CLASSROOM OBSERVATION TOOL FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS/LITERACY CLASSROOMS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION TOOL FOR ELA/LITERACY

This tool provides a picture of ideal teaching and learning practices in a standards-based classroom. It includes what you can expect to see in a classroom that is effectively implementing the relevant standards in a daily lesson. It is designed as a professional development tool for instructors, those who support instructors, and others working to implement standards. It is not designed for use in evaluation of instructors.

Directions:

Under each Core Action, mark the indicators with either a "Y" (for "Yes, it is evident") or an "N" (for "No, it is not evident"). However, if an indicator is not evident because it is not applicable in that particular observed lesson, then mark it as "N/A." For example, the lesson may be implemented over a number of days and you are only observing a portion of the lesson for one day. Another example might be that you only observed the mid-to-final portion of the lesson and you did not observe some of the introductory activities. In both examples, some indicators might be marked "N/A."

Use the section entitled "Evidence observed" for each Core Action to make notes about what is seen and heard to support findings. The process for observing effective teaching and learning practices is not linear. In many cases, determining whether certain Core Actions and indicators are evident will not become apparent until the lesson is over. Others will be evident early in the lesson. It is fine to take detailed notes on a separate paper and review the notes after the lesson to determine the presence of an indicator.

Core Action 1. Lesson content is rigorous and relevant for the level defined by the state-adopted standards.

Core Action 2. Questions and tasks are text-specific and cognitively demanding.

Core Action 3. Lesson content and activities productively engage students.

Core Action 4. Lesson content is intentionally sequenced to develop students' skills and knowledge.

Core Action 5. Students' levels of understanding are checked throughout the lesson, and instruction is adjusted accordingly.

English Learner Additional Core Action. Lesson activities offer strategic scaffolds to provide English learners access to lesson content.

Core Action 1. Lesson content is rigorous and relevant for the level defined by the state-adopted standards.	Y, N, or N/A
A. Instructor establishes well-defined standards-based lesson goals.	
B. Students are working with texts at or above the expected complexity for the level(s) as defined by the standards.	
C. Students spend most class time engaged with some combination of reading, writing, or speaking directly about knowledge-building text(s).	

Evidence observed:

Core Action 2. Questions and tasks are text-specific and cognitively demanding.	Y, N, or N/A
A. Instructor consistently sequences questions to support students delving deeper into text(s) to build their understanding of key information.	
B. Instructor consistently includes systematic work with high-value words, phrases, and syntactically complex sentences from the text(s).	
C. Instructor asks students to elaborate and justify their thoughts and responses with precision by drawing evidence from text(s).	

Evidence observed:

Core Action 3. Lesson content and activities productively engage students.	Y, N, or N/A
A. Students participate actively in sustained class discussions where they use evidence from their readings to build on each other's insights.	
B. Students have varied opportunities to apply what they are learning in authentic adult-oriented contexts.	
C. Most students display persistence with tasks about demanding text(s).	

Evidence observed:

Core Action 4. Lesson content is intentionally sequenced to develop students' skills and knowledge.	Y, N, or N/A
A. Instructor explicitly links lesson content to previous lessons or students' prior knowledge.	
B. Instructor offers a range of brief and engaging resources to build students' knowledge about the topics of the central texts.	
C. Instructor ends the class by: • Reviewing lesson objectives; • Summarizing student learning with references to student work and discussion; and • Previewing the next class session and explaining how it will build upon today's activities.	

Evidence observed:

Core Action 5. Students' levels of understanding are checked throughout the lesson, and instruction is adjusted accordingly.	Y, N, or N/A
A. Instructor consistently uses informal yet deliberate methods to provide students with prompt, specific feedback to correct misunderstandings and reinforce learning.	
B. Instructor consistently provides strategic supports and scaffolds to help learners focus on what is essential to make sense of what they are reading.	
C. Instructor provides opportunities for students to evaluate and reflect on their own learning.	

Evidence observed:

English Learner Additional Core Action. Lesson activities offer strategic scaffolds to provide English learners access to lesson content.[1]	Y, N, or N/A
A. Instructor offers a range of brief and engaging auxiliary resources to build students' knowledge and vocabulary about lesson content. This could include such resources as visual images, videos, and supplementary texts.	
B. Instructor provides such supports as sentence frames, visuals, graphic organizers, and student-friendly glossaries to promote understanding.	
C. Instructor suggests language supports, including using their home language to build understanding and facilitate access to learning activities.	

Evidence observed:

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[1] Use the Additional Core Action when English learners (ELs) are part of the ELA/literacy class you are observing. The indicators represent research-based instructional supports that will help to ensure that ELs have full access to the vital ELA/literacy content being taught.

AGGREGATION AND SUMMARY OF OBSERVATION DATA

Step 1: Aggregating and summarizing observation data.

Using one column for each classroom observed. Mark the indicator with a **Y**—when you determined it was present—or an **N**—when you found it was not present. If an indicator is not present because it is not applicable in that particular observed lesson, then mark it as **N/A**. Calculate the overall observed classroom percentage. Divide the number of Ys in a row by the total number of indicators that are marked with either Y or N. (Do not include the N/As.) If the # of Ys is less than 50%, put a checkmark in the last column.

Core Action 1. Lesson content is rigorous and relevant for the level defined by the state-adopted standards.	CLASSROOMS OBSERVED										Total # of Ys	% of Ys	Check if less than 50%
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
A. Instructor establishes well-defined standards-based lesson goals.													
B. Students are working with texts at or above the expected complexity for the level as defined by the standards.													
C. Students spend most class time engaged with some combination of reading, writing, or speaking directly about knowledge-building text(s).													

Core Action 2. Questions and tasks are text-specific and cognitively demanding.	CLASSROOMS OBSERVED										Total # of Ys	% of Ys	Check if less than 50%
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
A. Instructor consistently sequences questions to support students delving deeper into text(s) to build their understanding of key information.													
B. Instructor consistently includes systematic work with high-value words, phrases, and syntactically complex sentences from the text(s).													
C. Instructor asks students to elaborate and justify their thoughts and responses with precision by drawing evidence from text(s).													

Core Action 3. Lesson content and activities productively engage students.	CLASSROOMS OBSERVED										Total # of Ys	% of Ys	Check if less than 50%
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
A. Students participate actively in the lesson where they use evidence from their readings to build on each other's insights.													
B. Students have varied opportunities to apply what they are learning in authentic adult-oriented contexts.													
C. Most students display persistence with tasks about demanding text(s).													

Core Action 4. Lesson content is intentionally sequenced to develop students' skills and knowledge.	CLASSROOMS OBSERVED										Total # of Ys	% of Ys	Check if less than 50%
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
A. Instructor explicitly links lesson content to previous lessons or students' prior knowledge.													
B. Instructor offers a range of brief and engaging resources to build students' knowledge about the topics of the central texts.													
C. Instructor ends the class by: • Reviewing lesson objectives; • Summarizing student learning with references to student work and discussion; and • Previewing the next class session and explaining how it will build upon today's activities.													

Core Action 5. Students' levels of understanding are checked throughout the lesson, and instruction is adjusted accordingly.	CLASSROOMS OBSERVED										Total # of Ys	% of Ys	Check if less than 50%
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
A. Instructor consistently uses informal yet deliberate methods to provide students with prompt, specific feedback to correct misunderstandings and reinforce learning.													
B. Instructor consistently provides strategic supports and scaffolds to help learners focus on what is essential to make sense of what they are reading.													
C. Instructor provides opportunities for students to evaluate and reflect on their own learning.													

English Learner Additional Core Action. Lesson activities offer strategic scaffolds to provide English learners access to lesson content.	CLASSROOMS OBSERVED										Total # of Ys	% of Ys	Check if less than 50%
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
A. Instructor offers a range of brief and engaging auxiliary resources to build students' knowledge and vocabulary about lesson content. This could include such resources as visual images, videos, and supplementary texts.													
B. Instructor provides such supports as sentence frames, visuals, graphic organizers, and student-friendly glossaries to promote understanding.													
C. Instructor suggests language supports, including using their home language to build understanding and facilitate access to learning activities.													

Step 2: Setting priorities for professional development.
Your program's priorities for instructional staff professional development may be based on multiple factors. These include overall program goals and objectives and multiple federal or state initiatives. Following are some brief guidance points:

1. Note which indicators were observed in less than half of the classes. Record this information by placing checkmarks in the following chart.

Core Actions	Indicators Observed in Less Than 50% of Classes		
	A	B	C
Core Action 1. Lesson content is rigorous and relevant for the level defined by the state-adopted standards.			
Core Action 2. Questions and tasks are text-specific and cognitively demanding.			
Core Action 3. Lesson content and activities productively engage students.			
Core Action 4. Lesson content is intentionally sequenced to develop students' skills and knowledge.			
Core Action 5. Students' levels of understanding are checked throughout the lesson, and instruction is adjusted accordingly.			
English Learner Additional Core Action. Lesson activities offer strategic scaffolds to provide English learners access to lesson content.			

2. Determine which one or two Core Action areas present the greatest challenge(s) for instructors.

3. Record the priorities for professional development related to strengthening classroom instruction in the Core Action areas generated by discussion with instructional staff.

SAMPLE AGGREGATION AND SUMMARY OF OBSERVATION DATA

Step 1: Aggregating and summarizing observation data.

Using one column for each classroom observed, mark the indicator with a **Y**—when you determined it was present—or an **N**—when you found it was not present. If an indicator is not present because it is not applicable in that particular observed lesson, then mark it as **N/A.** Calculate the overall observed classroom percentage. Divide the number of Ys in a row by the total number of indicators that are marked with either Y or N. (Do not include the N/As.) If the # of Ys is less than 50%, put a checkmark in the last column.

Core Action 1. Lesson content is rigorous and relevant for the level defined by the state-adopted standards.	CLASSROOMS OBSERVED										Total # of Ys	% of Ys	Check if less than 50%
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
A. Instructor establishes well-defined standards-based lesson goals.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y			
B. Students are working with texts at or above the expected complexity for the level as defined by the standards.	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N			
C. Students spend most class time engaged with some combination of reading, writing, or speaking directly about knowledge-building text(s).	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y			

Core Action 2. Questions and tasks are text-specific and cognitively demanding.	CLASSROOMS OBSERVED										Total # of Ys	% of Ys	Check if less than 50%
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
A. Instructor consistently sequences questions to support students delving deeper into text(s) to build their understanding of key information.	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N			
B. Instructor consistently includes systematic work with high-value words, phrases, and syntactically complex sentences from the text(s).	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y			
C. Instructor asks students to elaborate and justify their thoughts and responses with precision by drawing evidence from text(s).	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y			

Core Action 3. Lesson content and activities productively engage students.	CLASSROOMS OBSERVED										Total # of Ys	% of Ys	Check if less than 50%
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
A. Students participate actively in the lesson where they use evidence from their readings to build on each other's insights.	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y			
B. Students have varied opportunities to apply what they are learning in authenticadult-oriented contexts.	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N			
C. Most students display persistence with tasks about demanding text(s).	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y			

Core Action 4. Lesson content is intentionally sequenced to develop students' skills and know.	CLASSROOMS OBSERVED										Total # of Ys	% of Ys	Check if less than 50%
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
A. Instructor explicitly links lesson content to previous lessons or students' prior knowledge.	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y			
B. Instructor offers a range of brief and engaging resources to build students' knowledge about the topics of the central texts.	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N			
C. Instructor ends the lesson by: • Reviewing lesson objectives; • Summarizing student learning with references to student work and discussion; and • Previewing the next class session and explaining how it will build upon today's activities.	Y	N/A	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N/A	Y			

Core Action 5. Students' levels of understanding are checked throughout the lesson, and instruction is adjusted accordingly.	CLASSROOMS OBSERVED										Total # of Ys	% of Ys	Check if less than 50%
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
A. Instructor consistently uses informal yet deliberate methods to provide students with prompt, specific feedback to correct misunderstandings and reinforce learning.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y			
B. Instructor consistently provides strategic supports and scaffolds to help learners focus on what is essential to make sense of what they are reading.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N			
C. Instructor provides opportunities for students to evaluate and reflect on their own learning.	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N			

English Learner Additional Core Action. Lesson activities offer strategic scaffolds to provide English learners access to lesson content.	CLASSROOMS OBSERVED										Total # of Ys	% of Ys	Check if less than 50%
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
A. Instructor offers a range of brief and engaging auxiliary resources to build students' knowledge and vocabulary about lesson content. This could include such resources as visual images, videos, and supplementary texts.	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N			
B. Instructor provides such supports as sentence frames, visuals, graphic organizers, and student-friendly glossaries to promote understanding.	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y			
C. Instructor suggests language supports, including using their home language to build understanding and facilitate access to learning activities.	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y			

Step 2: Setting priorities for professional development.

Your program's priorities for instructional staff professional development may be based on multiple factors. These include overall program goals and objectives and multiple federal or state initiatives. Following are some brief guidance points:

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