# Early Literacy Observation and Feedback Tool

This tool supports classroom observers to **identify and provide feedback on evidence-based and culturally and linguistically sustaining early literacy instructional practices** aligned to [Mass Literacy](https://www.doe.mass.edu/massliteracy/) and the [Massachusetts English Language Arts and Literacy Curriculum Framework](https://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/ela/2017-06.pdf). This is a required component of the Candidate Assessment of Performance (CAP) for Teacher Candidates in Early Childhood PK-2, Elementary 1-6, and Moderate Disabilities PK-8 programs.

The pre-practicum and practicum should build to candidate readiness for effective early literacy instruction in the licensure role, including all elements of a core literacy block. As such, this tool is designed to be used in an observation of a Teacher Candidate during a full core literacy block, which should include three main components: foundational skills (as appropriate based on grade-level and student need), engaging with complex text, and writing, with oral language developed throughout. Depending on the licensure role, these skills may be demonstrated during whole-group instruction, small-group instruction, and/or co-teaching and may occur across one or more observations. All components should be delivered in the context of a culturally and linguistically sustaining environment. For more information about each of the components, click on the links in the chart below.

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| Foundational Skills  Systematic instruction with active practice in phonological awareness, phonics and decoding, and fluency | Engaging with Complex Text  Reading or listening to authentic and meaningful texts | Writing  Systematic writing instruction with active practice |
| [Pre-K](https://www.doe.mass.edu/massliteracy/literacy-block/foundational-skills/grade-preK.docx) | [K](https://www.doe.mass.edu/massliteracy/literacy-block/foundational-skills/grade-K.docx) | [1st](https://www.doe.mass.edu/massliteracy/literacy-block/foundational-skills/grade-1.docx) | [2nd](https://www.doe.mass.edu/massliteracy/literacy-block/foundational-skills/grade-2.docx) | [3rd](https://www.doe.mass.edu/massliteracy/literacy-block/foundational-skills/grade-3.docx)  [Advanced Phonics](https://www.doe.mass.edu/massliteracy/skilled-reading/fluent-word-reading/advanced-phonics.html) | [Choosing and Using Complex Text](https://www.doe.mass.edu/massliteracy/literacy-block/complex-text/choosing-using.html) | [Reading for Understanding](https://www.doe.mass.edu/massliteracy/literacy-block/complex-text/understanding.html) | [Responding to Text](https://www.doe.mass.edu/massliteracy/literacy-block/complex-text/responding.html) | [Sentence Structure & Conventions](https://www.doe.mass.edu/massliteracy/literacy-block/writing/structure.html) | [Craft of Writing](https://www.doe.mass.edu/massliteracy/literacy-block/writing/craft.html) | [Writing Process](https://www.doe.mass.edu/massliteracy/literacy-block/writing/process.html) |

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| Oral Language  Develops through speaking and listening interactions, engaging with text, and explicit language instruction |
| **Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practice**  Culturally and linguistically sustaining practices affirm and value students' cultures, prior experiences, and linguistic resources to make learning more relevant and effective, promote academic achievement, cultural competence, and sociopolitical awareness, and value multilingualism as an asset. These practices are essential for all students in the classroom, regardless of their background, culture, or identity. All students benefit from an approach that is intended to meet the needs of diverse learners; from expanded cultural competence and sociopolitical consciousness; and from explicit instruction in the functions of language.  Evidence-based instruction, in culturally and linguistically sustaining learning environments, is essential to harnessing, supporting, and cultivating the talents and knowledge of all our students. This tool highlights culturally and linguistically sustaining practices an observer may expect to see relative to each component of the core literacy block. These Look Fors are intended to spark discussion, reflection, and feedback and are not exhaustive of all aspects of culturally and linguistically sustaining practice.  For more information and resources, see [Supporting](https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/culturally-sustaining/) Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practice. |

Using This Tool

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| BEFORE the observation:   * **Read the *Look Fors*** ([PreK-3](#_Early_Literacy_Look), [4-6](#_Early_Literacy_Look_1), or [Moderate Disabilities 6-8](#_Early_Literacy_Look_2))as a guide to the practices you should expect to observe, as they represent key observable components of early literacy instruction. When possible, confer with the teacher candidate in advance to learn more about the lesson and how these practices may be evidenced.   **Note:** As an observer, it is important to continuously reflecton the ways bias, assumptions, or preferences about instruction may be present in how you interpret and judge practice. Consider ways to mitigate those biases in this observation and on an ongoing basis.  DURING the observation:   * As you observe, **focus on what the teacher and students are saying and doing** relative to the Look Fors, in small groups and whole group where applicable. * **Record your observations** in the Notes column of the Look Fors document or on a separate page. These are your notes and will not need to be shared in their entirety with the candidate. * **Synthesize and categorize** your evidence into the table on the [CAP Early Literacy Observation Form](#_Early_Literacy_Observation).   AFTER the observation:   * **Review the Look Fors**. Reflect on the extent to which the Look For were observed with quality during the lesson. * **Draft feedback** to the teacher, identifying strengths and areas for growth in relation to the Look Fors. Debrief the observation with the teacher candidate to discuss reflections and next steps. * **Consider evidence** from this observation to inform the teacher candidate’s formative and/or summative assessments, specifically in relation to the focus elements of 1.A.1 Subject Matter Knowledge, 1.A.3 Well-Structured Units and Lessons, and 2.E.1 High Expectations. |

## Early Literacy Look Fors (Grades PreK-3)

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| Component of the Literacy Block | *Was the* ***teacher****…* | *Were the* ***students****…* | *Notes* |
| Foundational Skills | * Delivering instruction in phonological awareness, phonics and decoding, and/or fluency that is explicit, accurate, and grade-level appropriate, using culturally relevant curricular materials? (1.A.1, 1.A.3) * Gradually releasing responsibility when introducing new content in foundational skills? (1.A.3) * Building on students’ strengths, needs, and background knowledge about speech and language? (2.E.1) * Using text and activities purposefully for whole- and small-group instruction, based on student needs, interests, and identities, to promote transfer of phonics and decoding skills? (1.A.3) * Providing reinforcement and/or corrective feedback in a way that holds students to high expectations while affirming their sources of knowledge about language? (2.E.1) | * Practicing phonological awareness, phonics and decoding, and/or fluency through differentiated tasks in centers, small groups and/or independently? (1.A.1, 1.A.3) * Actively engaging in repetitive, playful, and efficient practice of foundational skills, with support as needed? * Interacting with the teacher and peers in ways characterized by mutual trust and positive, supportive relationships? (2.E.1) * Making visible learning progress towards mastery of grade-level foundational skills? (1.A.1) |  |
| Engaging with Complex Text | * Using high-quality, culturally relevant, complex texts and text sets that are rich in academic language, provide diverse and nuanced perspectives, and promote critical thinking? (1.A.1, 1.A.3) * Giving all students equitable access to grade-level texts, tasks, and experiences as well as the supports they need to meet high expectations? (2.E.1) * Modeling the process of making meaning from reading through read and think alouds? (1.A.1) * Facilitating student discussion in whole-group and small groups using text-based questions that move from literal to deeper and more inferential thinking based on grade-level standards? (1.A.1) * Providing explicit vocabulary instruction and opportunities for students to hear and use new words? (1.A.1) | * Examining diverse perspectives and thinking critically about texts and topics with real-world impact? (1.A.1) * Listening to, reading, writing about, and discussing multiple texts (e.g., article, essay, video, image) on the same topic to build knowledge and deepen understanding? (1.A.1) * Asking and responding to text-based questions orally and in writing with evidence from the text and in various group configurations (partners, small group, large group)? (1.A.3) * Practicing increasingly complex oral language through extended discussion with partners or small groups and in playful learning opportunities? (2.E.1) * Interacting with the teacher and peers in ways characterized by mutual trust and positive, supportive relationships? (2.E.1) * Making visible learning progress towards mastery of grade-level ELA/Literacy standards? (1.A.1) |  |
| Writing | * Providing explicit, standards-aligned instruction in sentence structure, conventions, craft, and/or writing process using culturally relevant curricular materials? (1.A.1, 1.A.3) * Facilitating guided practice and application of writing skills using questions and tasks that support students to actively draw upon their backgrounds, make connections, examine their own and others’ perspectives, or help advance student thinking and actions about real-world issues? (1.A.3) * Providing models (e.g., exemplar texts, student samples, sharing their own writing)? (2.E.1) * Providing feedback on students’ writing that is timely, asset-based, and actionable? (2.E.1) | * Practicing and applying skills in the context of culturally relevant and meaningful writing tasks? (1.A.3) * Demonstrating agency and choice in selecting and developing ideas, topics, or styles of writing? (1.A.1, 2.E.1) * Writing for specific and grade-appropriate purposes and audiences (opinion, informative/explanatory, or narrative)? (1.A.1, 1.A.3) * Engaging in discourse with the teacher and peers to extend their thinking and develop ideas for writing? (1.A.1) * Incorporating feedback from the teacher and peers into their writing? (2.E.1) * Interacting with the teacher and peers in ways characterized by mutual trust and positive, supportive relationships? (2.E.1) * Making visible learning progress towards mastery of grade-level ELA/literacy standards? (1.A.1) |  |

## Early Literacy Look Fors (Grades 4-6)

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| Component of the Literacy Block | *Was the* ***teacher****…* | *Were the* ***students****…* | *Notes* |
| Foundational Skills | * Delivering instruction in advanced phonics, morphology, fluency, and advanced phoneme awareness that is explicit, accurate, and grade-level appropriate using culturally relevant curricular materials? (1.A.1, 1.A.3) * Providing time and support for repetitive, engaging, active, and efficient student practice in advanced phonics skills? (1.A.3) * Building on students’ strengths, needs, and background knowledge about speech and language? (2.E.1) * Providing small-group instruction based on student needs, using evidence-based activities to promote transfer of word analysis skills? (1.A.3) * Providing reinforcement and/or corrective feedback in a way that holds students to high expectations while affirming their sources of knowledge about language? (2.E.1) | * Practicing advanced phonics through differentiated tasks in centers, small groups and/or independently? (1.A.3) * Practicing fluency and deepening comprehension by reading grade-level text with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression? (1.A.1) * Decoding multisyllabic words using knowledge of syllabication, roots, and affixes? (1.A.1) * Interacting with the teacher and peers in ways characterized by mutual trust and positive, supportive relationships? (2.E.1) * Making visible learning progress towards mastery of grade-level advanced phonics skills? (1.A.1) |  |
| Engaging with Complex Text | * Using high-quality, culturally relevant, complex texts and text sets that are rich in academic language, provide diverse and nuanced perspectives, and promote critical thinking? (1.A.1, 1.A.3) * Giving all students equitable access to grade-level texts, tasks, and experiences as well as the supports they need to meet high expectations? (2.E.1) * Facilitating student discussion in whole-group and small groups using text-based questions that move from literal to deeper and more inferential based on grade-level standards? (1.A.1) * Providing explicit vocabulary instruction and opportunities for students to hear and use new words? (1.A.1) | * Examining diverse perspectives and thinking critically about texts and topics with real-world impact? (1.A.1) * Listening to, reading, writing about, and discussing multiple texts (e.g. article, essay, video, image) on the same topic to build knowledge? (1.A.1) * Asking and responding to text-based questions orally and in writing with evidence from the text and in various group configurations (partners, small group, large group)? (1.A.3) * Practicing increasingly complex oral language through extended discussion with partners or small groups? (2.E.1) * Interacting with the teacher and peers in ways characterized by mutual trust and positive, supportive relationships? (2.E.1) * Making visible learning progress towards mastery of grade-level ELA/Literacy standards? (1.A.1, 2.E.1) |  |
| Writing | * Providing explicit, standards-aligned instruction in sentence structure, conventions, craft, and/or writing process using culturally relevant curricular materials? (1.A.1, 1.A.3) * Facilitating guided practice and application of writing skills using questions and tasks that support students to actively draw upon their backgrounds, make connections, examine their own and others’ perspectives, or help advance student thinking and actions about real-world issues? (1.A.3) * Providing models (e.g., sharing their own writing)? (2.E.1) * Providing feedback on students’ writing that is timely, asset-based, and actionable? (2.E.1) | * Practicing and applying skills in the context of culturally relevant and meaningful writing tasks? (1.A.3) * Demonstrating agency and choice in selecting and developing ideas, topics, or styles of writing? (1.A.1, 2.E.1) * Writing for specific and grade-appropriate purposes and audiences (opinion, informative/explanatory, or narrative)? (1.A.1, 1.A.3) * Engaging in discourse with the teacher and peers to extend their thinking and develop ideas for writing? (1.A.1) * Incorporating feedback from the teacher and peers into their writing? (2.E.1) * Interacting with the teacher and peers in ways characterized by mutual trust and positive, supportive relationships? (2.E.1) * Making visible learning progress towards mastery of grade-level ELA/literacy standards? (1.A.1, 2.E.1) |  |

## Early Literacy Look Fors (Moderate Disabilities, Grades 6-8)

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| Component of the Literacy Block | *Was the* ***teacher****…* | *Were the* ***students****…* | *Notes* |
| Foundational Skills (as needed based on student data) | * Delivering instruction in advanced phonics, morphology, fluency, and advanced phoneme awareness that is explicit, accurate, and grade-level appropriate using culturally relevant curricular materials? (1.A.1, 1.A.3) * Providing time and support for repetitive, engaging, active, and efficient student practice in advanced phonics skills? (1.A.3) * Building on students’ strengths, needs, and background knowledge about speech and language? (2.E.1) * Providing small-group instruction based on student needs, using evidence-based activities to promote transfer of word analysis skills? (1.A.3) * Providing reinforcement and/or corrective feedback in a way that holds students to high expectations while affirming their sources of knowledge about language? (2.E.1) | * Practicing advanced phonics through differentiated tasks in small groups and/or independently? (1.A.3) * Practicing fluency and deepening comprehension by reading grade-level text with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression? (1.A.1) * Decoding multisyllabic words using knowledge of syllabication, roots, and affixes? (1.A.1) * Interacting with the teacher and peers in ways characterized by mutual trust and positive, supportive relationships? (2.E.1) * Making visible learning progress towards mastery of advanced phonics skills? (1.A.1) |  |
| Engaging with Complex Text | * Using high-quality, culturally relevant, complex texts and text sets that are rich in academic language, provide diverse and nuanced perspectives, and promote critical thinking? (1.A.1, 1.A.3) * Giving all students equitable access to grade-level texts, tasks, and experiences as well as the supports they need to meet high expectations? (2.E.1) * Facilitating student discussion in whole-group and small groups using text-based questions that move from literal to deeper and more inferential based on grade-level standards? (1.A.1) * Providing explicit vocabulary instruction and opportunities for students to hear and use new words? (1.A.1) | * Examining diverse perspectives and thinking critically about texts and topics with real-world impact? (1.A.1) * Listening to, reading, writing about, and discussing multiple texts (e.g. article, essay, video, image) on the same topic to build knowledge? (1.A.1) * Asking and responding to text-based questions orally and in writing with evidence from the text and in various group configurations (partners, small group, large group)? (1.A.3) * Practicing increasingly complex oral language through extended discussion with partners or small groups? (2.E.1) * Interacting with the teacher and peers in ways characterized by mutual trust and positive, supportive relationships? (2.E.1) * Making visible learning progress towards mastery of grade-level ELA/Literacy standards? (1.A.1, 2.E.1) |  |
| Writing | * Providing explicit, standards-aligned instruction in sentence structure, conventions, craft, and/or writing process using culturally relevant curricular materials? (1.A.1, 1.A.3) * Facilitating guided practice and application of writing skills using questions and tasks that support students to actively draw upon their backgrounds, make connections, examine their own and others’ perspectives, or help advance student thinking and actions about real-world issues? (1.A.3) * Providing models (e.g., sharing their own writing)? (2.E.1) * Providing feedback on students’ writing that is timely, asset-based, and actionable? (2.E.1) | * Practicing and applying skills in the context of culturally relevant and meaningful writing tasks? (1.A.3) * Demonstrating agency and choice in selecting and developing ideas, topics, or styles of writing? (1.A.1, 2.E.1) * Writing for specific and grade-appropriate purposes and audiences (opinion, informative/explanatory, or narrative)? (1.A.1, 1.A.3) * Engaging in discourse with the teacher and peers to extend their thinking and develop ideas for writing? (1.A.1) * Incorporating feedback from the teacher and peers into their writing? (2.E.1) * Interacting with the teacher and peers in ways characterized by mutual trust and positive, supportive relationships? (2.E.1) * Making visible learning progress towards mastery of grade-level ELA/literacy standards? (1.A.1, 2.E.1) |  |

## Early Literacy Observation Form

| **Name: Date:** |
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| **Observation #: Type (Announced/Unannounced):**  **Observed By:**  **Focus Elements:**  X 1.A.1: Subject Matter Knowledge ☐ 2.B.1: Safe Learning Environment  X 1.A.3: Well-Structured Units and Lessons X 2.E.1: High Expectations  ☐ 1.B.2: Adjustments to Practice ☐ 4.A.1: Reflective Practice  ☐ 2.A.3: Meeting Diverse Needs  **Date of Lesson: Time (start/end):**  **Content Topic/Lesson Objective:**  **☐ Whole Group ☐ Small Group** **☐ One-on-One ☐ Other** |

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| *Active Evidence Collection occurred during the observation and is synthesized and categorized below.* |

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| **Element** | **Evidence** |
| 1.A.1 |  |
| 1.A.3 |  |
| 2.E.1 |  |

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| **Reinforcement Area/Action** | **Focused Feedback** |
| **Reinforcement Area/Action (Strengths)**   * Which early literacy practices were strongly evident, or observed with high quality? Provide evidence from the observation. * How can the teacher reinforce these strengths? |  |
| **Refinement Area/Action (Areas for Improvement)**   * Which early literacy practices were not evident, or observed with developing quality? Provide evidence from the observation. * How can the teacher refine these practices? |  |

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| **Educator Reflection** (optional) |
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