



Weekly Digital Learning Observation Brief, 10/02/20

Prepared by the Department of Research & Performance Management

Key Recommendations

New Recommendations:

1. Develop protocols for students calling other students into meetings from Teams, especially students contacting those in different schools & grade bands. The District cannot implement restrictions on this feature without interfering with instructions, so students and teachers should be aware of what to do if this situation arises.
2. Make sure teachers know how to use the new [breakout room](#) and [gallery/together mode](#) features in Teams to improve monitoring and student engagement during class.
3. Learn from schools that are starting to change their teaching structures with combined sections for lecture and smaller groups for independent work.

Recommendations from Previous Weeks:

1. Reinforce good practices for parents to set students up in a “ready to learn” environment at home. We saw students sleeping in three classes – some of them were still in pajamas and/or in bed at the start of class.
2. “Low tech” activities like whiteboard math problems and writing activities can be good teaching methods with younger students in terms of engagement and ease of implementation. We saw increased engagement and fewer interruptions for technology issues when students could work with pencil and paper and show their work on camera for at least part of the lesson. However, teachers should practice these strategies if possible before incorporating into instruction as audio levels and legibility of writing can vary based on how far away the teacher is from the camera/video feed.
3. Teachers should plan practice time for students to try out navigating additional (non-Teams) platforms such as iReady, One Note and Canvas before they engage in higher-stakes activities. Allocating more practice time can minimize frustration for students and teachers.
4. Encourage teachers to regularly/actively acknowledge students who come in late, have trouble getting logged off and on, and show visual cues that they have questions or might be lost. This strategy appears to improve engagement with passive or shy students and also ensures all students in the class can stay on track throughout lessons.
5. Ensure parents, students and teachers have user guide materials at the ready as students begin to increase usage of non-Teams platforms such as iReady and Canvas. This will improve students’ ability to navigate these platforms and decrease loss of instructional time.
 - Educators can refer parents to several training videos and live webinar opportunities on SCS’ Access for All website (<http://www.scsk12.org/accessforall/training>)
6. Reinforce with teachers how to mute students and set up presenter vs. attendee roles in Teams to limit distractions.
 - Some short video tutorials that may help are how to [mute all](#) participants and how to [set up different roles](#) in Teams meetings.
7. Ensure students use the Teams app instead of the web browser version when possible to make use of all features such as “raise hand” and chat.
8. Send communications reminders to parents to minimize distractions at home during instruction such as TV, family member/sibling interference and having food/drinks near devices.
9. Where there are resources available, ensure all teachers have access to two screens while teaching so that they can monitor student engagement and behavior on one screen while sharing content on the other screen.



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Observation Overview

We observed three elementary, three middle and two high school classrooms during the period of September 28-30, bringing the total number of observed classrooms for the year to 38. Despite heavy recruitment of middle and high schools, we had several teachers cancel at the last minute this week, so the overall findings for all observations still reflect mostly elementary classrooms. Seven ILD zones are represented. 37% of all observed classrooms primarily taught ELA/reading, 34% taught math, 18% taught science, and 11% taught other subjects.

Best Practices Observed

- We observed two classrooms at a middle school that used a combination of large-group and small-group sessions for instruction. In the large group, one teacher lectured on the key concepts and skills for the day with several sections of students simultaneously ranging from 30 to over 100 students. Other teachers were on hand during the session to host breakout/pull-out sessions and to call on students raising their hands. Teachers then arranged smaller sessions closer to traditional class sizes where students could practice the skills they learned and get more hands-on support when completing independent work.
- Some teachers also used MasteryConnect items for bell work at the beginning of class. This can be a good standards-aligned resource to get students quickly engaged in the day's objectives, and some of the teachers we observed also shared the trends on how students answered the item to explain the correct answer and identify misconceptions for the incorrect answers.
- In terms of increasing equitable student engagement, one teacher used a "randomizer" to call on students for discussion. Another teacher set up breakout rooms and navigated between the groups to check for understanding and ensure students were on task.

Use of Time

- 13 of 38 teachers spent 25% or less of class time engaged in lecture/presenting to the class while in 24 of the classes, students actively participated in the discussion at more than 50% of the total class time.
- The least-used teaching strategies observed so far continues to be the use of student presentations and breakout/small group work. The use of breakouts increased slightly. Teacher lecture/presentation, student discussion, and software/app activities continue to constitute the bulk of strategies used.

9. About What % of Time Were Students on Task?

[More Details](#)

● 25% or less	5
● 26-50%	6
● 51-75%	13
● More than 75%	13





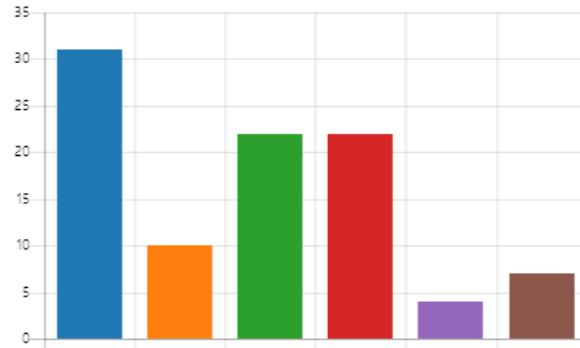
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10. What Strateg(ies) Did the Teacher Use During the Lesson?

[More Details](#)

Teacher Lecture/Presentation	31
Student Presentation	10
Student Discussion	22
Software/App Activities	22
Breakout/Small Group Work	4
Other	7



Technology Issues

- On average for the year so far, an estimated 5.7 minutes of classroom instruction was lost due to technical problems. For some classes during this reporting period, that number was as high as 10 minutes of instructional time lost. That number is down significantly from previous reporting periods when the time lost could reach as high as 25 minutes.
- The most common technical problems for teachers tend to be an issue with a feature in another platform/app, like Whiteboard, not operating as needed. For students, problems included navigating platforms for class assignments/resources, a feature in an app/program not operating as needed, or issues with their internet connection.

15. How Often Did Students Have Technology Issues?

[More Details](#)

Never	11
1-5 Small Issues	23
6+ Small Issues	3
1+ Big Issues	1





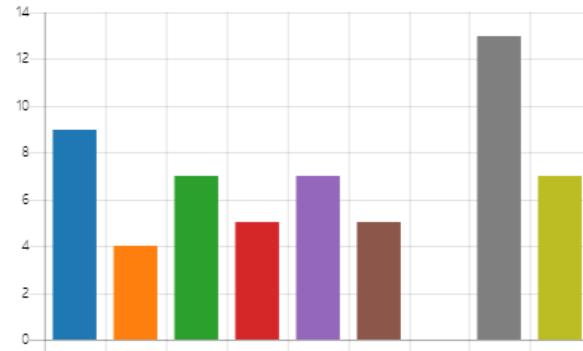
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17. What Issues Did Students Have?

[More Details](#)

● N/A	9
● Internet Connection/Freezes	4
● Getting Logged Off and On	7
● Teams Features Didn't Work	5
● Other Platform(s) Didn't Work	7
● Physical Device Problems	5
● Logging In/Passwords	0
● Trouble Navigating Platforms	13
● Other	7



Student Engagement

- Students continue to be engaged with the classroom instruction for the most part, with teachers primarily utilizing large group discussion and app/learning platform activities. However, the use of independent work and breakouts/small groups saw increased use from previous weeks.
- In terms of rating overall engagement with 1 = Students Were Extremely Passive or Off Task and 5 = Students Almost Always Actively Participated, our average was 3.3 this week, down from 4.6 the previous week. For all classrooms observed, the rating is 4.1.

19. About What % of Students Used Their Camera At Some Point?

[More Details](#)

● None	2
● About 25%	2
● About 50%	5
● About 75%	1
● All/Nearly All	28



20. About What % of Students Engaged in Verbal Discussion At Some Point?

[More Details](#)

● None	1
● About 25%	8
● About 50%	6
● About 75%	13
● All/Nearly All	10





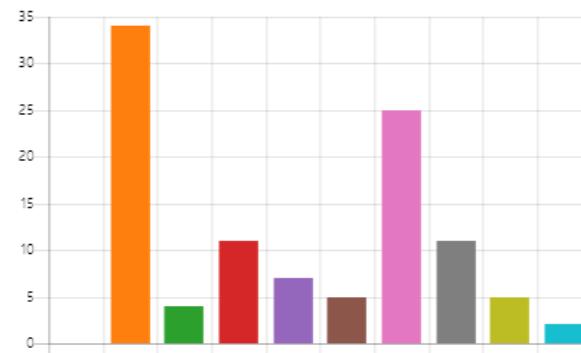
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23. What Engagement Strateg(ies) Did the Teacher Use?

[More Details](#)

None	0
Large Group Discussion	34
Breakout/Small Groups	4
Student Presentations/Sharing	11
Physical Movement/Activities	7
Polls/Quizzes	5
App/Learning Platform Activities	25
Independent Work	11
Chat Discussion	5
Other	2



Observation Notes

- It became more difficult to gauge true student engagement in some classes in recent weeks. More classrooms appear to be making cameras optional for students, especially at the middle and high school levels. Moreover, with teachers increasing the amount of time going over content and with the large-group lecture approach discussed in our Best Practices section, we saw more lessons that made it difficult to observe active engagement for all students by design.
- The high school classrooms we observed had the largest extremes between very active student engagement and very little engagement. There may be more to learn in this grade band about how some teachers establish strong norms and encourage participation during the first part of the year.

Digital Citizenship

- 62.5% of the classrooms had disruptions about 1-3 times during the reporting period and mainly involved adult/house noise coming through on their microphone. Teachers almost always addressed these disruptions by muting the students or verbally redirecting them. Unlike previous reporting periods, no classrooms observed this week had disruptions occurring at a frequency higher than 1-3.

25. How Often Did Students Disrupt Instruction Intentionally or Unintentionally?

[More Details](#)

Never/Almost Never	11
1-3 Times	20
4-7 Times/Every 10 Minutes	7
8+ Times/Every 5 Minutes	0





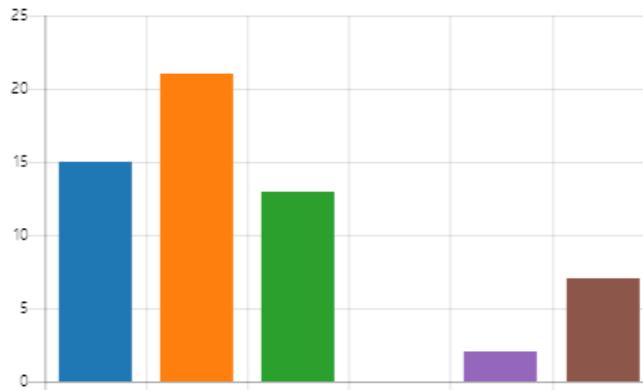
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26. What Types of Disruptions Occurred?

[More Details](#)

- Student Talking on Unmuted ... 15
- Adult/House Noise on Unmut... 21
- Student Off Task on Video 13
- Student Off Task on Chat 0
- Parent Interference During Les... 2
- Other 7



Observation Notes

- There has been a notable downtick in frequency and duration of disruptions each week we have done observations, and it appears both students and teachers are more comfortable and knowledgeable about how to use Teams features appropriately.
- One Digital Citizenship issue that we did not observe in class but heard from a principal about is that there have been some instances of older students from other schools calling elementary-age students into a meeting using the Teams platform. There is no way for the district to turn off this feature without disrupting other important capabilities for online instruction, so we simply raise this issue so that school staff are aware that it can happen and can reinforce expectations and protocols with students who receive these calls.

Student Equity

- Only one classroom observed this week had special populations services present and that was for SPED Inclusion. In total, only 3 classes were observed where special student populations were present. Note: "Other" is the same as "N/A".

5. Special Population Instruction/Services During Observation

[More Details](#)

- N/A 29
- SPED Inclusion 1
- SPED Self-Contained 0
- ESL 1
- RTI2 1
- 504 0
- Other 4

