# Overview: Sample Early Literacy Observation Form Focused on Engaging with Complex Text

icon of pen in ink jar to represent author **CONTRIBUTOR**

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Icon of a document with lines of text and a folded corner**WHAT is this resource?**

This resource is an example of an Early Literacy Observation Form that focuses on how the teacher demonstrates engagement with complex text. The lesson on which the observation is based can be found on Vimeo posted by the Student Achievement Partners -

<https://vimeo.com/196088083>.

Icon of a calendar with multiple blocks to represent time **WHEN could this resource be used?**

This resource could be used during the practicum semester to show a Teacher Candidate an example of what a completed observation form might look like, particularly one that focuses on engaging students in reading complex text. In addition, this resource could be used in an Educator Preparation Program’s professional development to help Program Supervisors and faculty calibrate their observation reports.

Icon with a group of five people standing together  **WHO could use this resource?**

The faculty member responsible for preparing Teacher Candidates for the practicum, as well as the **Program Supervisor, Supervising Practitioner** and **Teacher Candidate** could all use this resource.

**icon with a checkmark in a circle HOW could this resource best be used?**

This resource is not only helpful for Teacher Candidates to understand the expectations for an Early Literacy observation, but this resource can also be used in the training of Program Supervisors so that they all have the same understanding of the details and notes to record during an observation, especially one in which the focus is on early literacy and the ability of a Teacher Candidate to meaningfully engage students in complex text.

***Note:*** *This resource was submitted for inclusion in the Candidate Assessment of Performance (CAP) Resource Hub. It is intended to serve as a reference and source of guidance for others engaged in the CAP process. While it reflects one approach, users should adapt its content to fit the specific context and needs of their own evaluations.*

## Sample Early Literacy Observation Form Focused on Engaging with Complex Text

**Relevant Early Literacy Look Fors (Grades PreK-3) for the component of the literacy block that focuses on engaging with complex text on pg. 4 of** [**The Early Literacy Observation Tool**](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/resources/early-literacy-observation.html)**.**

Check mark

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| ***Was the teacher…*** | ***Were the students…*** | ***Notes*** |
| Check MarkUsing high-quality, culturally relevant, complex texts and text sets that are rich in academic language, provide diverse and nuanced perspectives, and promote critical thinking? (I-A)  check markGiving all students equitable access to grade level texts, tasks, and experiences as well as the supports they need to meet high expectations? (II-A-1)  hand drawn starModeling the process of making meaning from reading through read and think alouds? (I-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? (I-A-1, II-A-1)  Providing explicit vocabulary instruction and opportunities for students to hear and use new words? (I-A-1) | check markExamining diverse perspectives and thinking critically about texts and topics with real-world impact? (I-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? (I-A-1)   hand drawn starAsking 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)? (I-A-1, II-B-2)  check markPracticing increasingly complex oral language through extended discussion with partners or small groups and in playful learning opportunities? (II-A-1, II-B-2)  check markInteracting with the teacher and peers in ways characterized by mutual trust and positive, supportive relationships? (II-B-2)   * Making visible learning progress towards mastery of grade-level ELA/Literacy standards? (I-A-1) | **Active evidence collected on the observation form.** |

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| **Candidate Name:** | Sample teacher |

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| **Observation Number:** | 1 | **Observation Type:** | ü Announced  Unannounced |
| **Observed by:** | Demo | **Role:** | Supervising Practitioner |

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| **Required Focus Elements** | Observed (Yes/No) |
| I-A-1 Subject Matter Knowledge | Yes |
| II-A-1 High Expectations and Support | Yes |
| II-B-2 Safe Learning Environment | Yes |

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| **Optional Elements** | Observed (Yes/No) |
| I-C-2 Adjustments to Practice |  |
| II-A-3 Inclusive Instruction |  |
| III-C-1 Collaboration on Student Learning and Well-Being |  |
| IV-A-1 Reflective Practice |  |

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| **Date of Lesson/Activity Observed:** |  |
| **Modality of Observation:** | ü In-person  Virtual, synchronous (Announced Observations only)  Virtual, asynchronous (Announced Observations only) |
| **Start Time:** | 10:00 am |
| **End Time:** | 10:30 am |
| **Format:** | ü Whole Group  Small Group  One-on-One  Other (please describe below) |
| **Content Topic or Lesson Objective:** | Reread and get proof from the text for our anticipation guide and also be thinking and looking for evidence that tells about: Looks, Habitat, Food, Behavior, then work with a partner to fill in facts about emperor penguins |

**Active Evidence Collection** (may be entered below or on a separate form)

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| Whole group area, teacher shares objective, “Today we are going to re-read the story and get proof from the text for our anticipation guide and also be thinking about and looking for evidence that tells about: Looks, Habitat, Food, Behavior, then work with a partner to fill in facts about emperor penguins.”   * Teacher reads aloud while students follow in their books and help read certain parts of the text. * Uses a think-aloud strategy to model engaging with the text * Weaves in vocabulary and geography with information from the text   + Shows map and location of Antarctica * Student called on to read out loud, teacher draws attention to the reading strategy she demonstrated while reading – Teacher says, “Lily, you did a nice job of monitoring your reading and then you backed up and you smoothed it out.” * Second student read aloud and a fact was revealed about the emperor penguin – several students raised hands because they made the connection that this was one of the facts in their anticipation guide that they could answer. The teacher uses the think-aloud strategy to show students how to mark “true” to the question in their “after reading” column of the guide and marked the page number the evidence was shared. * Poses question about what may be interesting about the male taking care of the egg, brings in discission of classification: “Is this a mammal? How do we know it isn’t?” * Draws attention to the bottom of the page and student responds that they see a caption - teacher agrees and says it’s non-fiction feature but asks for what a caption does – students respond: S1 says, “It tells you about the picture,” and S2 says, “It gives you more information.” * Students read about the size of penguins and the teacher has the students stand up and draws attention to the height of the students to draw a connection * Students read aloud and find more evidence to add to the anticipation guide – add responses and page numbers – teacher asks students to re-read to check the correct responses * Asks students if they were surprised to hear that the mother emperor penguin lays the egg and then leaves it behind. Students share their thoughts on how this behavior is different that humans and other animals. S1 says, “Usually other animals stay with their babies…I don’t think it is very responsible for the female penguins to do that.”   + Teacher encourages students to share different opinions   + Reminds students of discussion expectations   + Student poses a question about how the egg gets transferred from the female to the male   + Teacher grabs an object and role plays transferring the egg from herself to a student, reminding students that she is role-playing and may not be an expert * Frequent reminders to track the text while reading |

**Synthesized Evidence**

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| Element | Synthesized Evidence |
| I-A-1 Subject Matter Knowledge | The teacher demonstrates strong content knowledge in early literacy instruction by skillfully integrating text evidence, nonfiction text features, and scientific concepts throughout the lesson. The use of a think-aloud strategy to model how to engage with the text and extract information supports comprehension instruction. Vocabulary and conceptual knowledge are reinforced with geographic context (map of Antarctica) and discussion of animal classification, prompting students to consider whether emperor penguins are mammals and why they are not. The teacher also highlights text features such as captions and connects them to their function, reinforcing nonfiction literacy skills. These instructional moves reflect a deep understanding of content and how to make it accessible to students. |
| II-A-1 High Expectations and Support | The teacher sets high expectations for comprehension and evidence-based reasoning by clearly stating the learning objective and guiding students to track the text, cite evidence, and mark page numbers as they complete their anticipation guides. Students are encouraged to reread for accuracy, reinforcing the value of close reading. The teacher provides specific feedback to students (e.g., acknowledging a student’s self-correction while reading aloud), which promotes metacognitive awareness. Additionally, the use of whole-group discussion, real-time modeling, and providing time for partner work after the discussion, shows a commitment to supporting all learners in reaching the learning goals. |
| II-B-2 Safe Learning Environment | The teacher creates a classroom culture that is respectful, inclusive, and encourages student voice and curiosity. Students feel comfortable expressing opinions (e.g., on penguin parenting behavior) and asking questions (e.g., about egg transfer), and the teacher encourages a range of perspectives while reinforcing discussion norms. The teacher’s willingness to role-play with a student using a physical object not only adds a kinesthetic, engaging element but also models humility and a growth mindset (“I may not be an expert”). Frequent reminders to track the text and the use of movement (e.g., comparing penguin height to student height) further support active engagement and a safe, responsive learning environment. |

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| Element | Optional Elements, include if observed: |
| I-C-2 Adjustments to Practice | Not Observed |
| II-A-3 Inclusive Instruction | Not Observed |
| III-C-1 Collaboration on Student Learning and Well-Being | Not Observed |
| IV-A-1 Reflective Practice | Not Observed |

**Actionable Feedback**

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| **Area(s) of Strength:** | Modeling of reading strategies, respectful, inclusive classroom culture, use of feedback, interdisciplinary integration |
| Specific strategies or recommendations to continue to reinforce these strengths: | You effectively integrated literacy, science, and geography to deepen student understanding, using think-alouds, vocabulary development, and text evidence routines to model strong reading strategies. Continue leveraging your interdisciplinary knowledge to make academic content more accessible and engaging. Your use of specific feedback and structured partner work supported high expectations and built student confidence. Maintain these practices to reinforce metacognitive skills and student accountability. The respectful and inclusive classroom culture you’ve created encourages students to share ideas and ask questions. Keep building on this by incorporating movement and hands-on strategies that sustain engagement and support diverse learners. |
| **Area(s) for Growth:** | Increasing student ownership of learning, affirming diverse family structures |
| Specific strategies or recommendations to improve in these areas: | To further support all learners, consider incorporating more opportunities for student-led discussion and peer-to-peer dialogue to deepen critical thinking and increase student ownership of learning, and be intentional about responding in the moment to students’ discussion points about gender roles in a way that affirms and respects all students’ diverse family structures. |