curricula so that all learners, including English Learners and students with IEPs, are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills and student work products.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary <input type="checkbox"/> Well Developed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Under-developed	

**S 1.3** Use **on-going assessment and equitable mastery-based grading and promotion practices**, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the school, team, class, and individual-student levels.

**To collect evidence to inform ratings:**

1. Review assessments, rubrics, and student learning data across grades and subjects, looking closely for ability to capture student mastery and strategic alignment to Connecticut Core learning standards.
2. Review assessments, rubrics, grading policies, and feedback practices across grades and subjects, looking for ability to demonstrate mastery in multiple ways and to promote self-monitoring and reflection on learning.
3. Observe leadership and instructional team meetings, interview instructional staff, and review staff surveys across grades and subjects, looking for how staff analyze student learning outcomes to adjust decisions at the school, team, class, and individual-student levels.

Indicator	Rating	Evidence
<p><b>1.3(a)</b> Across the vast majority of grades and subjects, teachers use assessments, rubrics, and grading and promotion policies that are aligned with the school’s curricula, provide valid and reliable information about student content mastery, and provide actionable and meaningful feedback to students, teachers, and families regarding student achievement.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary <input type="checkbox"/> Well Developed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Under-developed	
<p><b>1.3(b)</b> Across grades and subjects, assessment practices provide flexibility for students to demonstrate mastery in a variety of ways.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary <input type="checkbox"/> Well Developed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Under-developed	
<p><b>1.3(c)</b> Across grades and subjects, assessment practices provide routine and varied opportunities for self-monitoring and reflection on learning.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary <input type="checkbox"/> Well Developed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Under-developed	
<p><b>1.3(d)</b> Instructional and leadership teams across the district analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the school, team, class, and individual-student levels.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary <input type="checkbox"/> Well Developed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Under-developed	

**S 2.1** Communicate **clear and high expectations** with students, families, community members, teachers, staff, and administrators and provide supports to achieve those expectations.

**To collect evidence to inform ratings:**

1. Review communications to staff, families, and students across grades and subjects, looking for how they communicate expectations and supports.
2. Interview and review surveys submitted by staff, families, and students across grades and subjects, looking closely for how they perceive expectations and the quality and availability of supports to meet expectations.
3. Review professional learning offerings provided to instructional and non-instructional staff.
4. Review Care Team, Resource Team, Meal Team, and Shared-Student Team records, looking for rates, trends, and gaps in support uptake and provision.

Indicator	Rating	Evidence
<b>2.1(a)</b> School leaders consistently communicate high expectations around instructional design and delivery, developing a learning community, and continuous improvement to the entire staff.	<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary <input type="checkbox"/> Well Developed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Under-developed	
<b>2.1(b)</b> School leaders and staff communicate clear expectations connected to short-, medium-, and long-term academic and SEL goals and promotion and graduation standards.	<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary <input type="checkbox"/> Well Developed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Under-developed	
<b>2.1(c)</b> School leaders consistently communicate clear expectations to students, families, and staff about how to engage and interact while distance learning.	<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary <input type="checkbox"/> Well Developed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Under-developed	
<b>2.1(d)</b> School leaders and staff provide supports to each other, families, and students to achieve high expectations.	<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary <input type="checkbox"/> Well Developed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Under-developed	

**S 2.2** Build and maintain positive and **trusting relationships and a culture of learning** that support the academic, personal, social, and emotional growth of students and adults and fosters meaningful collaboration among students, families, community members, teachers, staff, and administrators in integrated settings.

**To collect evidence to inform ratings:**

1. Interview and review surveys submitted by staff, looking for provision and uptake of social-emotional and professional supports, professional satisfaction, and unmet needs.
2. Review provision and uptake of social-emotional and academic supports for students, including Care Team, Resource Team, Meal Team, and Shared-Student Team Reports. Interview and review surveys submitted by students and families across grades and subjects, looking for indications of satisfaction with school engagement, culture, and support.
3. Review engagement in collaboration between staff and families across grades and subjects.
4. Review engagement in collaboration between staff and families across grades.

Indicator	Rating	Evidence
<p><b>2.2(a)</b> Members of the school community demonstrate trust, respect, and care for one another.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary <input type="checkbox"/> Well Developed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Under-developed	
<p><b>2.2(b)</b> School practices consistently build and maintain a culture of learning that supports the academic, personal, social, and emotional growth of students and adults.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary <input type="checkbox"/> Well Developed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Under-developed	
<p><b>2.2(c)</b> Across the district, district and school practices foster meaningful collaboration among students, families, community members, teachers, staff, and administrators.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary <input type="checkbox"/> Well Developed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Under-developed	
<p><b>2.2(d)</b> Members of the school community learn, collaborate, and build meaningful relationships in integrated settings.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary <input type="checkbox"/> Well Developed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Under-developed	

**S 3.1** Establish and monitor progress against a theory of action for **school improvement and innovation** that is aligned to a longer-term vision for quality schooling, that reveals disparities in quality of services provided (e.g., by race, primary language spoken, IEP status, housing status, income status), and that is understood and supported by the school community.

**To collect evidence to inform ratings:**

1. Review district and school theories of action, looking for focus, clarity, alignment.
2. Review measures/indicators that have been collected, goals set, evidence of progress toward goals, and evidence of goal adjustment.
3. Review district and school data practices, looking for how practices reveal disparities and provide actionable feedback.
4. Review how school and district leaders collaborate with and elicit and use input from the school community (e.g., staff, families, and age-appropriate students) when creating school improvement plans and making decisions. Review communications to school community members regarding school improvement planning. Interview school community members for their involvement and satisfaction with these

Indicator	Rating	Evidence
<p><b>3.1(a)</b> The theory of action includes clear, focused, and coherent, and responsive school-level goals and action plans.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary <input type="checkbox"/> Well Developed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Under-developed	
<p><b>3.1(b)</b> Goals are tracked for progress and thoughtfully adjusted to leverage changes that explicitly link to accelerated student learning and social-emotional growth.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary <input type="checkbox"/> Well Developed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Under-developed	
<p><b>3.1(c)</b> District and school data practices reveal disparities in quality of services provided to students (e.g., by race, primary language spoken, IEP status, housing status, income status), providing actionable feedback to school and district leaders, administrators, and staff to adapt practices to eliminate disparities.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary <input type="checkbox"/> Well Developed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Under-developed	

<p><b>3.1(d)</b> School and district leaders effectively involve and communicate with the school community, including staff, families, and age-appropriate students, the theory of action and progress.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary <input type="checkbox"/> Well Developed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Under-developed</p>	
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**S 3.2** Make **strategic and innovative organizational decisions** to support the school’s instructional goals, eliminate disparities in opportunities provided and outcomes achieved, and meet student learning needs.

**To collect evidence to inform ratings:**

1. Review the use of district and school resources (e.g., budget, space, technology, coaches, staff, partnerships) looking for alignment with the school and district’s long-term goals (including the elimination of disparities in student opportunities and outcomes). Interview and review surveys from staff, looking for areas of inefficiency and misalignment with school goals.
2. Interview and review surveys from staff, looking for areas of inefficiency and misalignment with school goals.
3. Review staff schedules, looking for regular, substantial, and structured time for staff to collaborate and complete responsibilities aligned with school and district goals.

Indicator	Rating	Evidence
<p><b>3.2(a)</b></p> <p>The use of resources (e.g., budget, space, technology, coaches, staff, partnerships) and other organizational decisions are responsive to the virtual learning environment and data collection, support the school and district’s instructional and long-term goals, eliminate disparities in opportunities provided and outcomes achieved, and meet student learning needs.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary <input type="checkbox"/> Well Developed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Under-developed	
<p><b>3.2(b)</b></p> <p>The use of staff time is structured such that teams have substantial and regular meetings that are deliberately structured so that teachers’ professional responsibilities align with the school and district goals, focusing teacher time on instructional and social-emotional work and resulting in improved digital instruction that engages and challenges all students.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary <input type="checkbox"/> Well Developed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Under-developed	

**S 3.3** Engage in **structured, collaborative, inquiry-based professional and community learning** to improve implementation, eliminate disparities (e.g., by race, primary language spoken, IEP status, income status), problem solve challenges, experiment with promising innovations, promote shared leadership, and advance equitable outcomes and student learning.

**To collect evidence to inform ratings:**

1. Interview staff, community members, and families, looking for satisfaction with professional and community learning.
2. Review staff and family surveys as well as documents and artifacts from inquiry sessions.
3. Observe inquiry sessions.

Indicator	Rating	Evidence
<b>3.3(a)</b> Staff regularly problem solve individually and collectively, understanding underlying causes, designing and testing responsive solutions, and spreading promising practices.	<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary <input type="checkbox"/> Well Developed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Under-developed	
<b>3.3(b)</b> Staff engage with those most familiar with and affected by a problem, collaboratively investigating underlying causes and co-creating responsive solutions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary <input type="checkbox"/> Well Developed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Under-developed	
<b>3.3(c)</b> Learning that results from inquiry-based problem solving--including promising new practices and efficacy data--is shared and informs the school's theory of action and goals.	<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary <input type="checkbox"/> Well Developed <input type="checkbox"/> Developing <input type="checkbox"/> Under-developed	

<sup>1</sup> Culturally responsive approaches use “the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them.” Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*. Teachers College Press.

<sup>2</sup> Culturally sustaining approaches “seek to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling” (Django, 2012, p. 95). Culturally sustaining not only takes into account the many ways students learn, but it also requires that students are supported in “sustaining the

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cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence.” Django, P. (2012). Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy: A Needed Change in Stance, Terminology, and Practice. *Educational Researcher*, 41(3), 93-97.