

# CHAPTER 8: ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS

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TEAMS is an innovative instructional delivery system designed to facilitate the integration of technology and active learning into the middle school curriculum. It also provides for and encourages interdisciplinary connections which shift the instructional emphasis to depth rather than breadth. Students receive recognition and rewards for cooperation and effort as well as for achievement. This fosters a collaborative team atmosphere in the classrooms.

The TEAMS program has been carefully designed with 20 Essential Components. In order to maximize success with the TEAMS system, all components must be fully implemented. This chapter provides a summary of the essential components. An "Essential Components Checklist" is also provided in the Appendix to use for quality control.

## Training Components

### **1. Teachers and the principal participate in specialized training.**

TEAMS teachers and administrators participate in specialized training to learn to use the TEAMS methods and supporting materials. This mandatory training takes place before implementation and periodically throughout the first year. Ongoing training beyond the first year is highly recommended.

### **2. Students are trained in TEAMS management techniques.**

Students participate in a three-week orientation at the beginning of the school year. This orientation prepares them to be self-regulated learners, to move efficiently to various work stations, to stay on-task while working independently, to responsibly use and care for materials and equipment, and to take responsibility for solving work-related problems. Integral to this orientation is learning to use the *TEAMS Work Logs* and *Task Cards*.

## Teacher Components

### **3. Teachers form interdisciplinary teams with a common corps of students.**

A team of teachers will work with a common corps of students. The basic TEAMS team will consist of the classroom teachers responsible for mathematics, science, social studies, and language arts along with resource teachers for students with special needs. Support staff such as music, art, guidance, media center, physical education, etc. will also help extend student learning by coordinating with the TEAMS team teachers where possible.

**4. Teacher teams use structured meetings to facilitate collaboration.**

Teachers within each TEAMS team must share a common planning time. They must meet at least twice weekly and use the "Team Planning Guide" to facilitate interdisciplinary curriculum planning and the "Team Meeting Agenda" form to facilitate professionalism and teamwork.

**5. Teachers observe students in their other TEAMS classrooms.**

Once during each unit, teachers should observe students in their other TEAMS classrooms to facilitate efficient independent work at the learning stations. Teachers complete the "Structured Observation" form and report their observations to their colleagues.

**6. Teachers use the *TEAMS Planning Guides* to plan lessons.**

Teachers coordinate interdisciplinary lessons by using the *TEAMS Planning Guides*. These guides also facilitate the integration of technology and hands-on activities with the curriculum objectives.

**7. Teachers ensure that stations are open frequently and accessible to all students.**

Teachers assign students to stations on a rotating basis and monitors station visitation to ensure that all students are gaining frequent and balanced access to station activities regardless of gender or previous academic success.

**8. Teachers use varied assessment techniques.**

Teachers use a variety of assessment techniques including observation, interviews, and portfolios of student-produced work along with quizzes and tests. Teachers also provide ample opportunities for practice with feedback before formal grading takes place.

## Student Components

**9. Students set and assess unit goals.**

Students are guided by their teachers to set reasonable long and short-term goals which they record in their *Work Logs*. At the end of each unit and periodically throughout the station rotation cycles, students will use the *Work Logs* to assess their progress toward achieving these goals. Throughout the year, teachers will model goal-setting for students as reinforcement for this life-long behavior.

**10. Students are responsible for materials and equipment.**

Students have access to and are responsible for all materials and equipment at designated work stations. Students are trained to use equipment carefully and store it properly during a three-week orientation.

**11. Students have frequent opportunities to work in cooperative groups.**

Students will work at the Computer Station with a partner (or groups of no more than three) except when word processing or completing individual web-based programs. Students will also work in small groups at the other learning stations. Peer coaching and collaborative problem-solving will be introduced in the three-week orientation and encouraged throughout the year with recognition and rewards.

**12. Students know how to get help.**

Teachers will clearly communicate specific self-help strategies. Students will be encouraged to utilize peer coaching and classroom resources, rather than relying solely on the teacher.

## **Instructional Components**

**13. The classroom ambiance is supportive, equitable, and risk-free.**

Teachers will create a risk-free climate which supports inquiry and creativity. Teachers will set high expectations and follow equitable practices in dealing with students. There will be a positive tone where students are frequently praised and encouraged. The TEAMS team teachers will coordinate a reward system to recognize effort and cooperation as well as achievement.

**14. Students work at a variety of learning stations.**

Each TEAMS classroom will have learning stations to accommodate all learning modalities. These stations include a Technology Station mainly for computer-based activities, Exploration Stations for hands-on activities, and a Text Station for written work. Students will have access to all learning stations on a frequent and equitable basis.

**15. Learning station activities are clearly defined, leveled appropriately, and provide feedback.**

Teachers carefully explain and model learning station activities before independent station rotations begin. Station activities are designed to coordinate with lesson objectives and are appropriate to the students' level of intellectual, academic, and social development. The activities provide learner feedback, including answer keys and self-checking capabilities as appropriate.

**16. Students use *TEAMS Work Logs* and station *Task Cards*.**

Teachers provide *Task Cards* at the learning stations to clearly communicate expectations and academic purpose to students. Students use their *Work Logs* as a record-keeping tool to record information from the *Task Card*. This helps them stay focused, organized, and accountable. Students also use the *Work Logs* to set goals and assess their own progress. Parents use the *Work Log* to stay informed.

## Support Components

**17. The principal provides adequate resources, along with leadership and support.**

The principal will attend the TEAMS training and be thoroughly familiar with the TEAMS methods and materials. The principal will designate a TEAMS coordinator, and provide the necessary resources required to fully implement the TEAMS program -- including hardware and software. The principal will facilitate communication and teamwork by helping teachers find ways to conduct structured observations, meeting frequently with the TEAMS teams, and visiting frequently in the TEAMS classrooms.

**18. There is adequate time for collaborative planning; instructional time is free from interruptions.**

Each TEAMS team must have a common planning time. Two meetings per week are essential and should not be superseded by unscheduled faculty meetings, departmental duties, parent conferences, etc. Block scheduling or other innovative scheduling plans that accommodate longer class periods are highly desirable to facilitate the station rotation process. All attempts should be made to avoid disruptions through pull-outs, unscheduled special events, and intercom announcements.

**19. Students have frequent and equitable access to technology.**

Each classroom is equipped with a minimum of four computers (or more for class size over 30 students) and appropriate software and/or web-based programs. Other technology such as laptops, projectors, and Internet connectivity are highly desirable. The Technology Station is vital to the instructional process and all students must have frequent and equitable access.

**20. Parents are kept informed and provide input on a regular basis.**

A Project TEAMS parent orientation is held at the beginning of the school year to inform parents about the TEAMS instructional model. Parents review their child's *Work Log* on a regular basis, and also sign and make comments at the end of each unit.