LEAP
Handbook

Growing as an Educator

LEAP
LEADING EFFECTIVE
ACADEMIC PRACTICE

DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Discover a World of Opportunity™

DCTA

CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

WHAT IS LEAP?
Leading Effective Academic Practice (LEAP)

LEAP is Denver Public Schools' (DPS) teacher growth and performance system. DPS created LEAP to measure teacher effectiveness with the goal of ensuring an excellent teacher in every classroom with support from highly effective school leaders. District leaders, school leaders, teachers, Denver Classroom Teachers Association (DCTA) members and other stakeholder groups collaborated on LEAP's design to establish a clear set of expectations to assess teacher performance. As a fully-functioning system, LEAP helps teachers identify areas of strength and growth by providing guidelines for more meaningful feedback conversations, well-designed and implemented coaching cycles and professional learning sessions so that teachers can develop as professionals and continue meeting the needs of students.

Denver Public Schools has embraced the Colorado Academic Standards and Common Core State Standards in order to ensure all students receive the academic knowledge, language and skills they need to be successful in college, career choices and life. LEAP supports how the standards are taught using research-based instructional practices and is aligned to the standards shifts.

When measuring teacher effectiveness and prescribing professional learning opportunities, LEAP incorporates multiple measures, including:
• Observation: the opportunity for peer and school leader observations of classroom practice, the "on-stage" performance indicators.
• Professionalism: the measurements of each teacher's "off-stage" contributions outside of instructional time.
• Student Perception Survey: students' perception feedback.
• Assessments: students' academic growth data.

By assessing multiple areas of each teacher's performance, LEAP creates a more robust way of capturing a teacher's performance effectiveness, and this process helps identify strengths and areas for growth. More information on all of these measures is available in the other LEAP Handbook booklets.

Rooted in our shared core value of 'Students First', the LEAP system provides a framework for recognizing that, as professionals, teachers and school leaders, require clear standards of performance, honest assessments of their strengths and areas for growth, helpful feedback and support for their development.

NOTE: *Additional information is available and continually updated via the LEAP website at:* leap.dpsk12.org.
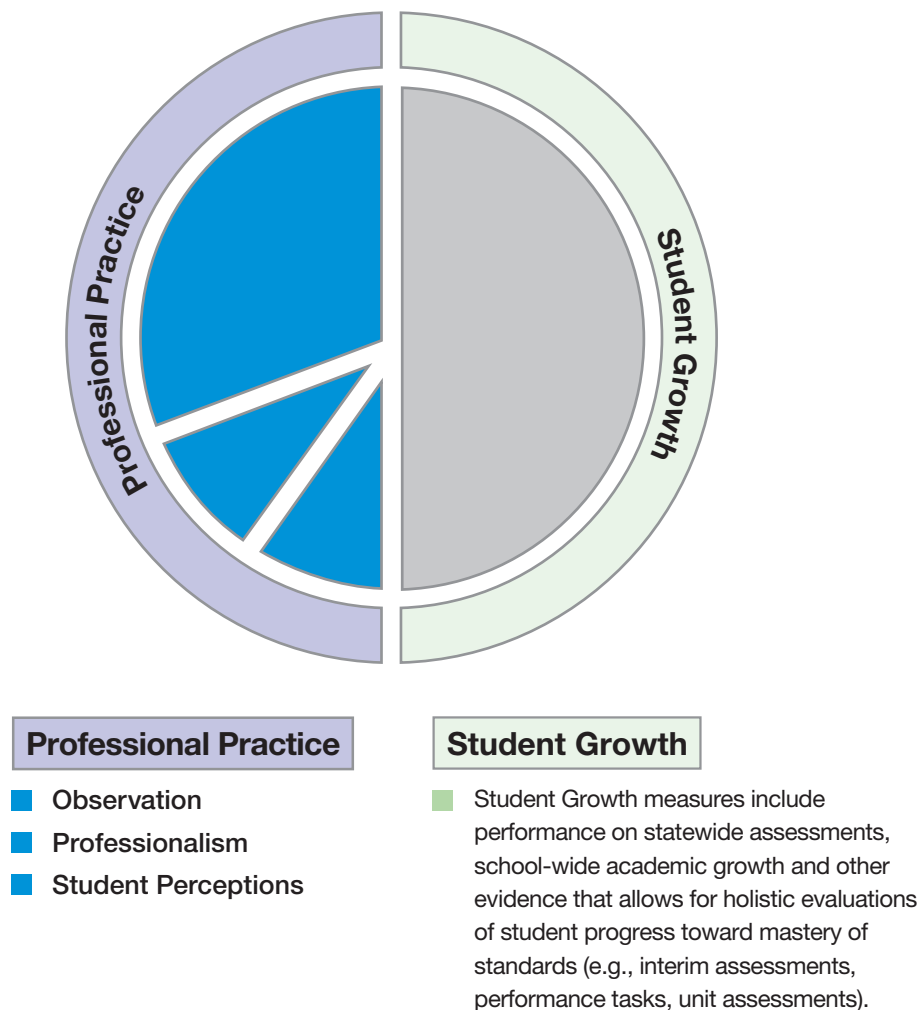
LEAP'S MULTIPLE MEASURES

In the beginning, DPS and the Denver Classroom Teachers Association (DCTA) recognized that the components of a successful growth and performance system must be informed by the ideas and experiences of our educators. It also needed to be comprised of multiple measures in order to provide a more complete and comprehensive picture of a teacher's performance. Consequently, DPS and DCTA stakeholders designed LEAP with input from our teachers, school leaders and national research. The measures that contribute to LEAP were heavily informed by the Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) study, which was conducted in multiple districts across the United States (including Denver) from 2009–2011. The MET study identified the importance of using **multiple measures of a teacher's performance** to gain a more accurate measure of each teacher's practice.

NOTE: *For more on the MET study, please visit*: metproject.org

To learn more about the development of the LEAP system, read the paper *Beyond Buy-In: Partnering with Practitioners to Build a Professional Growth and Accountability System for Denver's Educators* on the LEAP website: leap.dpsk12.org.

To understand the effectiveness of each teacher, LEAP is constructed of the following measures:

Professional Practice	Student Growth
■ Observation	■ Student Growth measures include performance on statewide assessments, school-wide academic growth and other evidence that allows for holistic evaluations of student progress toward mastery of standards (e.g., interim assessments, performance tasks, unit assessments).
■ Professionalism	
■ Student Perceptions	

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE
- **Observation**—Using the first two domains of the DPS Framework for Effective Teaching, *Learning Environment* and *Instruction,* school leaders and/or peers observe a teacher's classroom practice, collect evidence, align the evidence to the Framework for Effective Teaching (FET) and arrive at a final score for each indicator. Then, the observer reviews the evidence, constructs a meaningful feedback conversation aligned to the teacher's Professional Growth Plan (PGP), identifies next steps for the teacher's growth and suggests further professional learning opportunities. All teachers will have scored observations by a school-based observer (e.g., principal, assistant principal, principal resident or intern, teacher leader, internal peer observer, etc.). Some teachers will also have observations conducted by a peer observer.
- **Professionalism**—The third domain of the DPS Framework for Effective Teaching, *Professionalism*, is assessed throughout the year by school leaders and through teacher self-assessment. This domain assesses the work teachers do "off-stage" and outside of instructional time, individually and collaboratively in support of students' learning.
- **Student Perception Survey (SPS)**—The Student Perception Survey (SPS) is the component of LEAP that reflects students' voices regarding their teacher's classroom and practice. It includes three categories of teachers' practice as perceived by their students: Facilitates Learning, Supports Students and Communicates High Expectations.
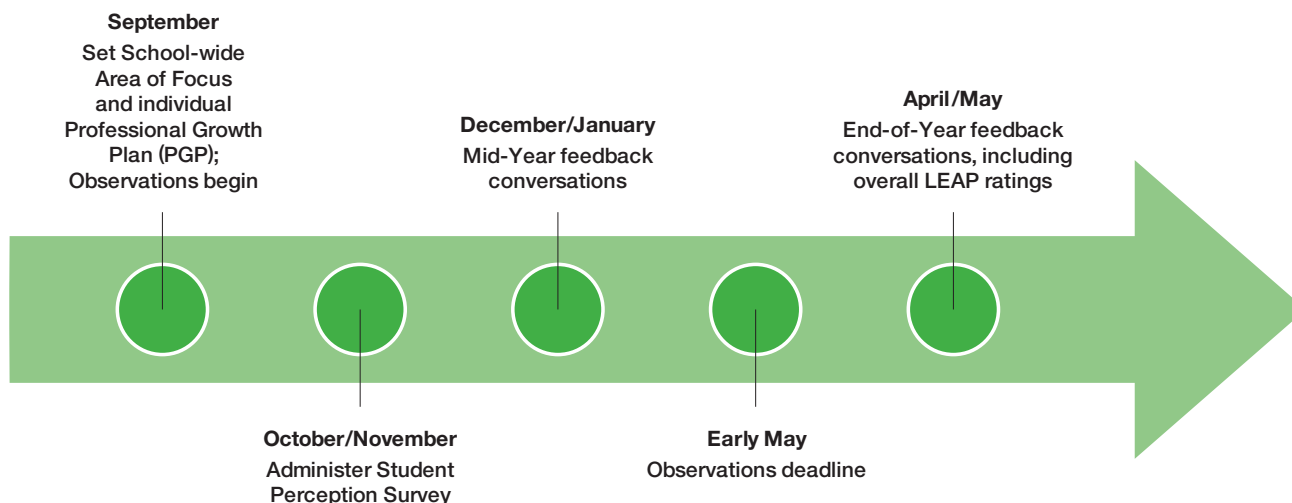
STUDENT GROWTH
- Student Growth measures are important to review, discuss and consider in support of students' growth. This process affords teachers and school leaders an opportunity to reflect upon the connection between data-driven lesson plans formulated collaboratively with data teams and individually by teachers, teaching of the lessons employing best instructional practices and students' mastery of content as measured by different types of formal and informal assessments.

The LEAP system includes both classroom and school level measures of students' progress.
- **State Measures**—Measures the growth of a teacher's own students on state tests. This applies to teachers who instruct grades 4–10 in the state-tested subject areas of reading, writing and math.
- **School Measures**—Academic growth on the district's School Performance Framework (SPF) is applied to all teachers who were assigned to teaching positions in the previous year. Progress toward students' learning goals includes a range of evidence, such as interim assessments, performance tasks and unit assessments.
- **District Measures**—District growth on the state's District Performance Framework (DPF). This measure reflects the growth of all students in the district on state tests and ACCESS.

School-Year Timeline

September
Set School-wide Area of Focus and individual Professional Growth Plan (PGP); Observations begin

October/November
Administer Student Perception Survey

December/January
Mid-Year feedback conversations

Early May
Observations deadline

April/May
End-of-Year feedback conversations, including overall LEAP ratings

LEAP AS PART OF THE BROADER DPS VISION

The Denver Plan

The Denver Plan 2020 is Denver Public Schools' five-year strategic plan. With the vision of great schools in every neighborhood, DPS is committed to closing academic achievement gaps and preparing all students for success in college and careers.

In order to have great schools in every neighborhood, DPS needs strong leaders and teachers in every school. All leaders deserve to be empowered to meet the unique needs of their schools. All teachers deserve the resources and professional development needed to be the best educator they can be. Ultimately, all students deserve quality teachers, leaders and schools to prepare them for success, and LEAP provides the way for empowering excellent educators to raise students' achievement.

LEAP plays an integral role in establishing great schools by providing the coaching and feedback our teachers and leaders need to reach our Denver Plan goals and ensure that Every Child Succeeds.

NOTE: *To read the Denver Plan 2020, please visit:* **denverplan.dpsk12.org**

Our Vision: Every Child Succeeds

Great Schools in Every Neighborhood

GOALS
A Foundation for Success in School
Support for the Whole Child
Ready for College & Career
Close the Opportunity Gap

STRATEGIES
Leadership
Teaching
Flexibility
Invest Early
Culture

CORE BELIEFS
Every child has talent and potential.
Our diversity is a community treasure.
We can and will eliminate the opportunity gap.
We must dramatically accelerate our progress.
Every family deserves choice and access.
Our kids need all of us.

SHARED CORE VALUES
Students First
Integrity
Equity
Collaboration
Accountability
Fun

Resources that contributed to the development of LEAP:

- Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) reports: metproject.org/reports.php

- District of Columbia Public Schools' Impact rubric: dc.gov/DCPS/In+the+Classroom/Ensuring+Teacher+Success/IMPACT+ (Performance+Assessment)/IMPACT+Guidebooks

- Tennessee Department of Education's Teacher and Principal Evaluation System: tn.gov/firsttothetop/programs-committee.html

- New Haven Public Schools' Instructional Practice Framework: nhps.net/node/1082

- Houston Independent School District's Instructional Practice and Professional Expectations Rubric: hisdacademics.org/wp-content/uploads/gravity_forms/2-b18b158c2f279cf25b600c39bae04778/2013/08/ HISD-Teacher-IP-and-PE-Rubrics.pdf

- Protocol for Language Arts Teaching Observations (PLATO): platorubric.stanford.edu/Archived.html

- National Center for Teacher Effectiveness Mathematical Quality of Instruction (MQI) instrument: isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=mqi_training

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GROWING AS AN EDUCATOR

Highly effective school leaders provide teachers with ongoing feedback aligned to coaching and development opportunities. They also empower teachers to engage in dialogue with other educators about best teaching practices, with the goal of promoting teacher—and ultimately students' growth. Consequently, Denver Public Schools (DPS) leaders strive to provide teachers with more meaningful feedback with greater frequency, while providing easy access to professional learning and instructional resources aligned to a teacher's individual development areas.

Just as teachers have high expectations for students, DPS has equally high expectations for our teams of educators—including teachers, school leaders and all central school-support employees—in order to meet our shared vision for students' learning and growth. Implementing this vision requires all DPS stakeholder groups to take a self-reflective approach to their work, deciding on a professional learning path and holding themselves and one another accountable for progress.

As part of LEAP's growth-based implementation, DPS teachers should anticipate that their school leaders will provide them with a number of individualized, differentiated and framework-aligned opportunities for them to engage in professional learning opportunities.

LEAP Roles

We all play a role in assuring that our teachers receive the feedback and professional learning they need to continue to support students throughout their growth. Consider these four roles and their responsibilities:

TEACHERS	SCHOOL LEADER	PEER OBSERVER	TEACHER LEADER
• Create a Professional Growth Plan (PGP) selecting a focus for growth • Actively participate in feedback dialogues with observers • Seek professional development, ask for guidance from school leaders, Peer Observers, Teacher Effectiveness Coaches (TECs), Teacher Leaders and the LEAP team to support growth • In collaboration with School Leaders, identify and pursue opportunities to improve abilities based on Professionalism scores • In collaboration with School Leaders, identify and pursue opportunities for growth based on students' perception and students' growth data	• Work with the School Leadership Team to select a school-wide area of focus from the Framework aligned to the school's Unified Improvement Plan (UIP), and then collaboratively design the professional learning required to meet the needs of the focus area • Successfully meet requirements for observing teachers using the Framework • Observe all teachers using the Framework, assign scores and hold reflective feedback conversations • Provide teachers with specific next steps and Professional Learning (PL) options to improve their practice • Align school-wide and differentiated PL with teacher growth areas • Review all available LEAP data to drive Mid-Year and End-of-Year conversations with teachers	• Successfully meet requirements for observing teachers using the Framework • Observe teachers using the Framework, assign scores and hold reflective feedback conversations • Provide teachers with specific next steps and Professional Learning options to improve their practice • Provide additional support for new DPS teachers	• Many schools will have new Teacher Leaders who will serve in roles specifically designed to support the school's goals. • School Leaders should inform teachers of how Teacher Leader roles are being defined to support LEAP implementation. For example, Teacher Leaders may serve as certified observers, lead data teams, provide instructional coaching, etc.

Supporting Teachers Through Teacher Leaders

As we set more rigorous academic standards for our students, effective implementation of LEAP is an integral part of ensuring that teachers have the supports they need to prepare students to meet higher expectations and leave DPS ready for college and career choices. This includes aligning standards within the Framework for Effective Teaching. It also requires more focus on professional learning for teachers and School Leaders to support teachers as they shift instructional practices to help students meet the new standards.

Teacher Leaders play a key role in supporting teachers as they implement the standards by providing teachers with feedback and coaching to support standards-aligned instruction. Feedback and coaching through LEAP will play an integral role as educators continue evolving how they teach to the academic standards.

What are Differentiated Roles?

DPS launched Differentiated Roles as a pilot program in 14 schools in the 2013–14 school year. The program quickly expanded to 40 schools in 2014–15 and in 2015–16, 72 DPS schools will have hybrid teacher leadership roles. Differentiated Roles teachers support continuous learning for all teachers by extending the reach of great teachers as instructional leaders in their schools.

Teacher Leaders, known as Team Leads, serve in a hybrid role that includes both teaching and non-teaching time. In their time without students, they serve as instructional leaders supporting a team of teachers through coaching, co-planning lessons, observing instruction and providing feedback. Over the summer and throughout the year, Team Leads participate in extensive Professional Development to sharpen the skills they need in their new leadership roles.

How do schools join the program?

School design teams—comprised of teachers and school leaders—spent the fall developing a strong vision and plan regarding teacher leadership at their schools. Schools with strong plans are awarded funding to bring Differentiated Roles to their schools. Teacher teams are established around specific areas that support the school's goals for students. The program is not one-size-fits-all. Every school develops its own unique design. Learn more at: teacherleader.dpsk12.org

There are two Differentiated Roles: *Senior Team Leads* fulfill responsibilities for LEAP much like those of School Leaders [Principals and Assistant Principals (APs)] by conducting observations, rating Professionalism, reviewing available Student Perception Surveys (SPSs) and Student Growth data and hosting Mid-Year and End-of-Year Conversations with teachers on their teams. *Team Leads* serve a different role by contributing observations to LEAP throughout the year and supporting teachers' growth through ongoing coaching and feedback.

Professional Growth Plans (PGPs)

Teachers and School Leaders will review previous years' LEAP Observation, Professionalism, SPS data and Student Growth data and collaborate to develop a Professional Growth Plan (PGP) focused on the teacher's areas of needed growth.

• Teachers and School Leaders will collaboratively select a school-wide area of focus at the Expectation level as defined by the Framework for Effective Teaching, or within the *Professionalism* domain. School Leadership Teams (SLTs) will then collaborate on the design of Professional Learning (PL) or Professional Development (PD) programs aligned to the chosen expectation with targeted strategies to increase school and individual teacher effectiveness.

• In the fall, teachers will identify two indicators for their PGP; one indicator from the school-wide area of focus and the other indicator from any domain of the Framework (including the *Professionalism* Domain) that the teacher and School Leader agree would best help the teacher grow his or her educational practice.
• In addition to identifying these indicators, teachers will state their personal area of focus in their own words regarding what they would like to focus their growth on as a professional learner throughout the year.
• Lastly, each teacher and his or her School Leader will finalize PGPs. The selected PGP focus areas will guide the feedback conversations, interventions, communities of practice and professional learning offerings throughout the year.

To pursue growth areas outlined in their PGP or identified through feedback, teachers can access a variety of professional growth tools via Schoolnet or the Professional Learning catalog that are aligned to the Framework. However, a teacher should rely most heavily on the school's specific Professional Learning Plan created by the School Leadership Team to leverage growth opportunities that are uniquely focused upon each individual teacher.

Mid-Year and End-of-Year Conversations

Research about how people improve at any given task tells us that improvement comes from specific, measureable and actionable feedback followed by ongoing coaching cycles. In order to reach the growth-based goals of LEAP, instructional leaders should provide teachers with frequent, shorter-duration conversations throughout the school year to reflect on their performance and to ensure continuous professional improvement opportunities. Some examples of scenarios when School Leaders should provide feedback conversations include: 1) after a full, partial, or walkthrough observation, 2) after a parent/teacher conference to request feedback about a Professionalism indicator and 3) when contemplating student/teacher interactions captured in the Student Perception Survey.

In the middle of the school year and at the end of the school year, teachers and School Leaders will have comprehensive conversations about their performance and recommended courses of action for continued Professional Development and learning (Mid-Year Conversations occur from December through February and End-of-Year Conversations from April through May). These conversations will provide an opportunity for School Leaders and teachers to reflect and discuss professional progress and adjust the teachers' Professional Growth Plans in order to ensure teachers continue to receive meaningful feedback and highly effective supports that promote continued growth and development. In addition, Mid-Year Conversations provide an opportunity to review available Student Growth data, including state-wide standard assessments and progress towards Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), in relation to Professional Practice data.

To prepare for feedback conversations with your School Leader (Mid-Year, End-of-Year or shorter conversations taking place throughout the year), review the following data prior to the conversation:
• Observation data
• Professionalism ratings
• Professional Growth Plan (school-wide indicator and personal indicator)
• Student Perception Survey results (as available)
• Student Growth data and progress toward students' learning goals (as available)

When teachers think about the outcomes of the conversation, consider the following:
• What strengths do you want to highlight in the conversation?
• What actions are you willing to commit to in order to improve on areas of development?
• If there is a disparity between you and your leader in ratings or identifying strengths and development areas; how will you approach a conversation about that difference?
• What support or practice will you need to improve on areas for development?

SECTION	TEACHER TALKING POINTS
Classroom Practice (Observation & Student Perception Survey)	• My area(s) of strength in the classroom is/are _____ (consider both Observation and Student Perception Survey Data). I know this because _____. • I will continue to leverage this/these area(s) of strength next year by _____. • My area(s) of growth in the classroom is/are _____ (consider both Observation and Student Perception Survey Data). I know this because _____. • I will pursue the following next steps to improve on this/these growth area(s) _____. • I chose _____ indicator and _____ indicator for my PGP. • My greatest learning in my PGP areas so far has been _____. It is/has impacting/impacted my practice and my students' learning in the following way _____. • I used the Student Perception Survey data to change/inform my instructional practice in the following way(s) _____. • I can build on my strengths and address areas for growth in students' perceptions by _____. *If applicable:* • A big area of growth outside of my PGP is _____ indicator, as evidenced by _____.
Professionalism	• My area(s) of strength in Professionalism is/are _____. • My area of growth for Professionalism is _____. I will do _____ to improve in this area, as evidenced by _____. • My interests/passions for _____ will support my areas of growth by _____.
Student Growth	• My area(s) of strength in Student Growth is/are _____. • My area(s) of growth in Student Growth is/are _____. • I can build on my strengths and address areas for growth in students' learning by _____.
Follow Up and Next Steps	• Thank you for taking the time to meet with me! • To summarize, my next steps are _____. • I need support from you in the following way(s) _____. • I plan on doing _____ so I can continue to grow in _____area.

Resources

We are dedicating unprecedented resources to teacher support and development, and it is one of our top priorities at DPS. Although we still have work to do in developing and improving these resources, our commitment is that every teacher will have every opportunity to meet the shared goals that we've set for supporting the academic success of our students.

With the guidance of the principal acting as the instructional leader for the school, each School Leadership Team (SLT) collaborates and determines in-school Professional Learning based on the school-wide area of focus. From this foundation, teachers receive school-based Professional Learning. For more information on roles supporting data and instruction, please contact your principal and/or members of your School Leadership Team.

In addition to the school-based Professional Learning opportunities, the following resources have been developed to support teachers as they review their LEAP data and identify strengths, growth areas and next steps, all of which are outlined on the LEAP website: leap.dpsk12.org. Check back for newly added resources.
- The Teacher Professional Learning Catalog is a comprehensive list of both required and optional Professional Learning courses that are offered online and in-person. Access the comprehensive catalog through the Teacher Portal at: teacher.dpsk12.org/Pages/TeacherCatalog.aspx. Courses are sorted by date, content area, grade level, observation/professionalism indicator, etc.
- Framework indicator-specific resources, selected from Observation experts' "Top 10" lists, are available on Google Drive. Log in to your DPS Google Account, click: bit.ly/LEAP_indicator_resources to open the Drive folder and click the blue "Open in Drive" button in the upper right-hand corner. For Google support and ideas for using your DPS Google Account, visit: sites.google.com/a/dpsk12.net/googlesupport/.
- Watch short videos of effective DPS teachers on Safari Montage. Use the search term "classrooms in action" to find indicator-specific videos. A Safari Montage video library provides indicator-specific examples of effective practice, including explanations of what makes the video lesson effective.
- Search for Framework indicator-specific resources in Schoolnet. Instructions for how to search are available here: docs.google.com/document/d/1fcKHQxGeImXnoZQ_icLaTk7JigBncaOlIAn2SP0SHH4/edit?usp=sharing

> **For more information on the educator resources and technology guides to support LEAP, please visit the LEAP website at: leap.dpsk12.org.**

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There's More Online!

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Questions?

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