# Overview: Sample Early Literacy Observation Form Focused on Foundational Skills

 **CONTRIBUTOR**

Literacy Specialists in DESE’s Center for Instructional Support

**WHAT is this resource?**

This resource is an example of an Early Literacy Observation Form that focuses on how the teacher provides instruction in foundational skills.  The lesson on which the observation is based can be found on YouTube posted by the Tennessee Department of Education - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xGtWGU61C5Y>.

 **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 early literacy instruction focused on foundational skills. 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.

 **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.

** 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 provide evidence-based instruction in foundational skills.

***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 Foundational Skills

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

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ***Was the teacher…*** | ***Were the students…*** | ***Notes*** |
| Check MarkDelivering instruction in phonological awareness, phonics and decoding, and/or fluency that is explicit, accurate, and grade-level appropriate, using culturally relevant curricular materials? (I-A-1)Check MarkGradually releasing responsibility when introducing new content in foundational skills? (II-A-1)Check MarkBuilding on students’ strengths, needs, and background knowledge about speech and language? (II-B-2)* 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? (I-A-1, II-A-1)

Check MarkProviding reinforcement and/or corrective feedback in a way that holds students to high expectations while affirming their sources of knowledge about language? (II-A-1, II-B-2) | Check MarkPracticing phonological awareness, phonics and decoding, and/or fluency through differentiated tasks in centers, small groups and/or independently? (I-A-1 , II-A-1)Check MarkActively engaging in repetitive, playful, and efficient practice of foundational skills, with support as needed? (I-A-1 , II-A-1)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 foundational skills? (I-A 1)
 | **Phonemic Awareness:*** **Added in vocabulary instruction during phonemic awareness portion of the lesson by engaging in discussion about the words they were orally manipulating.**
* **Added visuals to the words the students are blending and had the students discuss what all the words had in common.**
	+ **One student responded, "They are all nouns of the ocean."**

***Game:* Work in pairs to sound out words and partner blends - Modeled how to play with a student - Students worked in pairs; one sounds out the words with motions on their arm, the other blends the sounds into the word.*** **Candidate focused on mouth position of words and showed pictures to match - "Is this sound voiced or unvoiced?" and the students practiced making the sounds.**
	+ **Vowel focus: a,i,o**
	+ **Vowel talk: asked students what vowels are and students responded correctly - "Vowels are open" - "you can say them for a long time" – took student responses and let them practice to validate student responses.**

**Phonics: Transition from PA to Phonics using focused vowel sounds into word chaining.*** **"Now I’m going to vowel switch" - students know routine and say along with her with motions.**
* **Chain-to-spell - "Spelling means you hear the sounds, you break them up, and you write down the letters that you know show those sounds."**
* **Sound out by tapping on arm, blending by wiping down the arm, then write, read their word.**

**CHAIN: at, mat, cat, cot, dot, dog, got, tot, cot, cat*** **Practice discriminating between /a/ and /u/ sounds - focused on sounds and jaw movement**
 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Candidate Name:** | Sample Teacher - Kindergarten |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Observation Number:** | 3 | **Observation Type:** | ü Announced Unannounced |
| **Observed by:** | Sample observer | **Role:** | Program Supervisor |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **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 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **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 |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Date of Lesson/Activity Observed:** |  |
| **Modality of Observation:** | ü In-person Virtual, synchronous (Announced Observations only) Virtual, asynchronous (Announced Observations only) |
| **Start Time:** | 9:00 am |
| **End Time:** | 9:48 am |
| **Format:** | ü Whole Group Small Group One-on-One Other (please describe below) |
| **Content Topic or Lesson Objective:** | Phonemic Awareness * Sound & Syllable isolation
* Blending
* Sorting by vowel sound

Phonics* Word Chaining
* Identifying correct vowel grapheme to match heard sound
 |

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

|  |
| --- |
| Students on the floor of the whole group area for 48 minutes* Took notes on Foundational Skills Look-Fors document
 |

**Synthesized Evidence**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Element | Synthesized Evidence |
| I-A-1 Subject Matter Knowledge | The teacher demonstrates strong content knowledge in foundational literacy instruction, particularly in phonemic awareness and phonics:* Phonemic Awareness Integration: Skillfully integrates vocabulary development into sound manipulation activities, reinforcing both decoding and meaning-making (e.g., discussion of words that are “nouns of the ocean”).
* Explicit Instruction: Uses precise language to explain phonological concepts like “voiced vs. unvoiced” sounds, and models correct mouth positions and jaw movements to support accurate articulation.
* Structured Phonics Routine: Implements a cohesive and developmentally appropriate phonics sequence, such as word chaining and vowel switching, that systematically builds decoding and encoding skills.
* Multisensory Techniques: Utilizes kinesthetic strategies (e.g., tapping and wiping on the arm) that align with best practices in phonics instruction.
 |
| II-A-1 High Expectations and Support |  The teacher maintains high cognitive and behavioral expectations, while providing clear scaffolds for student success:* Student Ownership: Students demonstrate familiarity and confidence with routines (e.g., saying along with teacher during vowel switch), showing that expectations are consistently taught and upheld.
* Peer Collaboration: Partner games and turn-taking activities encourage peer accountability and student talk, indicating expectations for engagement and collaborative learning.
* Responsive Teaching: Teacher listens to and validates student responses (e.g., reinforcing student definitions of vowels), supporting student understanding while elevating academic discourse.
* Gradual Release: Teacher models, guides, and then releases students to practice independently or with peers, reflecting a strong understanding of instructional scaffolding.
 |
| II-B-2 Safe Learning Environment | The learning environment supports risk-taking, collaboration, and respectful interaction:* Student-Centered Interaction: Students comfortably share ideas and take turns leading activities (e.g., naming picture cards, blending sounds), indicating a classroom culture of mutual respect.
* Positive Tone and Engagement: Games and routines foster joyful participation and help students remain focused and engaged for an extended period (48 minutes).
* Inclusive Practices: Teacher uses visuals, movement, and repetition to meet diverse learning needs and ensure all students can access and succeed in the lesson.
* Safe Risk-Taking: Emphasis on practice and exploration (e.g., “is this sound voiced or unvoiced?”) promotes a climate where mistakes are part of learning, supporting student confidence.
 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 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**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Area(s) of Strength:** | Content knowledge in foundational literacy, clear routines and explicit instruction |
| Specific strategies or recommendations to continue to reinforce these strengths: | Continue to build on your strong content knowledge in foundational literacy by consistently using accurate terminology, multisensory techniques, and vocabulary instruction to support student understanding. Maintain your clear routines and structured partner activities, as they promote high expectations and student independence. Your use of scaffolding and responsive feedback is effective—look for ways to further extend this by deepening student explanations and encouraging peer feedback. Continue fostering an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages participation and academic risk-taking, and consider incorporating strategies that allow for even more student ownership during collaborative learning. |
| **Area(s) for Growth:** | Movement integration, targeted feedback |
| Specific strategies or recommendations to improve in these areas: | To help maintain student focus and physical comfort, consider incorporating movement breaks or offering varied seating options during longer whole-group activities. This can improve engagement and support students’ physical needs. Look for opportunities to provide more individualized feedback during practice, which will help target specific learning needs and reinforce skill development. Additionally, embedding informal progress monitoring strategies—such as quick checks for understanding or exit tickets—can offer timely insights into student comprehension and guide your instructional planning. |