



Indicator Explanation



DOMAIN	EFFECTIVE PRACTICE	INDICATOR
Talent	Target professional learning opportunities	2B.4 All teachers receive initial and ongoing training and support in effective use of blended learning methods.

Forms of virtual and blended learning which incorporate the use of technology have risen sharply over the past fifteen years, and this trend is likely to continue moving forward (Evergreen Education Group, 2019). In certain situations, remote instruction may be necessary, due to school closures following a natural disaster or health crisis. School leadership teams have an important role to play in ensuring that teachers and other school staff are equipped with the resources and supports necessary to provide high-quality, evidence-based remote and/or blended instruction. The accompanying tool at the end of the brief is designed to support teams as they evaluate how strategies are implemented, whether they are having the intended impact, and plan for improvements.

School leadership teams can support teachers by identifying the social-emotional supports that may be needed in response to a crisis which results in a shift to remote learning, as well as ensuring that professional development is provided to help teachers develop the skills needed to provide evidence-based remote/blended instruction.

Providing Social-Emotional Supports

Stress is a leading cause of teacher burnout and decisions to exit the profession (American Federation of Teachers, 2017). Many educators work in communities with high numbers of students experiencing stress and trauma, and may experience both primary stress themselves, as well as secondary traumatic stress as they work with and learn about “students’ trauma exposure, feeling empathetic yet having limited ability to change their situations” (Thomas, Crosby, & Vanderhaar, 2019, p. 428). Many educators are likely experiencing both primary stress themselves, as well as secondary traumatic stress as they work with and learn about “students’ trauma exposure, feeling empathetic yet having limited ability to change their situations” (Thomas, Crosby, & Vanderhaar, 2019, p. 428). The National Center on Safe Supportive Learning environments provides a self-care packet to help educators, counselors, and other support staff who work with students experiencing trauma. Some schools have conducted wellness surveys of staff, setting up “help lines,” drop-in wellness sessions focused on mindfulness or other restorative practices, and ensuring that social activities (no work talk) continue to help educators connect with colleagues outside of a work setting (Lew, 2020). Many teachers have likely not developed the confidence to implement remote/blended instruction (Roy, 2020). Collective efficacy within a school is a critical factor for student success (Hattie, 2017), and schools must take initiative to build teachers’ efficacy for providing high-quality remote/blended learning. Schools are encouraged to:



Develop a shared vision for distance learning with teachers that is practical and learner-centered. Then find teachers on your staff who have strengths in these areas to serve as models. Vicarious experiences are one way to build a teacher's sense of efficacy. If the majority of your faculty believes your new mode of teaching is impossible, they are unlikely to try. But by seeing concrete examples from colleagues who have found success, they are more apt to believe that they, too, can do it. (Roy, 2020)

Much of the efficacy needed for high-quality remote/blended instruction will also need to come from responsive professional learning to support teachers' mastery experiences

Professional Development for High-Quality Remote/Blended Instruction

While some professional development is district-mandated, schools and leadership teams often are in a better position to determine additional professional learning tailored to benefit the needs of the particular school staff. As Gallagher and Cottingham (2020) note, "teachers will need additional daily planning time and training to redesign instruction and make the substantial instructional shifts necessary to provide high-quality learning experiences" (p. 6). Remote and blended learning requires teachers to have a different skill set from that which is provided through most teacher preparation programs (Rice, 2014), and the majority of teachers have not been prepared to engage students with remote instruction, making professional development paramount (Archambault & Kennedy, 2018). Professional organizations have developed standards for online teaching that reflect the skills and dispositions necessary for success (i.e., National Standards for Quality Online Teaching developed by the Virtual Learning Leadership Alliance and Quality Matters, 2019); these standards include themes such as online pedagogy (i.e., feedback and classroom management); instructional design that incorporates methods of accessibility and accommodation; assessment of student learning; technical expertise; and professionalism and ethics (Archambault & Kennedy, 2018). Mentors are also key in building both pre-service and in-service teachers' capabilities in remote instruction, although little research on mentoring programs exists (Dawson & Dana, 2018a).

Professional learning for in-service teachers must improve technological pedagogical content knowledge, or TPACK (Harris, Mishra, & Koehler, 2009), while simultaneously empowering teachers to generate educational innovation that better meets students' needs (Lafuente, 2018). Lafuente noted:

The goal is not to learn how to run technological devices to better meet student needs. There needs to be professional learning where practitioners form learning communities and share materials and best practices. Investing resources in technology is not enough if teachers do not have the competence to use them in a pedagogically sound fashion; otherwise, technology in the classroom can even have detrimental consequences. (OECD, 2015, pp. 108–109)

Unfortunately, most training is generic and not integrated within a content area (Dawson & Dana, 2018b). Little is known through research about what enables fully remote and blended teachers to have "not only an excellent grasp of their given content area but also an appreciation of how technology and the online environment affect the content and the pedagogy of what they are attempting to teach" (Archambault, Debruler, & Freidhoff, 2014, p. 87, as cited in Greene & Hale, 2017). Dawson and Dana (2018b) suggest that professional development for K–12 remote teaching incorporate but extend the five core features of effective professional development suggested by Desimone (2009) to address remote instruction:

1. **Content focus:** Emphasize subject matter content and how students learn it, but also address the varying roles within remote learning contexts (i.e., administrators, content designers, counselors, etc.).
2. **Active learning:** Include more options for active learning; the variety of media typically used in remote instruction can support simulations, modeling, role-playing, etc.
3. **Coherence:** Align professional development with state and district goals but also with standards for online teaching and learning, content standards, and the type of media teachers will use for instruction.



4. Duration: Optimize remote teaching by including both short- and long-term opportunities to prepare teachers for more technical, skills-based knowledge needed to be effective in online settings.
5. Collective participation: Encourage teachers to work together to learn; remote professional development lends itself well to this cause due to greater teacher comfort working and collaborating together in online environments, and the geographic distance that often separates online teachers. Highly interactive programs include coaching, peer coaching, lesson study, and action research; these practices are often embedded within the workday to support teachers as they learn about their own practice and that of their colleagues (Zepeda, 2013).

School leadership teams can use these features to determine the quality of professional development currently being provided, identifying issues or areas that need improvement or expansion based on teachers' satisfaction, quality of implementation, and effects on student learning. School leaders should also consider how they can free up adequate time for teachers to effectively engage in instructional planning and teach well within remote/blended conditions. Gallagher & Cottingham (2020) report on innovative approaches being used in schools:

Interviews also highlighted the way schools supported teachers to narrow their roles to make the time requirements more manageable, including relatively typical pre-existing practices (e.g., teachers at a grade- or subject-level who divide up planning for a multi-week unit so that each teacher planned only a portion of instruction) and innovative approaches to reallocating teaching responsibilities (e.g., one teacher creating video-based direct instruction models, while another provides feedback on student work, and a third does one-to-one phone outreach to families of students who were less engaged). (p. 6)

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