

Virtual Look-Fors for School Leaders: Supporting Instruction During Remote Learning

When learning takes place in-person and walk-throughs of physical classrooms can be conducted, leaders typically use the Instructional Core to look for evidence of meaningful content, effective instructional practices, and active student engagement. The same applies during times of remote learning. Before leaders can engage in these observations, it is critical to ensure that students are connected and supported, teachers are clear and communicative, and content is worthy and engaging. You also need to keep equity and the needs of your most vulnerable learners front and center. Below, New Leaders has outlined a set of recommended look-fors during remote learning. These look-fors are organized by “Stage 1” and “Stage 2.” Stage 1 look-fors are the foundations – the elements that virtual classrooms must have in place to begin moving toward a vision of instructional excellence and equity. Stage 2 look-fors build on these foundations to further support a vision of instructional excellence and equity during times of sustained remote learning.

Area	CONTENT LOOK-FORS		Where to Look
Assignments	Content, tasks, and assignments...		
	Stage 1	<input type="checkbox"/> consist of high-quality texts, problems, and tasks aligned with the most critical skills and knowledge within the grade-level/content area to accelerate student learning. <input type="checkbox"/> are designed to measure students’ ability to demonstrate the intended skill(s) and approach or achieve mastery. <input type="checkbox"/> are culturally responsive, inclusive, and reflect the lived experiences of students and their communities. <input type="checkbox"/> engage students, are developmentally appropriate and connected to their own experiences, are worthy of students’ time. <input type="checkbox"/> provide qualitative data for teachers about what students know and are able to do (i.e., no busy work).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignments • Student tasks
	Stage 2	<input type="checkbox"/> provide flexible opportunities and avenues for students to demonstrate their learning – e.g., discussion boards, written assignments, project-based learning, presentations, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> are designed with entry points and purposeful scaffolding (i.e., all students can begin the task and then advance). <input type="checkbox"/> balance critical thinking and problem-solving with maintaining important knowledge and skills. <input type="checkbox"/> offer a manageable workload wherein students can complete tasks independently without adult support and within given time frames.	
Clarity of Instructions	Content, tasks, and assignments...		
	Stage 1	<input type="checkbox"/> communicate high expectations and high standards for student learning, participation, work, and expected outcomes, while also providing flexibility around how and when work is done. <input type="checkbox"/> offer clearly defined verbal and written instructions, required steps, and the amount of time it should take for students to complete (for elementary, this may also include expectations for family support).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignments • Student tasks • Learning platform (e.g., Google)

	Stage 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ include clear success criteria, rubrics, or other tools aligned to the applicable standard(s) for students to monitor progress toward completion and to self-assess.❑ outline how and when work will be reviewed and timely feedback will be provided as part of the initial instructions.	<div>Classroom)</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rubrics• Teacher-student communication
Area	TEACHER LOOK-FORS		Where to Look
Planning	The teacher...		
	Stage 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ utilizes ongoing student data (formative/summative assessments, student work, observations, etc.) to drive daily instruction and weekly planning.❑ uses data and feedback from a variety of stakeholder groups (students, families, teachers, leaders) to inform longer-term planning.❑ effectively develops and sequences assignments to prioritize the most critical prerequisite skills and knowledge to accelerate student learning and drive towards mastery of year-end learning targets.❑ distinguishes when and how to effectively use synchronous instruction versus asynchronous instruction to accelerate learning and support students’ ability to meet year-end learning targets.❑ collaborates with grade-level/content-area colleagues and specialists to share resources, develop assignments, plan for instruction, and provide additional supports to meet the needs of diverse learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lesson plans• Virtual collaborative planning meetings
	Stage 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ facilitates learning by consistently placing the cognitive lift on students.❑ uses technology and learning platforms strategically and effectively to build community, engage students, and support learning goals and outcomes.❑ notices any disproportionality in outcomes and partners with content/grade-level teams to determine the root cause(s) and address and dismantle any inequitable systems.	
Feedback	The teacher...		
	Stage 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ builds formative assessment into tasks.❑ ensures all students receive regular, ongoing, and timely feedback aligned to support goals and accelerate learning.❑ proactively offers opportunities to connect with students to review feedback 1:1 – e.g., office hours, student-teacher check-ins, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assignments• Student tasks• Submitted student work• Teacher-student communication

	Stage 2	<input type="checkbox"/> provides consistent and effective feedback to students that includes next steps for the student to take towards the goal of the task and their overall learning goals. <input type="checkbox"/> provides opportunities for students to apply feedback and resubmit tasks as a means of demonstrating learning and mastery.	
Communication	The teacher...		
	Stage 1	<input type="checkbox"/> proactively works to understand the reality and unique situation of each student and family and communicates with empathy and care. <input type="checkbox"/> establishes effective mechanisms and channels for communication with families as a group and individually, considering family needs and preferences when appropriate. <input type="checkbox"/> sets clear expectations for when they are available and how they can best be contacted. <input type="checkbox"/> utilizes formal and informal mechanisms to check in with all students and families on overall well-being and to support academic progress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning platforms • Teacher-student communication • Teacher calendar • Student and family surveys
	Stage 2	<input type="checkbox"/> develops positive supports and reinforcements (e.g., digital rewards, celebratory routines) to celebrate student growth and success. <input type="checkbox"/> develops mechanisms to help students stay on track with assignments and tasks (e.g, calendar reminders, timelines). <input type="checkbox"/> provides ongoing opportunities for students and families to share what's working and what's not and uses the data to drive their next steps.	
Area		STUDENT LOOK-FORS	Where to Look
Work Habits	Students...		
	Stage 1	<input type="checkbox"/> demonstrate an ability to effectively sign-onto and use all technology platforms. <input type="checkbox"/> actively participate and engage in learning both independently and during group learning. <input type="checkbox"/> exhibit effective work habits, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> effectively managing time to complete assignments. <input type="checkbox"/> proactively seeking support when an assignment is challenging or requires clarification. <input type="checkbox"/> requesting an extension if assignments cannot be completed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submitted student work • Discussion boards • Synchronous learning
	Stage 2	<input type="checkbox"/> engage in self-paced and self-directed learning when appropriate. <input type="checkbox"/> possess organizational strategies to keep track of assignments. <input type="checkbox"/> reflect on learning and can say whether or not the learning target was met.	

		<input type="checkbox"/> produce quality work that demonstrates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> understanding and engagement with the task <input type="checkbox"/> mastery of the intended skills/task <input type="checkbox"/> critical thinking and/or problem-solving <input type="checkbox"/> application of teacher feedback that moves towards students' learning goals 	
Student Discourse	Students...		
	Stage 1	<input type="checkbox"/> have opportunities to learn with and from one another through discussion boards, synchronous discussion, or other collaborative opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submitted student work • Discussion boards • Synchronous learning • Learning platforms
	Stage 2	<input type="checkbox"/> discuss and ask questions about each other's thinking to clarify or improve their understanding or build upon one another's ideas. <input type="checkbox"/> use social media and platforms to work, share, interact, and learn together.	