

## A quick guide for observing classroom content and practice

Working with appropriate **complex texts**, students should:

### Read About It

1. Stories
2. Drama
3. Poems
4. Nonfiction

### Think About It

5. Research
6. Analysis
7. Reflection

### Talk About It

8. Presentation
9. Collaboration

### Write About It

10. Arguments
11. Explanations
12. Narratives

In a **grade 8 ELA class**, you should observe the teacher integrating the grade level ELA standards and students engaging in a variety of the following standards and practices:

Students engage independently with grade-level literary and informational texts, focusing on:

- Key Ideas and Details:** objective summary, development of theme or central idea, pivotal lines or events, strong textual evidence for claims about explicit and implicit meanings, quoting or paraphrasing as appropriate
- Craft and Structure:** impact of different text and paragraph structures, effect of differences in point of view (e.g., dramatic irony, conflicting evidence), impact of specific word choices, rhetorical techniques, including allusion and irony
- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:** faithfulness of film or live production to text, benefits and drawbacks of various media for presenting specific information, relationship of new texts to old (e.g., how modern texts re-imagine folk tales), disagreement between texts on same topic

Students engage daily in higher-order reasoning, both orally and in writing, especially by:

- Synthesizing:** drawing on multiple sources of information in multiple formats to answer a self-generated research question and to generate focused questions for further research
- Analyzing:** understanding the purpose and motives (e.g., political, commercial) behind an author's or speaker's presentation of information, assessing credibility of sources, compare or contrast 2+ texts
- Evaluating:** assessing arguments with attention to soundness of reasoning and relevance and sufficiency of evidence, recognizing irrelevant information

Students attend closely to language use in their own work and others', focusing on:

- Meanings:** strategies (e.g., consulting resources, analyzing roots) for understanding words and phrases in context, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings
- Conventions:** punctuation to indicate pauses or breaks (e.g., ellipsis, em dash), verb voice (active, passive) and mood (indicative, imperative, interrogative, conditional, subjunctive), pronoun-antecedent agreement

Students interact frequently, purposefully, and effectively with diverse others, engaging in:

- Discussion:** being prepared, following rules, defining individual roles, monitoring progress toward goals, connecting others' ideas, asking and answering questions, acknowledging other viewpoints and defending or adjusting own stance in response
- Presentation:** coherent claims or findings, emphasis on salient points, eye contact, volume, pronunciation, use of appropriate vocabulary, integration of multimedia elements, consideration of specific audience
- Collaboration:** revising and editing work with help from peers and adults, using Internet and other technology to publish and exchange ideas and information, paraphrasing without plagiarizing and providing citations in standard format

Students engage in writing within a range of time frames for a variety of audiences, producing:

- Arguments:** claims distinguished from counterclaims, logical reasoning, relevant evidence, accurate and credible sources
- Explanations:** well-chosen details and quotations, domain-specific vocabulary, useful text features and multimedia elements
- Narratives:** effective literary techniques, clear point of view, sensory details, appropriate narrative sequence, narrative techniques (e.g., dialogue, pacing), irony
- All writing:** clear and appropriate beginning and end, logical and cohesive structure, varied and effective transitions, precise language, style appropriate to audience and purpose We purposely changed "formatting" to "text features" in this standard for clarity and consistency with other standards. The same change should be made here (and in other grade levels as appropriate).

**ELA What to Look For** The example below features three Indicators from the [Standards of Effective Practice](#). These Indicators are just a sampling from the full set of Standards and were chosen because they create a sequence: the educator plans a lesson that sets clear and high **expectations**, the educator then delivers high quality instruction, and finally the educator uses a variety of **assessments** to see if students understand the material or if re-teaching is necessary. This example highlights teacher and student behaviors aligned to the three Indicators that you can expect to see in a rigorous 8<sup>th</sup> grade ELA classroom.

**Expectations**  
(Standard II, Indicator E) Plans and implements lessons that set clear and high expectations and also make knowledge accessible for all students.

**What is the teacher doing?**

- Selecting appropriate complex texts (e.g., texts from unfamiliar perspectives)
- Focusing attention on academic language (e.g., linguistic complexity, conventions, and vocabulary)
- Highlighting when an author uses figurative, connotative, or technical language purposefully

**What are the students doing?**

- Identifying a lesson's standards or objectives and how they connect to unit goals
- Persisting when engaging with meaningful literacy tasks
- Making an argument giving reasons (e.g., citing evidence from a text)
- Technical language purposefully

**Instruction**  
(Standard II, Indicator A) Uses instructional practices that reflect high expectations regarding content and quality of effort and work; engage all students; and are personalized to accommodate diverse learning styles, needs, interests, and levels of readiness.

**What is the teacher doing?**

- Modeling actively incorporating others into discussions
- Highlighting how a section of text relates to the whole
- Grouping students based on data and adjusting grouping as needed (using both homogenous and heterogeneous grouping)

**What are the students doing?**

- Making connections between reading, writing, speaking and listening
- Resolving conflicts with peers in order to working together effectively
- Reading a variety of complex texts to advance academic learning

**Assessment**  
(Standard I, Indicator B) Uses a variety of informal and formal methods of assessments to measure student learning, growth, and understanding to develop differentiated and enhanced learning experiences and improve future instruction.

**What is the teacher doing?**

- Providing students with feedback aligned to long-term goals
- Using multiple formative approaches to assess student learning (e.g., exit slips, classroom discussion)
- Conducting frequent checks for student understanding and adjusting instruction accordingly

**What are the students doing?**

- Engaging in challenging learning tasks regardless of learning needs (e.g., linguistic background, disability, academic gifts)
- Engaging in meaningful writing in response to text
- Using exemplars to inform their work