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**Ministry of Education**

**Quality Review: Internal Review Guide**

Instructional Practices – Questions for reflection

As a distributed learning teacher, what do you do to create a **teaching presence** in your classes?

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| 1. Communicate course topics, goals, timelines, and expectations regarding assignments?

*(what I can and what I am doing now)* | At the beginning of the year my students are given a handout with all of their learning outcomes for the year. This outline shows the required assignments needed to show their knowledge of the learning outcomes and how they are all connected. My students are given the opportunity in the online learning environment to choose when they would like to complete each course as I only have three students this year and having them all in different grades they work asynchronously. When students have chosen their course loads for each quarter, I then send them an outline with a timeline they can follow so that the work is spread evenly through the year and nothing is missed. Students know that it is their responsibility to get assignments to be by the required dates and I send out an email at the beginning of every week to each student with a heads up for the week. My students also get reminders a few weeks in advance of report cards being sent out to get all work to me as soon as possible. I feel that this has been working so far and the at least once a week communication allows me to feel connected to my students and that my teacher presence is felt even though we are not synchronous. |
| 1. Provide instruction to students about participation in activities, productive dialogue, and task expectations, as well as providing instruction to help student’s master content and achieve learning outcomes?

*(what I can and what I am doing now)* | As an asynchronous model my students do not partake in any group activities. Once I have more students I am looking forward to having a synchronous model where my students can work together online and through collaborate, much like we do in the OLTD course, as they will be living all over BC and possibly other parts of Canada. Students are required to check in with me once a week and I look forward to the calls that I have with them. For two of my students who are completing their art course, I have allowed them to come to me with ideas for projects and things that would inspire them as they have the learning outcomes list. My students really enjoy the free reign for their creativity and I enjoy hearing how they are planning to use their artwork and creativity to cover learning outcomes and it helps me to see them take responsibility for their own learning. Students are given rubrics for all of their assignments so they know what I expect of them and what they have to do to obtain the mark that they desire. My thoughts are if students know why they are doing something and what is expected for their final product then they will be more engaged than the student who is given a very basic outline with no direction or grading scale. I also believe that any student could master any subject with enough help and guidance, this is why another thing that I allow my students to do is revise work that they feel that they would like to improve on. If my students are putting in the effort for revision to improve, why not give them that allowance and reward them for it instead of punishing them for not doing as well the first time? |
| 1. Guide students to help identify areas of agreement or disagreement on course topics, help clarify student’s thinking about course topics, focus discussion on relevant issues, and help students explore new concepts in the course?

*(what I will be able to do once I have more students in the same grade)* | Once I have more students and at least three or four in each grade, I am looking forward to incorporating a lot of information circle meetings and literacy circle meetings into my courses. I believe that these circle meetings allow students to feed off of each other’s thoughts and opinions rather than them listening to me and thinking that I have all the right answers and I am the only one that can teach them anything. One of the greatest phrases about teaching that I have in my office says “We are all teachers. We are all learners” and I think this is very true. We can learn just about as much from our students as they can learn from us if we just afford them the opportunity. Teachers will always be necessary for students to come together and have someone lead a conversation and provide clarification and focus but if the students are taking ownership for their thinking and learning and bringing that to share with their peers then they will be able to internalize their learning and get to a deeper level. I also believe that making connections is a big part of learning, if we can connect what we are learning to a real life application then we are able to remember it more readily (like what we are doing with this assignment). When bringing my students to a literacy circle meeting or an information circle meeting, they will be bringing notes based on the textbook readings and sharing their thoughts with connections being a part of their notes. I believe that students who are able to take notes from a textbook reading and share thoughts and opinions with their peers opposed to filling in a worksheet are more likely to remember what they have learned and it helps to reach more of the learning styles of all of the diverse students that I am sure to have. |
| 1. Foster the development of a sense of community among course participants, and provide relevant and timely feedback to students?

*(what I will be able to do once I have more students in the same grade)* | I feel like this is a continuation of what I have already stated. When bringing students together to collaborate, we allow them to develop a sense of community of learners where they feel like their opinion is valued and they belong. This comes with the knowledge as the teacher that values for this communication need to be put in place at the beginning of the year so everyone knows the expectations and no one feels neglected or unwanted in our readings the Community of Inquiry model shows that where teaching and social presence come together, that is where you will find the setting climate and this is especially true for literacy and information circle meetings. If students are left to feel neglected or unwanted then their opinions will stay bottled inside of them and they will not be able to share with their peers, this would be unfortunate as I know from experience no one is going to have all of the same connections and ideas as anyone else in the group and everyone will be able to bring something unique to the discussion. I also believe that timely feedback for students is a great way to foster learning. Students should be given feedback from their peers through group discussions and as a teacher, it will be my job to suggest other ideas that they might want to explore with their thinking (this would be done through and at the end of circle meetings). The use of rubrics for students to judge their own learning before handing it in will allow them to see if they are missing something. The rubrics also allow for me as the teacher to highlight where I feel the student’s work belongs and in turn will give students a very quick look at where it has been assessed and allow them to go back and make changes if they wish to improve their mark. |
| 1. Select appropriate resources and/or develop learning materials and content for your students that meet the highest standards for quality and student usability

*(what I can and what I am doing now as well as what I will be able to do once I have more students in the same grade)* | Through teaching at an independent online school, I have been given the option of choosing whichever textbooks I believe will fit the learning outcomes or I can allow my students and their parents to choose the textbooks that they would like to use and modify my courses accordingly. I believe that this allows students to choose the textbooks that work for them and I have already seen evidence of this. Most teachers I work with use SNAP math and all three of my students came to me at the beginning of the year to let me know that they have tried this route for many years with little success and much frustration about how it is set up. I allowed my students to choose their math textbooks and I now have one student using Math U See and the other two are using Math Makes Sense and they are all doing very well and exceeding their previous math results. Although students are using different textbooks, the content will be the same, just delivered in a different way. This is almost better when it comes to courses such as science and social studies as they will be reading and learning about the same information but in different ways and contexts which will allow for more opinions and ideas to come when we move into group collaborations. I am very excited to see where this goes and where my students will take their learning when I have enough students and I am able to apply everything that I would like to. For now I will just gain as much knowledge as I can to be the best distance learning teacher when it comes to that point. |

As a distributed learning teacher, what do you do to create a **social presence** in your classes?

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| 1. Create a sense of belonging and community for students?
2. Support student expression in online discussion, building a sense of collaboration?

*(what I will be able to do once I have more students in the same grade)* | I have combined #6 and #7 as I feel with my thoughts they are almost the same thing and I would just be repeating myself.With only having three students it is really hard to create a social presence in my class (as stated before they are all in different grades so collaboration is pretty much impossible). Once I have enough students to get them together for discussions and collaboration I believe that creating a community of learners approach to the ‘classroom’ with set values that we can all agree on will allow for all students to feel included and that their opinions are valued. Having circle meetings and group collaborations / discussions about their learning, students are able to express themselves, their opinions and ideas, and in turn allow others to learn from their thoughts and feed off of them to provide other thoughts to with back up or challenge their peers. Blooms suggests that students should be able to judge and defend their learning and if they are doing this with peers in a setting where they feel safe then I believe that their learning will only increase and deepen. |
| 1. Foster the use of a variety of communication strategies, including online strategies, for social interaction among students and teacher?

*(what I will be able to do once I have more students in the same grade)* | For this I had to really lean on the readings and what I have taken from them. I believe that social interaction between students is very important, when possible, as stated many times before but knowing how this would look in an online setting was a little more challenging as I have never been able to try it out before. When looking at the Community of Inquiry model, you see that between the social presence and the cognitive presence you find supporting discourse. You will always find discourse once you have more than one person but how it is supported and fostered makes a big difference. I have been doing readings on my own of technology based systems and programs that allow for discussion and communication and I am interested in learning more about them for use with my own students. I have a collaborate classroom that is mainly used for helping my students with math if they need it as I have a bamboo tablet that I can plug into my computer and it makes for a very easy way to show the work to my students and walk them through a problem step by step. Through this I am learning more and more each day what collaborate is capable of and I am excited to be gaining this knowledge now before I need to implement it so that in hopes I will know even more leading up to the next school year and it will be more of an asset to my students. I am also very interested in all of the programs and websites we have gone over in class. Until now I had no idea that prezi or storyboard existed and I have found that twitter is much more useful than I originally thought and this will allow for greater communication with not only students but also colleagues in the coming years.  |

As a distributed learning teacher, what do you do to create a **cognitive presence** in your classes?

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| 1. Foster student interest in course issues and content, while supporting the development of new perspectives through student reflection?
2. Encourage students to use a variety of information sources, techniques, and approaches to solutions when exploring problems posed in the course?

*(what I can and what I am doing now as well as what I will be able to do once I have more students in the same grade)* | To me, this question is very similar to question #5. As I stated earlier, through teaching at an independent online school, I have been given the option of choosing whichever textbooks I believe will fit the learning outcomes or I can allow my students and their parents to choose the textbooks that they would like to use and modify my courses accordingly. Although students are using different textbooks, the content will be the same, just delivered in a different way. This is almost better when it comes to courses such as science and social studies as they will be reading and learning about the same information but in different ways and contexts which will allow for more opinions and ideas to come when we move into group collaborations. Peter Shea suggests that learner presence includes: planning and time management, organizing and transforming course materials, establishing a positive learning environment, self-monitoring and record keeping, help-seeking and reflection on performance, effort and goal setting. I believe that all online learners will have to be good at planning and time management, or at least good at following a set timeline already put in place if they are going to have all of their work completed in time and pass their courses. If students are able to organize and transform materials in a way that makes sense to them and allows them to deepen their thinking then I say ‘let them!’ As stated before, when collaborating with peers a positive learning environment is key so that everyone feels valued and safe, this also allows students to take risks. Providing students with rubrics allows them to reflect on their assignments and learning to see if they have accomplished everything that they set out to and obtain the grade they desire. As always, students should look for the teacher for help when they are unclear or unsure but when using a community of learners approach to learning, it allows students to also look for help from their peers. |
| 1. Support the testing and application of new knowledge for students?
 | This is something else that I highly relied on the readings for. When looking at the Leithwood and Duke seven dimensions of transformational leadership I wish I had seen this before now. What they state in their seven steps I agree with and it is what I am trying to bring into my own classroom and use with my own students. My favorite point that they make is the last one where they state ‘developing a positive culture, and creating structures that support active involvement in decision making’. Students should be making decisions for themselves about what they believe and coming up with their own conclusions and opinions and not be spoon fed by the teacher. I also fully agree with the ‘equation’ put forth where it says **idealized influence + individualized consideration + inspirations motivation + intellectual stimulation = Performance Beyond Expectations**. I have already seen how this is possible in my f2f classroom and I am excited to see how it would take shape in my online classroom. It is my wish that more teachers would start thinking outside of the box and stop doing the same mundane worksheets day in and day out and see what their students are really capable of. If I have a student who can clearly explain everything that is related to the war of 1812 as an example, should I not allow them to have an intellectual conversation with me about it to demonstrate their learning opposed to sitting at their desk with a test and a pencil and expecting them to get all of their ideas down in a set amount of time? |