

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP TOOL: Early Childhood

PURPOSE:

This resource is intended to assist Local Education Agency (LEA) administrators with information and evidence to support performance evaluations for teachers of preschool students. It is not intended to supplant any documents or resources adopted by the LEA to support the employee evaluation process. The considerations and discussion points provided are intended to help administrators guide their own thinking, teacher thinking, and purposeful conversations. This tool is designed to align with Domains 1-3 of the T-TESS evaluation system. It is recommended for use in any stage of the T-TESS process, especially during the Pre-Evaluation Conference and Post-Evaluation Conference meetings.

INSTRUCTOR	ADMINISTRATOR	SCHOOL YEAR



DATE:

PRE-CONFERENCE NOTES:

DATE:

POST-CONFERENCE NOTES:

DATE:

END-OF-YEAR-CONFERENCE NOTES:

Planning

T-TESS Dimensions	EC Considerations	Discussion Points
<p>1.1 Standards and Alignment The teacher designs clear, well-organized, sequential lessons that reflect best practices, align with the standards, and are appropriate for diverse learners. Standards Basis 1A, 1B, 3A, 3B, 3C</p>	<p>1. The teacher uses Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) Guidelines, TEA EC-2 vertical alignment tool, developmentally appropriate practices, and any local curriculum and guidance documents to determine student skill levels and plan differentiated classroom activities.</p> <p>2. The teacher creates sequences of guided and student-led activities that provide practice in increasingly complex skills and build knowledge within developmental domains.</p> <p>3. The teacher designs hands-on, play-based learning experiences across a mix of open-ended and problem-solving materials considering diverse learners.</p> <p>Examples of materials: Open-ended: blocks, Legos, dolls, etc. Problem-solving: puzzles, pegboards, nesting cups, etc.</p>	<p>Describe your typical lesson planning process. How do you use state and local alignment documents and student data to create weekly and daily learning objectives and develop activities?</p> <p>Walk me through this week's plans for whole and small group lessons and student-led centers. What types of sensory, movement, fine and gross motor activities did you include alongside emerging literacy and math content?</p> <p>How do you incorporate different opportunities for play in your academic and social lesson plans? How do you promote play in your classroom?</p>
<p>1.2 Data and Assessment The teacher uses formal and informal methods to measure student progress, then manages and analyzes student data to inform instruction. Standards Basis 1B, 1F, 2B, 2C, 5A, 5B, 5C, 5D</p>	<p>1. The teacher collects and uses anecdotal records, parent reports, student work samples, behavioral logs, informal and formal assessment results, and IEP documentation and uses it to build comprehensive plans for individual and group instruction.</p> <p>2. IEP goals for students in general education receiving special education services are embedded in classroom lessons and activities and not taught in isolation or through ad hoc pull-out lessons.</p>	<p>What different sources and/or kinds of data do you use to plan instruction?</p> <p>How do you use student work samples and/or student observations to assess learning?</p> <p>What are some logistical challenges to collecting and using data? How can administrators or colleagues support the solutions you've found work best?</p>
<p>1.3 Knowledge of Students Through knowledge of students and proven practices, the teacher ensures high levels of</p>	<p>1. The teacher identifies children's strengths, interests, preferences, experiences, cultures, and home languages and uses this information to plan relevant and affirming lesson plans.</p>	<p>Tell me about some of your students. What are their strengths? What are some of their interests, likes and dislikes?</p> <p>How do you learn more about your student's family and</p>

<p>learning, social-emotional development, and achievement for all students. Standards Basis 1A, 1B, 1C, 2A, 2B, 2C</p>	<p>2. The teacher organizes books, activities, and materials that reflect student backgrounds and interests and utilizes students' prior knowledge and experiences to connect to new learning goals.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dolls with different hair, eye, and skin color ● Food props from family cuisines ● Dinosaur or fantasy-themed pretend props 	<p>home life and connect that to classroom activities and instruction?</p>
<p>1.4 Activities The teacher plans engaging, flexible lessons that encourage higher-order thinking, persistence, and achievement. Standards Basis: 1B, 1C, 1D, 1E</p>	<p>1. The teacher provides opportunities for children to work on complex, challenging tasks and assists in approximations of mastery within the child's zone of proximal development.</p> <p>2. The teacher develops opportunities for collaborative, open-ended play and imaginative and creative expression by exploring fine and performing arts, sports, and hobbies.</p> <p>3. The teacher's plans allow for spontaneity and flexibility to incorporate student questions and interests into lessons.</p> <p>Example: Encouraging observations of a caterpillar found at recess using a magnifying lens in addition to the planned science center.</p>	<p>How do you plan differentiated activities to allow all students to participate and scaffold student learning at individual levels?</p> <p>How do you plan for student inquiry, discovery, and curiosity?</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student-led discussions ● Encouraging questioning ● Brainstorming ● Exploring how things work and why ● Reasoning out relationships <p>How do you plan play-based and open-ended centers that promote imagination and creativity?</p>

Instruction

T-TESS Dimensions	EC Considerations	Discussion Points
<p>2.1 Achieving Expectations The teacher supports all learners in their pursuit of high levels of academic and social-emotional success. Standards Basis: 1B, 1D, 1E, 2A, 2C, 3B, 4A, 4D, 5B</p>	<p>1. Students are engaged in grade-level content with differentiation as appropriate based on individual student progress and goals.</p> <p>2. The teacher coaches students to identify and correct errors using positive instructional strategies and provides supportive modeling to address misconceptions.</p> <p>3. Social-emotional learning is supported through the use of tools, routines, and procedures that afford autonomy and student leadership.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Emotion charts/facial expressions ● Teaching conflict resolution steps ● Role-playing ● Problem-solving; “I wonder, what if let’s try?” <p>4. Instructional methods support inquiry, experimentation, classification, comparison, and evaluation. Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Leading guided discovery ● Modeling think-a louds ● Providing visual vocabulary lists for scavenger hunts 	<p>How do you spot and address mistakes in understanding during instruction?</p> <p>What opportunities are available for students to take initiative and ownership in their learning?</p> <p>How do your teaching strategies support collaborative or active learning, such as play with peers and hands-on activities?</p>
<p>2.2 Content Knowledge and Expertise The teacher uses content and pedagogical expertise to design and execute lessons aligned with state standards, related content, and student needs.</p>	<p>1. The teacher delivers interactive play-based lessons that enable developmentally appropriate learning.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Games ● Songs ● Sensorimotor activities 	<p>What are some new pedagogical methods and teaching strategies you are implementing in your classroom to support developmental learning?</p> <p>How did you choose manipulatives and/or materials to offer students or equip your centers?</p>

<p>Standards Basis: 1A, 1C, 1E, 1F, 2C, 3A, 3B, 3C</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interactive activities <p>2. The teacher asks open-ended questions to discover the child’s ideas and thought processes.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Tell me about the story you wrote.” ● “What did you choose to include in your picture of the story? Why?” ● “What did you decide to build with your blocks?” <p>3. The teacher selects manipulatives and materials that support conceptual development.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Geoboards ● Shape blocks ● Real objects in centers <p>4. Vocabulary is introduced and taught in context, number concepts are reinforced through interactive experiences, and science and social studies content is interwoven with literacy and math activities.</p>	
<p>2.3 Communication The teacher clearly and accurately communicates to support persistence, deeper learning, and effective effort. Standards Basis: 1D, 1E, 2A, 3A, 4D</p>	<p>1. Lessons are supported with visual, gestural, and pictorial cues.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Charts ● Instruction cards ● Models ● Step-by-step directions with images ● Sign language ● Illustrations. <p>2. Students are encouraged to use manipulatives, pictures, verbal, non-verbal, and tactile responses to demonstrate their understanding and learning.</p> <p>3. The teacher selects process-based or open-ended</p>	<p>How do you create visuals using gestures or pictures to support students in processing information, following instructions, or accessing content?</p> <p>What types of student responses do you solicit during different types of instruction?</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Whole group ● Small group ● Independent practice ● Centers

	learning methods that allow students to manipulate materials toward different outcomes and unique products.	
<p>2.4 Differentiation The teacher differentiates instruction, aligning methods and techniques to diverse student needs. Standards Basis: 1C, 1F, 2A, 2B, 2C, 3C, 4A, 5A, 5C, 5D</p>	<p>1. The teacher uses visuals, cues, prompts, and fading to build independent mastery.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Visual schedules ● Visual directions ● Photos that show where materials belong <p>2. The teacher selects inclusive learning strategies to ensure students with IEP goals in general education settings have equitable access to lessons.</p> <p>3. The teacher collaborates with support services and leverages internal resources as needed, such as collaborating with school counselors, specialists, librarians, social workers, and the school nurse to meet student needs.</p>	<p>How do you collaborate with service providers to gather data and inform instruction for students in general education with IEP goals?</p> <p>How do you plan differentiated instruction and activities to allow all students to participate and scaffold student learning at individual levels?</p>
<p>2.5 Monitor and Adjust The teacher formally and informally collects, analyzes, and uses student progress data, and makes necessary lesson adjustments. Standards Basis: 1D, 1F, 2B, 2C, 3B, 4D, 5C, 5D</p>	<p>1. Reteaching strategies introduce new manipulatives, alternative methods, and materials to support developing understanding.</p> <p>2. The teacher collects in-the-moment data by monitoring student learning and checking for understanding during independent practice and centers, and plans reteaches, modifies or adjusts instruction and plans for individuals and groups as needed.</p> <p>3. The teacher encourages participation and extends learning and play with prompts, questions, and suggestions.</p>	<p>1. How do you pace lessons and maintain student attention and engagement? Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Think-pair-share ● Hand signals ● Tactile/ total body responses <p>2. What are some types of movement, games, or play-based strategies you use to support transitions and daily routines?</p>

Learning Environment

T-Tess Dimensions	EC Considerations	Discussion Points
<p>3.1 Classroom Environment, Routines, and Procedures The teacher organizes a safe, accessible, and efficient classroom. Standards Basis: 1D, 4A, 4B, 4C, 4D</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The teacher provides a visual daily schedule and uses consistent routines and efficient procedures for transitions and non-academic tasks such as lining up, cleaning up, and moving to the rug. 2. The teacher uses hand signals, visual cues, and environmental resources, like line spots marked on the floor, to support routines and procedures. 3. Instructional areas, centers, and materials are prepared, organized, visually labeled, and presented at the child's level to maximize learning time and student autonomy. 4. The teacher allows appropriate levels of noise during centers and play. The teacher encourages students to interact meaningfully and talk with one another in collaborative activities and play and affords students autonomous movement between areas and activities. 5. The teacher uses a combination of sight and sound supervision at all times. 	<p>How do students know what is expected of them during _____ time?</p> <p>How might you redirect students who are not following a routine?</p> <p>How do you teach students to pass out, collect, and clean up materials?</p>
<p>3.2 Managing Student Behavior The teacher establishes, communicates, and maintains clear expectations for student behavior. Standards Basis: 4A, 4B, 4C, 4D</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Classroom rules are explicitly taught, modeled, and consistently reinforced. 2. Prosocial skills and behaviors are taught, modeled, and prompted. <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Child-friendly language ● Pictures ● Gestures ● Photo cues 	<p>What are some techniques or phrases you use to help students prepare for upcoming transitions?</p> <p>What are some environmental cues or reminders that assist students in successfully following classroom rules?</p> <p>How do you model respectful behavior for students in the classroom?</p>

	<p>3. The teacher uses positive language and caring, respectful tones with children at all times.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Warm and demanding” • Clear and fair redirection <p>4. If the teacher adopts a behavior reward system, they use it routinely and fairly with ways for students to make appropriate amends.</p> <p>5. The teacher anticipates problem behaviors and intervenes quickly, preventing escalation.</p>	
<p>3.3 Classroom Culture The teacher leads a mutually respectful and collaborative class of actively engaged learners. Standards Basis: 1E, 1F, 3B, 4C, 4D, 5A, 5B, 5D</p>	<p>1. The teacher explicitly develops skills like turn-taking, sharing, emotional regulation, and self-help.</p> <p>2. The teacher encourages celebrations, positive recognition, and peer sharing.</p> <p>3. Student voice, choice, and leadership are promoted in the classroom.</p> <p>4. The teacher uses physical proximity and positive affect such as smiling, laughing, and expressions of interest. The classroom is free of sarcasm, yelling, bullying, and shame.</p> <p>5. The teacher shows enthusiasm and encourages children when they make a learning mistake/error and frequently engages in positive conversations with families.</p>	<p>What are some ways students can be leaders in your classroom?</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom jobs • Greeter • Student-led morning meeting activities • Monitoring classroom schedule • Center leader <p>What are some ways you collaborate with families?</p> <p>What kinds of celebrations do you have in your classroom?</p> <p>What kinds of responsibilities do you give students?</p> <p>What are some ways you encourage students to take risks in the classroom?</p>

Teacher – the special education, inclusion teacher
Classroom teacher – The general education teacher