# Overview: Subject Matter Knowledge Look-Fors



 **CONTRIBUTOR**

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 **WHAT is this resource?**

This document is a list of descriptors that indicate that a Teacher Candidate demonstrates Subject Matter Knowledge. It is divided into different areas such as clear instructional goals, depth of student discourse, clear and concise explanations etc.

 

 **WHEN could this resource be used?**

This resource can be used at multiple 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 subject matter knowledge. 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 a Teacher Candidate’s subject matter knowledge. The list of Look-Fors not only functions as a checklist; it allows the observer to rate the teacher candidate's demonstration of their subject matter knowledge 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.*

## Subject Matter Knowledge Look-Fors

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

### Clear Content Understanding

| **Look-Fors** | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| The teacher demonstrates a deep understanding of the subject matter and its core concepts. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| The teacher explains content clearly and accurately without errors or misconceptions. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |

### Use of Current and Relevant Content

| **Look-Fors** | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| The teacher integrates up-to-date knowledge and contemporary examples into lessons. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| The teacher connects subject matter to real-world issues, demonstrating the relevance of the content. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |

### Clear Instructional Goals Linked to Content

| **Look-Fors** | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| Lesson objectives are clearly aligned with subject-specific standards and are communicated to students. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| The teacher makes explicit connections between learning goals and the subject matter. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |

### Cultural Relevance of Content

| **Look-Fors** | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| The teacher uses diverse perspectives, authors, and examples that reflect various cultural contexts as needed.  | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Content is framed in a way that is responsive to students’ backgrounds, experiences, and identities. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |

### Integration of Interdisciplinary Connections

| **Look-Fors** | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| The teacher demonstrates an understanding of how the subject connects to other disciplines. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Lessons incorporate cross-curricular concepts, such as linking math to science or history to literature. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |

### Student Engagement with Content

| **Look-Fors** | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| The teacher uses varied instructional strategies that actively engage students with the content. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Opportunities for students to ask questions, explore ideas, and make connections are embedded in the lesson. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |

### High Expectations for Student Understanding

| **Look-Fors** | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| The teacher challenges students to think critically and deeply about the subject matter. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| The teacher sets high expectations for all students, pushing them to reach higher levels of mastery. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |

### Use of Assessment to Inform Instruction

| **Look-Fors** | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| The teacher uses both formative and summative assessments to monitor student progress. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Assessment results are used to adjust instruction, providing targeted support for students who need it. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |

### Scaffolded Learning Activities

| **Look-Fors** | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| Instruction is differentiated and scaffolded to support varying levels of student understanding. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| The teacher provides structured opportunities for students to build knowledge progressively. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |

### Engagement with Student Misconceptions

| **Look-Fors** | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| The teacher proactively identifies and addresses student misconceptions and errors in understanding. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Corrective feedback is given promptly and effectively, allowing students to revisit and refine their understanding. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |

### Use of Effective Questioning Techniques

| **Look-Fors** | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| The teacher asks open-ended questions that encourage critical thinking and exploration of the subject matter. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Questions are designed to prompt students to make connections, analyze, and apply their knowledge. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |

### Clear and Concise Explanations

| **Look-Fors** | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| The teacher explains complex ideas in simple, accessible terms without oversimplifying important concepts. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| The teacher uses examples, analogies, and visual aids to help students understand challenging content. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |

### Interactive and Collaborative Learning

| **Look-Fors** | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| The teacher incorporates opportunities for students to collaborate with peers in exploring subject matter. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Group discussions, peer feedback, and cooperative learning are used to deepen student understanding. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |

### Instructional Flexibility

| **Look-Fors** | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| The teacher adapts lessons in response to student needs, interests, and levels of understanding. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| The teacher adjusts pacing and instructional strategies based on student responses. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |

### Incorporation of Student Interests and Prior Knowledge

| **Look-Fors** | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| The teacher builds on students' prior knowledge and personal interests to enhance engagement with the content. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Lessons incorporate cross-curricular concepts, such as linking math to science or history to literature. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |

### Support for Diverse Learners

| **Look-Fors** | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| The teacher uses a variety of strategies, such as differentiated instruction or Universal Design for Learning (UDL), to support diverse learners. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Lessons include opportunities for students to make connections between new content and their own experiences. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |

### Use of Technology to Support Learning

| **Look-Fors** | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| The teacher integrates technology in meaningful ways to enhance students’ understanding of the subject matter. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Digital tools, multimedia resources, and interactive platforms are used to support content exploration. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |

### Depth of Student Discourse

| **Look-Fors** | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| The teacher facilitates student-driven discussions that demonstrate deep understanding of the subject matter. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Student discourse reflects critical thinking, problem-solving, and the ability to analyze content from multiple perspectives. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |

### Incorporation of Real-World Problem Solving

| **Look-Fors** | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| The teacher integrates real-world problems and scenarios into lessons to enhance student engagement. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Students are encouraged to apply their subject knowledge to solve complex, real-life problems. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |

### Pedagogical Approach Promotes Understanding of Accurate Content

| **Look-Fors** | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| The teacher’s pedagogical approach promotes understanding by providing clear explanations that guide student thinking without doing the work for students. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Instruction promotes learning across all Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels, ensuring students develop a comprehensive understanding of content. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |

### Use of Instructional Strategies Consistent with Best Practices

| **Look-Fors** | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| The teacher uses instructional strategies that align with scholarly research and best practices for the subject area and grade level. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Strategies are tailored to the developmental needs of students and encourage mastery of content. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |

### Scaffolded Learning Experiences Based on Prerequisite Skills

| **Look-Fors** | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| The teacher creates scaffolded learning experiences that support student acquisition of complex content knowledge. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| These experiences integrate students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds, ensuring accessibility for all learners. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |

### Engagement Through the Four Domains of Language

| **Look-Fors** | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| The teacher designs and facilitates learning experiences that require students to actively engage in the learning process through listening, speaking, reading, and writing in the content area. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Students engage both independently and collaboratively, enhancing language development across disciplines. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |

### Use of Curricular Materials for Synthesis and Application

| **Look-Fors** | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| The teacher consistently uses curricular materials (textbooks, worksheets, graphic organizers, etc.) that enable students to synthesize and apply content knowledge in diverse ways. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Materials are chosen with an eye toward reinforcing complex ideas and supporting critical thinking. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |

### Anticipation of Student Misconceptions and Obstacles

| **Look-Fors** | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| The teacher’s knowledge of content and pedagogy allows them to anticipate or reveal student misconceptions or obstacles to learning. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Teacher questioning and prompting strategies facilitate independent thinking and help overcome barriers to student learning. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |

### Reflection on Own Subject Matter Knowledge

| **Look-Fors** | **Rating** |
| --- | --- |
| The teacher engages in regular reflection about their own content knowledge and pedagogical practices. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |
| Professional development activities are pursued to stay current with the subject area and best practices in teaching. | * Exemplary
* Proficient
* Needs Improvement
* Unsatisfactory
* Not Observed
 |