TEAM FAQs and Guidance – June 2020

The CSDE Talent Office and the RESC Alliance recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly changed the way teachers are delivering instruction.

The TEAM program has been affected by the change in school dynamics over these last few months and we recognize that moving forward there are many questions about how components of the program will be addressed this summer and fall. The following addresses the most frequently asked questions based on a survey conducted by the RESC Alliance.

Mentors

Questions:	Guidance:
Will Mentor Update be available online over the summer?	The Online Mentor Update is currently under revision. The new Mentor Update Professional Learning Series[1] will be available beginning in the fall.
Will mentors whose training is due to expire on July 1, 2020, be given an extension for the 2020-21 school year?	All TEAM trained mentors who are required to complete their mentor update by July 1, 2020, will retain their active TEAM Mentor status through the 2020-21 school year. This will allow them to begin the new Mentor Update Professional Learning Series launching Fall 2020.
How can TEAM mentors best support their mentees in building relationships, planning, instructing, assessing, and providing feedback during online learning?	This is a challenging time and beginning teachers need support more than ever as they are implementing virtual learning. There are many ways for mentors and beginning teachers to keep in touch. A simple phone call to check in with one another will help to build a trusting mentoring relationship. Beginning teachers need to know they can reach out to their mentors with questions and for support. Mentors can support their beginning teachers virtually. One option is to use Zoom or Google Meet where there are "in-person" chat features. Those platforms also allow for screen sharing, so a beginning teacher or mentor could share relevant resources and complete components of TEAM. Since it can be more difficult to maintain strong relationships with a beginning teacher that a mentor doesn't see every day, it's important to establish a dependable communications process, including: - Establishing a consistent regular time when you and your beginning teacher will check-in; - Offering support, discussing how things are going, sharing lesson plans, talking about challenges, problem-solving, etc.; - During check-ins, don't just focus on business; ask about the beginning teacher's family, life outside of work, etc.; - Scheduling virtual coffee hours or get-togethers and inviting other colleagues to join.

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[1] *The new Mentor Update Professional Learning Series is a suite of professional learning units designed to build on and enhance the knowledge and skills that were learned in Initial Support Teacher Training (IST). Support teachers will be able to select from a menu of Professional Learning Units (PLUs) that address a wide variety of topics designed to meet their learning needs. This will allow them to direct their own professional growth as they build skills to effectively support beginning and student teachers.*

Will interested teachers be trained to become mentors /cooperating teachers? When will this training be offered?	The CSDE Talent Office and RESC Staff Developers are working to transition Initial Support Teacher Training (IST) to live, virtual offerings.
	We anticipate live, virtual IST Training to be available by late summer/early fall to support the training of new TEAM Mentors across the state.
	Additionally, once social distancing guidance and group size limitations are eased, in-person IST training will resume.

TEAM Modules and Distance Learning

Questions:	Guidance:
Are there SDE resources, materials, and guidelines for effective distance or blended learning strategies?	Districts have the authority to determine how best to meet the needs of their students. Many districts have developed plans for distance learning and have provided their teachers with specific guidance and resources to help them implement distance and blended learning.
	The CSDE is committed to supporting districts in this undertaking and has compiled multiple resources to support teachers and families grades PK-12.
	These resources can be helpful to mentors who are supporting beginning teachers. All resources can be found on the CSDE website at: Resources to Support Student Learning During School Closures Due to COVID-19
How can teachers plan a module with students they have never met and do not know anything about for the new school year?	While online learning looks and feels different from a traditional classroom, effective teaching still prevails. It is important to get to know your students. Whether in a classroom or online, those first few weeks of school are the time when teachers are getting to know their students and students are getting to know their teachers.
	TEAM does not recommend beginning any modules until October so that teachers can adjust to the new year and get to know their students.
	All of the TEAM modules should focus on the students' individual needs. Teachers should not rush to begin modules. Taking the time to get to know your students will make the modules more relevant and meaningful.
Can we do a virtual module 5 roundtable?	Module 5, Professional Responsibilities, and Teacher Leadership, is designed to be a facilitated conversation.
	A virtual roundtable would work well for this conversation. Districts can access all Module 5 materials and resources on the TEAM website, which can be used to plan and facilitate the virtual roundtable.
For our students with special needs, the parents need to be present to assist their child. Is this ok?	Effective teachers provide instruction based on students' general and individual learning needs for support and enrichment. Having parents engage with their students during online learning is perfectly acceptable.
	As the teacher documents the module, include how parents assisted in engaging students in the learning.

If schools are not fully in session in the fall, should participants do Module 2 planning, since there is no need for data, and it is easier to anticipate impact rather than show evidence of student impact?	Module 2, Planning for Active Learning can present challenges for beginning teachers. Often, teachers teach the lesson before they write about it. The reflection, therefore, focuses on the instruction rather than the reasons why the teacher planned specific strategies and how the teacher anticipates those strategies will impact student outcomes. All modules should be grounded in data. Teachers should examine student data and reflect on their own level of skill when determining which indicator they will focus on for the module. Data is needed to help teachers understand their students' needs and plan instruction accordingly. Whether schools are in full session or not, the process is the same.
How does a teacher proceed with Module 4, Assessment, when they don't have the data due to online teaching?	There is strong research and evidence that high-quality learning can be achieved in distance learning environments. Whether in a traditional classroom or online environment, teachers still need to check for understanding and provide meaningful feedback to students. Data on student learning can be collected through numerous methods. Technology offers many different ways for students to demonstrate their learning. Module 4, Assessment, focuses on how effective teachers determine what students know, don't know, and how they will help them achieve the learning objectives. Consider the various indicators in Module 4 that describe what assessment involves. Effective teachers: • Provide multiple ways for students to demonstrate their learning. • Establish criteria for learning aligned to learning objectives. • Provide specific feedback that describes strengths and weaknesses in the student performance and includes suggestions for improvements. • Communicates expectations and performance results with students and families. For more information on assessing student learning, you may want to read the article in Edutopia, Formative Assessment in Distance Learning, by Andrew Miller, April 7, 2020.

TEAM Completion/ Reflection Papers/Projects	
Questions:	**Guidance:**
If we are not back in school in the fall, what will completion timelines look like?	The TEAM deadlines for all beginning teachers were extended as educators transitioned to a distance learning environment. Many beginning teachers and their mentors have continued to work on TEAM. With a new school year approaching, we anticipate that beginning teachers and mentors who have not engaged in TEAM, will begin to do so in the fall. Throughout this document, we provide guidance on how to approach TEAM in this current environment. Please note that there has always been an additional year allowed for the completion of TEAM in the event that teachers do not complete TEAM by their expected completion date. For teachers who experience extreme circumstances, such as a prolonged illness, the District Facilitator can initiate a Request to Extend a Deadline. See page 11 in the TEAM Program Manual for more information.
How are Reflection Papers/Projects being reviewed during this time?	While some people have asked about changing the review of reflection papers/projects to a "more lenient" standard, the review criteria remain the same as outlined in the CT General Statute 10-145o. The regional review process ensures that reflection papers are fairly reviewed. If a reviewer finds that a paper does not meet the specific criteria for success, then that paper will be randomly assigned to a second reviewer. If the second reviewer disagrees with any part of the first review, then a Chief Reviewer will adjudicate the two reviews. Teachers can revise and resubmit their papers as many times as necessary. Our data shows that most teachers are successful on the first submission. Those that need revision are most often successful on the second submission. **For districts that use in-district review:** Districts that do not participate in the regional review process and review reflection papers/projects in-district, the standard and criteria by which papers/projects are reviewed must follow the same criteria as outlined in CT General Statute 10-145o. Details on how a district reviews reflection papers/projects can be found in each district's Three-year Teacher Education and Mentoring Plan. *Regardless of whether a district requires a reflection paper/project, the criteria for review are the same.*
What direction are reflection paper/project reviewers being given for reviewing papers at this time? Any changes as of yet?	Reviewers are expected to follow their training and review papers/projects according to the protocol and established criteria. We are in the process of collecting sample papers written that reflect an online learning environment. These papers will be able to inform any revisions to Reviewer Training and Updates. We will post the samples with some additional guidance in the fall.

Will Reviewer Training expire on June 30, or will it be extended?	All TEAM trained reviewers, who were eligible for the 2019-20 school year, will retain their eligibility as a reviewer through the 2020-21 school year. They will not need to complete an update. However, the CSDE will be providing updates to all reviewers and sample reflection papers completed in an online learning environment.
Will there be NEW online reviewer training?	The CSDE Talent Office and RESC Staff Developers are working to transition Initial Reviewer Training (IRT) training to live, virtual offerings. We anticipate virtual IRT Training to be available by late summer/early fall to support the training of new TEAM Reviewers across the state. Additionally, once social distancing guidance and group size limitations are eased, in-person IRT training will resume.

Funding	
Questions:	Guidance:
Will the CSDE continue to provide funding for districts based on BTs who are still in TEAM, regardless of how many semesters it takes for TEAM completion?	The TEAM Allocations that the CSDE provides are based each year on the total number of active TEAM participants. The allocation is not based on TEAM deadline dates. Therefore, if a teacher needs three years to complete all requirements, the teacher is still actively participating and the district will receive an allocation.
If a spring module is to be completed in the fall, should the mentor stipend request be withheld to the fall?	The CSDE does not prescribe when modules should be completed. Some districts set specific timelines. The mentor stipend, per state statute (10-145o (f)) is paid by the local or regional board of education. If a mentor has provided the minimum number of mentoring hours, then the mentor should be paid. If the mentor did not provide the minimum number of mentoring hours, then the district can reduce the stipend accordingly.
When will the checks from the State be coming for TEAM?	TEAM Allocations are distributed through the state grant system. The distribution of allocations began at the end of May. If your district has not received their allocation, check with your business office, town hall, or whoever handles grants for the district. All District Facilitators received a communication from the TEAM program that details the amount of the allocation for the district. This may help track down the funds. If you need assistance contact, Gady Weiner, at gady.weiner@ct.gov