# Overview: Safe Learning Environment Look-Fors



 **CONTRIBUTOR**

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 **WHAT is this resource?**

This document is a list of descriptors that indicate what a safe learning environment might look like in a classroom. The list is divided into specific areas, such as classroom routines and systems, differentiated support for diverse needs, student empowerment, etc.

 

 **WHEN could this resource be used?**

This resource could be used at multiple time points. Before the practicum and before any observations, Teacher Candidates can discuss with Program Supervisors and Supervising Practitioners what behaviors and teacher moves would demonstrate a safe learning environment. During an observation, the observer can use this list to check off what behaviors are evident. After an observation the list can be used to show a Teacher Candidate what areas were apparent and what areas, if any, were absent.



 **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?**

These ‘look-fors’ can be used across three different CAP forms:

* The required CAP Observation form
* The optional Candidate Self-Assessment Form
* The optional Candidate Observation Self-Reflection Form

On all the above forms, the Essential Elements are listed but not described in detail. This list of Look-Fors helps the observer and the teacher candidate notice and name the instructional moves related to creating a safe learning environment. The list of Look-Fors not only functions as a checklist; it allows the observer to rate the Teacher Candidate's demonstration of various strategies and routines that indicate the creation of a safe learning environment by using the dropdown menus which have the same rating categories as in the CAP evaluation rubric. Another advantage of having a bank of Look-Fors is that it helps teacher candidates, program supervisors and school-based supervising practitioners share a common understanding of what each element looks like in practice.

***Note:*** *This form 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.*

## Safe Learning Environment Look-Fors

**For each statement, check the box to rate the proficiency of your teacher candidate.**

### Classroom Routines and Systems

| **Look-Fors**  | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| Clearly defined and collaboratively developed classroom routines and procedures that are consistently implemented. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Use of visual aids (e.g., charts, posters, digital displays) to reinforce routines and expectations. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Systematic transitions between activities that minimize downtime and maximize learning. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Preemptive strategies to prevent off-task behaviors through clear instructions and engagement techniques. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |

### Respect and Affirmation of Differences

| **Look-Fors**  | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| Classroom discussions and materials that reflect diverse cultures, languages, and perspectives. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Use of inclusive language that respects students' backgrounds and identities. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Activities that encourage students to share their own experiences, promoting mutual understanding and appreciation of differences. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Modeling respectful interactions in teacher-student and student-student communications. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |

### Accountability and Student Behavior

| **Look-Fors**  | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| Clear expectations for student behavior that are co-created with student input. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Proactive communication of behavioral expectations using both verbal and non-verbal cues. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Positive reinforcement strategies, such as praise or tangible rewards, to promote accountability. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Effective use of restorative practices to address conflicts and rebuild trust in the classroom. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |

### Academic Risk-Taking and Idea Sharing

| **Look-Fors**  | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| Regular opportunities for students to collaborate and share ideas in pairs, small groups, or whole-class discussions. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Structures that ensure all students, including shy or hesitant participants, are supported to contribute (e.g., wait time, think-pair-share). | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Explicit encouragement of diverse opinions, with teacher modeling acceptance of all ideas without judgment. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Constructive and supportive feedback that focuses on effort and growth, enabling students to take risks without fear of failure. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |

### Feedback and Adjustment to Practice

| **Look-Fors**  | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| Ongoing feedback mechanisms such as anonymous surveys, exit tickets, or student journals to assess the classroom climate. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Responsive teaching adjustments based on student feedback, such as changing seating arrangements or modifying instructional approaches. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Reflection and analysis of student feedback to improve classroom policies and practices. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |

### Emotional and Physical Safety

| **Look-Fors**  | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| Immediate and consistent response to behaviors that threaten emotional or physical safety. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Evidence of a physically safe environment (e.g., organized furniture, clutter-free pathways, emergency procedures clearly communicated).Use of conflict resolution strategies that empower students to resolve issues peacefully. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Emotional check-ins (e.g., morning meetings, one-on-one conferences) to assess and support students' well-being. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |

### Differentiated Support for Diverse Needs

| **Look-Fors**  | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| Proactive accommodations for students with identified needs, such as sensory breaks, preferential seating, or scaffolding materials. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory

Not Observed |
| Strategies to de-escalate potential disruptions while maintaining a positive classroom climate. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory

Not Observed |
| Access to resources or tools that support diverse learning styles, such as manipulatives, graphic organizers, or technology. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Consistent use of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and 504 Plans to tailor supports for students requiring specific accommodations. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |

### Professional Collaboration and Reflection

| **Look-Fors**  | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| Collaboration with mentors, supervisors, or peers to refine strategies for creating a safe learning environment. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Regular self-assessment and reflection on classroom practices related to safety and inclusivity. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |

### Student Empowerment

| **Look-Fors**  | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| Opportunities for students to lead classroom activities or discussions, fostering ownership of the learning environment. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Systems that empower students to monitor and improve their own behavior, such as personal goal-setting or self-assessment rubrics. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |