A Guide for NDL Teachers

OUR VISION

Students in small communities have access to equitable academic programming enabling them to:

- STAY IN THEIR HOME COMMUNITY
- MEET THE GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS OF HIGH SCHOOL; AND
- PREPARE TO ENTER POST-SECONDARY PROGRAMS DIRECTLY FROM HIGH SCHOOL
**NDL: RELATIONAL SKILLS**

Online learning, blended learning, synchronous, asynchronous... What do you need to know about teaching in this environment and how it is different from your regular classroom?

**Relationships and teacher ‘presence’**. You are a teacher, teaching a live class, but the students are not in the room with you physically. They are in another room that you can see on a screen. This affects your ‘presence’ with your students in new ways. Connecting with students on the screen can be more difficult. In regular classes you often already have a relationship with the students from being in the school with them. The concept of building relationships in a videoconference space will eventually feel familiar especially when you have students progress through grades 10-12 in your NDL class. Among many distance learning aspects, NDL continues to develop the concept of ‘presence’ and support—and your ideas are needed.

Programming curriculum in a blended learning environment can feel different from the regular classroom. You cannot deviate from a plan or use new materials unless all communities have access to them. You need to structure and plan for collaboration; it doesn’t occur organically. You need to engage and include all students (even the quiet ones). You need to be well planned and have alternate lessons ready in case the technology doesn’t work the way it is intended to work. It can be challenging to get students to do homework or to ask for extra help because you are not in their community and don’t really know what is happening outside of class.

What are the protocols for communication about student progress and/or issues?

**Remote students**. NDL students are students who are enrolled in a different school, and often a different education body. As such, they are ultimately the responsibility of their local school principal. However, you are their teacher, so if you feel the need to contact their parents, or let their principal know about an issue, you need to know how to do so.

**First**. Your first point of contact about concerns regarding a student would be the student themselves and the local In-class Support Person (ISP). The ISP is the go-between who acts as your bridge to the students’ local school and community.

**Next**. If, for some reason, you don’t feel that the student is responding or that the ISP is communicating the message effectively, you can speak to your principal or the BDEC NDL coordinator for advice on how to proceed.

**Student support**. Students who miss more than 3 classes unexcused, or whose grade falls below 65% should be flagged to have a support meeting. This is an ISP role, but it would make sense for you to ask and/or follow-up with them about any attendance or achievement concerns. October 15 and March 15 are key dates for NDL administration to be certain that registered students are fully attending and participating. When you see a problem, remind the ISPs to track, follow-up with meetings, and document in the support form.

**What is the nature of the ISP-teacher relationship?**

**Remote assistance**. As per popular request of NDL teachers, the NDL teacher takes attendance at the beginning of the class and the ISP takes attendance for late students. ISPs act as the local school arm of the teacher and communicates with students, parents, and local principal about student issues.

**Working relationship**. The ISP is there to support NDL student education. You can ask them to prepare and deliver programs for students such as labs, but they are not experts. You are still the teacher and will need to guide them. If you have preferences for how the ISP
and students work together during class time, you should discuss these with the ISP. For example, asking them to ensure side discussions with a student don’t occur while the teacher is teaching is a practical matter that needs discussing. You should have regular, ongoing contact via email or other preferred methods with the ISP.

**NDL: PEDAGOGICAL – INSTRUCTIONAL SKILLS**

**Managing learning & Instructional design decisions.**

Time is provided to use the Moodle Learning Management System (LMS) to organize materials, create and house assignments, communicate, etc. It will be useful to complete the orientation in August on how to use Moodle effectively (nuts and bolts), but it is also worthwhile to spend some time thinking about how you might design your course in Moodle to best make use of the resources available to you:

- Is there a particular type of assignment that would be best delivered online?
- Is there a particular activity that requires everyone to be live, listening and talking together?
- Is there an assignment that must be completed on site, supported by the ISP?

Consider how blending online and face-to-face learning can allow you to enhance the range of learning materials and activities used in the course. Blended learning can also enhance education for students by paying attention to Universal Design for Learning principles. Some questions to direct your planning could include:

- What are the learning goals?
- What platforms are available?
- To what equipment do the teacher and students have access?
- What content is available to enhance your lesson?

**What about technology-related issues? Do NDL teachers have to have special technology skills?**

**Learning with technology.** You are first and foremost a teacher. You may not be a technical expert, and there are supports in place to help navigate technology issues. Your first point of contact is the BDEC NDL coordinator, who will help resolve an issue, or seek further support - they can be reached at 867-678-0774 or William_logan@bdec.learnnet.ca.

**Technical routines.** It is helpful to have some technical skills. Especially knowing how to use a Mondopad, understanding the common technical issues that come up and being aware of the troubleshooting, knowing how to use the Surface Pros and their applications, etc. This way, you can quickly help students on the fly with minor issues, and not have to disrupt your teaching to seek outside support. As you establish your technical routines, your confidence and trouble-shooting abilities will grow.

**Responding to Changes.** Flexibility is essential. It is good to have a backup plan in place in case technology fails. You don’t have to have a complete alternate plan in place, but it is helpful to have a pdf version of an online assignment handy that you could quickly email to a student or ISP if their network is behaving badly. Some of these things are useful to know about so that you can minimize disruptions that are outside of your control.
PROFESSIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

What are the benefits of being an NDL teacher?

**Diverse students.** You get to teach great students from across the NWT. Very few people have this opportunity without extensive travel.

**Professional development.** You have the opportunity to develop your teaching practice in a new, digital environment. All NDL teachers are given additional preparation time to work on their course’s development in Moodle with the support of the BDEC NDL coordinator, and have time to learn and develop high quality blended-learning opportunities for their students. Each September-October, NDL teachers are expected to review the Content Development Standards Rubric (CDSR), self-reflect and set goals for their courses.

**Team identity.** You are part of a dedicated team of educators working to bring equitable educational opportunities to students, regardless of what community they live in.

What are some other aspects of NDL that would be useful to know about before starting as a new NDL teacher?

**Your supervisor.** Your local principal is your supervisor. The BDEC NDL coordinator is not your supervisor; he is there to support all aspects of the NDL program to keep it running smoothly.

**The feeling of disconnection.** Be very well planned and prepared; in the beginning there will likely be a lot of silence. Check for understanding and have students paraphrase what is happening in class often. Do not assume silence means students know what is happening. Often there are technical issues of which the teacher may not be aware.

**Communications/administration.** Note all due dates in writing. Don’t rely on lectures or oral instructions. Be prepared for more time spent on administration. There are a number of emails to send to monitors, parents, and principals.

Be flexible and experimental. Be prepared to try different activities; often activities that work well in a regular classroom do not work well in an NDL class, and vice versa.

**Future trends in NDL.** Changes in the way NDL students learn will result in changes to NDL programming. As students desire more choice over when and where their NDL classes are held, NDL programming will include more modularized components in courses that can be studied independently. This change will require NDL teachers to modularize new and existing courses with the support of instructional designers, as well as think of new ways to support students in this broadening of NDL services.

“I participated in NDL classes because it offered the courses that were required to get into a university program I was considering. I also believed that taking NDL courses would best prepare me for post-secondary education.”
- NDL Student

IS NDL HARD?

For NDL students, classes will be different from what they are used to. At first, students will find it harder. At first, some parents might note student marks are lower than what they are used to seeing. Do not change the eligibility standards when you hear these things. Explain there is a reason for lower scores, but scores will improve. Explain how students at post-secondary institutions often work outside of the regular class periods to complete assignments and projects. NDL students should too. Explain to parents/guardians how to help their child transition to this environment by encouraging them to do their homework with the ISP after school, and by making a time and place for them at home to study and prepare for the next day.