# Quick Reference Guide: The Early Literacy Observation Form and CAP

# 2023-24 School Year

**What is the Early Literacy Observation Form?**

The [Early Literacy Observation Form](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/resources/early-literacy-observation.html) supports educator preparation supervisors to observe and provide high-quality feedback to teacher candidates on their practice in evidence-based early literacy as outlined in the [Mass Literacy Guide](https://www.doe.mass.edu/massliteracy/) and in alignment with the new [Early Literacy Program Criteria](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/resources/early-literacy.html). This tool is a key component of Massachusetts' mission to ensure that all teacher candidates in Elementary, Early Childhood, and Moderate Disabilities programs are well-prepared in early literacy instruction and an important source of data for programs’ continuous improvement.

**When should supervisors use the Early Literacy Observation Form?**

In the 2023-24 school year, Sponsoring Organizations are required to begin implementing the form during CAP with a subset of candidates (at least 10 per relevant program). By 2024-25, all teacher candidates in relevant programs will be observed and receive feedback using the form during CAP.

**Does the form need to be used in one observation (one sitting)?**

No. Teacher candidates should be observed on all components of a full core literacy block, but this may occur in multiple parts due to scheduling. If an additional observation is necessary to collect data for all components of the literacy block, the additional visit may be incorporated into the required CAP observations or be supplemental.

**What is included in the form?**

The form includes the following:

* An overview of the core components of the early literacy block (foundational skills, engaging with complex text, and writing) and links to informational resources
* Evidence-based Look Fors to guide the observation and feedback
* A template for synthesizing evidence and providing feedback to the teacher candidate

**Which Look Fors do I use?**

The Look Fors are grouped for use in the following grade spans: Grades PK-2, Grades 3-5, Grades 4-6, and Grades 7-8 (for Moderate Disabilities PK-8 candidates who are placed in those upper grade classrooms). The Look Fors are not a checklist, but meant to provide a comprehensive picture of effective early literacy instruction. Supervisors should be looking for all of these practices but may not necessarily need to comment on all of them on the observation template.

**How does the Early Literacy Observation Form work within CAP?**

The Early Literacy Observation Form is designed to be used during CAP Announced Observation #2 because of the expectation that a candidate assume responsibility of a full core teaching block. For SOs using the paper-based CAP, it replaces the general observation form. For SOs using the CAP Online Platform, it can be used within the platform with some adjustments (see the next page for specific instructions).

The Early Literacy Observation Form is associated with the following three essential elements: 1.A.1 Subject Matter Knowledge, 1.A.3 Well-Structured Units and Lessons, and 2.E.1 High Expectations. As such, an alternative sequence of focus elements for CAP observations (see below) may be used for candidates using the form. Following this alternative sequence when implementing the Early Literacy CAP Observation Form will ensure that candidates are assessed on all essential elements over the course of the practicum.

**Traditional CAP Observation Sequence of Focus Elements (based on the CAP Guidelines)**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Essential Element | Announced Observation #1 | Unannounced #1 | Announced Observation #2 | Unannounced Observation #2 |
| 1.A.1 Subject Matter Knowledge |  |  |  |  |
| 1.A.3 Well-Structured Units and Lessons |  |  |  |  |
| 1.B.2 Adjustments to Practice |  |  |  |  |
| 2.A.3 Meeting Diverse Needs |  |  |  |  |
| 2.B.1 Safe Learning Environment |  |  |  |  |
| 2.E.1 High Expectations |  |  |  |  |

**Alternative CAP Observation Sequence of Focus Elements for Early Literacy Observation**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Essential Element | Announced Observation #1 | Unannounced #1 | Announced Observation #2 (Early Literacy) | Unannounced Observation #2 |
| 1.A.1 Subject Matter Knowledge |  |  |  |  |
| 1.A.3 Well-Structured Units and Lessons |  |  |  |  |
| 1.B.2 Adjustments to Practice |  |  |  |  |
| 2.A.3 Meeting Diverse Needs |  |  |  |  |
| 2.B.1 Safe Learning Environment |  |  |  |  |
| 2.E.1 High Expectations |  |  |  |  |

**Can the Early Literacy Observation Form be used in the CAP Online Platform?**

Yes, the Early Literacy Observation Form mirrors the general CAP Observation Form so Program Supervisors can continue to use the CAP Online Platform to enter evidence and feedback. However, as the full tool also includes a protocol for conducting the observation and specific Look Fors that are not integrated into the Online Platform, supervisors should access a copy of the [Early Literacy Observation Form](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/resources/early-literacy-observation.html) *separately* from the CAP Online Platform as guidance for their observation and feedback.

In the CAP Online Platform, the designated focus elements for each observation are “required fields.” This means that supervisors must enter information into those text boxes in order for the form to be marked as complete in the system. Because the Early Literacy Observation Form necessitates a *different sequence of focus elements* than what is currently in the system, supervisors may have to use the following workaround for completing Announced Observation Forms in the CAP Online Platform for teacher candidates being observed with the Early Literacy Observation Form during the 2023-24 school year. There is no change to Unannounced Observations.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Announced Observation #1** | ***What to enter in each text field*** |
| 1.A.1 Subject Matter Knowledge | Focus Element (no change). Enter evidence from the observation.  |
| 1.A.3 Well-Structured Units and Lessons | This element is not a focus element but is currently a required field. If not commenting on this element, type “See Announced Observation #2” into the field. |
| 1.B.2 Adjustments to Practice | This element is not a focus element and is not a required field. It can be left blank. |
| 2.A.3 Meeting Diverse Needs | Focus Element (new): Enter evidence from the observation.  |
| 2.B.1 Safe Learning Environment | This element is not a focus element and is not a required field. It can be left blank. |
| 2.E.1 High Expectations | Focus Element (no change). Enter evidence from the observation.  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Announced Observation #2 (Early Literacy Focus)** | ***What to enter in each text field*** |
| 1.A.1 Subject Matter Knowledge | Focus Element (new): Enter evidence from the observation based on Look Fors from the Early Literacy Observation Form. |
| 1.A.3 Well-Structured Units and Lessons | Focus Element (new): Enter evidence from the observation based on Look Fors from the Early Literacy Observation Form. |
| 1.B.2 Adjustments to Practice | This element is not a focus element but is currently a required field. If not commenting on this element, type “See Unannounced Observation #2” into the field. |
| 2.A.3 Meeting Diverse Needs | This element is not a focus element but is currently a required field. If not commenting on this element, type “See Announced Observation #1” into the field. |
| 2.B.1 Safe Learning Environment | This element is not observed and is not a required field. It can be left blank. |
| 2.E.1 High Expectations | Focus Element (new): Enter evidence from the observation based on Look Fors from the Early Literacy Observation Form. |

Please note that this will likely only be applicable in the short-term, pending updates to CAP and the CAP Online Platform.

**How can Program Supervisors develop their understanding of the practices included in this tool?**

The [Mass Literacy Guide](https://www.doe.mass.edu/massliteracy/) and [Mass Literacy Guide Online Course](https://keystoliteracy.com/mass-literacy-online-course/) are two resources currently available to build understanding of evidence-based early literacy practices. See the [Early Literacy Observation Form webpage](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/resources/early-literacy-observation.html) for more information about implementation supports.

Please reach out to educatorpreparation@mass.gov with any questions.