# Decorative image of two young boys looking at picture books on a table with the DESE logoClassroom Observation Tool

DESE Instructional Planning and Observation Tools Collection

Guiding Question  
**To what extent are all students experiencing** [**deeper learning**](https://www.doe.mass.edu/kaleidoscope/dl-guidance-tool.docx)**?**

## About this Tool

The Classroom Observation Toolarticulates the daily practices of effective teaching and learning, aligned to the [DESE Educational Vision](https://www.doe.mass.edu/commissioner/vision/default.html) and the [Standards of Effective Practice](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edeffectiveness/standards/default.html).

* The provided “look-fors” are illustrative examples – not a checklist – and are not exhaustive. Use the rating scale at your discretion depending on your intended purpose and use of the tool.
* For details on the purpose and use of this classroom observation tool, along with facilitation guidance, please review the [Tools Collection Guidance](https://www.doe.mass.edu/kaleidoscope/planning/protocols/default.html).

## Classroom Observation Notes and Rubric

Subject: Click or tap here to enter text. Grade Level: Click or tap here to enter text.

Part of Lesson Observed: Choose an item. Numbers of Students and Teachers: Click or tap here to enter text.

**Low Inference Observation Notes**

*Describe the assignment or activity. What is the teacher doing? What are students doing (all students, x number of students)?*

*If possible, note known or identifiable student groups represented in the room (multilingual learners, students with disabilities, etc.).*

Click or tap here to enter text.

Grade-level content standards addressed: Click or tap here to enter text.

Language objective addressed, if applicable: Click or tap here to enter text.

High-quality instructional materials (HQIM) used: Click or tap here to enter text.

## Section 1: Learning Environment (Standard II-B)

The learning environment is safe and supportive, fostering a sense of welcome and belonging for all students.

| *Observation Look Fors* | *Rating* |
| --- | --- |
| The learning environment creates a welcoming and supportive space for all students.  * The space is purposefully organized and used to support student routines and learning. * The classroom includes purposeful and usable displays or resources, such as language models, anchor charts, student work, classroom agreements, and criteria of success that support access to grade-level content. | Yes  Mostly  Partially  Not yet |
| Teacher and student interactions reinforce inclusivity and value unique experiences related to background, identity, language, ideas, and perspectives.  * Students and teachers listen to each other’s ideas and contributions. * Students and teachers intentionally invite all students into the learning and create space for each other’s perspectives. * Teacher(s) employs strategies that honor students’ identities and their cultural and linguistic diversity. | Yes  Mostly  Partially  Not yet |
| There are established routines and structures for learning.  * Routines and structures maximize instructional time. * Routines and structures support all learners to engage in academic tasks and positively contribute to the classroom and school community. | Yes  Mostly  Partially  Not yet |

## Section 2: Curriculum Planning (Standard I-A)

The lesson uses instructional materials that reflect grade-level demands of the content standards and evidence-based practices and demonstrates a clear focus on embedded language development.

| *Observation Look Fors* | *Rating* |
| --- | --- |
| The lesson is grounded in materials and tasks that are aligned to grade-level [content standards and practices](https://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/observation/).  * Lesson objectives, activities, and assessments are aligned to targeted grade-level standards and practices. * Instructional tasks are carefully sequenced and structured to advance students in learning at the depth of the standard(s). * Texts used during the lesson are at (or above) grade level. | Yes  Mostly  Partially  Not yet |
| The lesson supports students to develop disciplinary language and literacy.  * Students have opportunities to practice disciplinary language and target language functions and features, aligned to content and language objectives. * The lesson is grounded in language objectives that highlight target language functions and features related to the content of the lesson. * The lesson includes targeted language development as aligned to grade-appropriate English language development standards (WIDA). | Yes  Mostly  Partially  Not yet |
| The lesson is grounded in a clear purpose that is visible and/or shared or co-constructed with students.  * The lesson is connected to prior and/or upcoming lessons. * The objectives of the lesson are clear and shared with students. * The lesson is grounded in an anchoring essential question, genuine topic, problem, issue, or phenomenon connected to the content standards and/or practices. | Yes  Mostly  Partially  Not yet |

## Section 3: Instruction (Standard II-A, II-B)

All students engage in the complex thinking and ideas of the lesson through instructional practices and pedagogy that are evidence-based, inclusive, and culturally and linguistically sustaining.

| *Observation Look Fors* | *Rating* |
| --- | --- |
| All students do the majority of the thinking during the lesson, in service of grade-level standards.  * Students carry the cognitive lift in analyzing, evaluating, applying and creating throughout the lesson. * Students provide meaningful oral or written explanations that support their thinking and/or show their learning in various ways. * Students actively participate and work on the assigned task from the beginning of the observed lesson to the end. * Teacher(s) structures tasks to ensure that every student engages in the thinking of the lesson. * Teacher(s) provides time for students to grapple with challenging content. * When used, digital tools and educational technology are purposeful to enhance learning for all students. | Yes  Mostly  Partially  Not yet |
| Students receive flexible scaffolds and supports, when necessary, so that all students can engage in grade-level work.  * Teacher(s) provides scaffolds as necessary to allow all diverse learners, including students with disabilities, English learners, and former English learners, to work towards the same, grade-level objectives as their peers. * Teacher(s) includes strategic linguistic scaffolds (orally and/or in writing) that preserve the cognitive complexity of the tasks so all learners can access and demonstrate understanding of grade-level material. * Students access resources, visual supports, and strategies when needed to persevere through challenging tasks. | Yes  Mostly  Partially  Not yet |
| All students participate in high-quality student-to-student academic discourse (in pairs, small groups, and/or whole class), to clarify or improve their understanding of grade-level content.  * Teacher(s) facilitates purposeful student to student discourse that is aligned to the goals of the lesson. * Students use academic/disciplinary language and/or target language functions and features during discourse. * Students negotiate the meaning of complex texts and/or topics by asking questions, referring to the text or task, responding directly to their peers, and/or respectfully challenging each other’s thinking. * Within group work, all students are engaged and contributing to the group’s discussion. | Yes  Mostly  Partially  Not yet |
| All students receive and incorporate targeted and constructive feedback that clarifies misconceptions and/or deepens the quality of student work and thinking.  * Teacher(s) sets and clearly communicates expectations for student thinking and work. * Teacher(s) checks for understanding and monitors student work to assess students’ progress towards learning goals and to identify and respond to misunderstandings. * Teacher(s) provides asset-based feedback that maintains the cognitive lift on students. * Students receive frequent whole-class and/or individual feedback, from peers or from teacher(s), that reinforces expectations for student work and aligns to the goals of the lesson. | Yes  Mostly  Partially  Not yet |
| All students engage in learning in ways that value and leverage their identities, assets, experiences, interests, home languages, and/or cultures.  * Teacher(s) prompts students to draw on their backgrounds and experiences to connect new concepts to their funds of knowledge, lived experiences, and/or cultural assets. * Teacher(s) conveys belief in students’ abilities and potential through their phrasing, questions, and feedback to students. * Students have opportunities to leverage their home language to explore new concepts and engage with peers. | Yes  Mostly  Partially  Not yet |
| All students think critically about the content and draw connections to other contexts within and/or beyond the lesson.  * Students pose questions, critically think about the content, and develop new ideas or theories. * Students consider why their learning matters and grapple with the essential question, genuine topic, problem, idea, or phenomenon. * Students apply their learning to new contexts and/or broader concepts. | Yes  Mostly  Partially  Not yet |

## Addendum: Content-Specific Look-Fors

This addendum provides look-fors in each subject to support Section 2 of the Classroom Observation tool:

*Section 2 - Curriculum Planning: The lesson uses instructional materials that reflect grade-level demands of the content standards and evidence-based practices and demonstrates a clear focus on embedded language development.*

1. *The lesson is grounded in materials and tasks that are aligned to grade-level content standards and practices.*

| **Content Area** | **Content-Specific Focus Questions** | **Look Fors** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Arts** | What purpose or meaning is the presentation or performance intended to evoke, express, or communicate as demonstrated by how it drives students’ learning and skill development within a particular arts discipline: dance, media arts, music, theater, visual arts?  How is student artistic intent and voice centered to introduce or build upon their understanding of relevant artistic concepts or skills, and to express themselves creatively and authentically within the arts discipline (such as through artistic experimentation)? | * Instructional tasks align with the standards and skills in the relevant [Arts Framework](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.doe.mass.edu%2Fframeworks%2Farts%2F2019-08.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK) for the grade band. * Tasks in the specific Arts discipline make explicit and meaningful connections to comprehensive health, digital literacy/computer science, English language arts, mathematics, science and technology/engineering, and/or world languages concepts/standards, as relevant. |
| **Career Connected Learning / Pathways** | What is the topic, concept, or skill anchoring students’ learning?  How are students introduced to or building upon prior career or technical knowledge, supported to develop language, and applying specific career or technical concepts, standards, or skills in real-world contexts that connect to their future goals? | * Instructional tasks align with the standards and skills in the relevant [CTE Frameworks](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/frameworks/default.html). * Students engage with relevant industry standard settings, equipment, and tools to demonstrate and expand upon their learning. * Classroom activities make explicit and meaningful connections between relevant math, science and technology/engineering, and English language arts concepts/standards and the technical coursework. |
| **Comprehensive Health and Physical Education (CHPE)** | What practice, process, concept, or skill are students developing knowledge about?  How are the comprehensive health and physical education practices utilized to create a learning experience that integrates health concepts and physical activities, to promote mental health and well-being and the development of social and emotional skills? | * Instructional tasks align with the specific Comprehensive Health and Physical Education Practices (pp 11-15) for the particular grade band in the [Comprehensive Health and Physical Education Framework](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.doe.mass.edu%2Fframeworks%2Fhealth%2F2023-09.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK). * Instructional tasks focus on the development of self-efficacy in health and movement-related skills and knowledge. |
| **Digital Literacy and Computer Science (DLCS)** | What is the digital literacy/computer science content or concept on which students are building knowledge and skill in the unit?  How are the DLCS practices utilized to support students to develop language and content knowledge, apply skills in real-world contexts, and navigate the digital world critically, creatively, and responsibly? | * Instructional tasks align with the specific [Digital Literacy and Computer Science Practices](https://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/dlcs.pdf#p=21) in the Digital Literacy and Computer Science Framework. * Instructional tasks include both plugged and unplugged activities. * Students share their problem-solving strategies and respect each other's varying approaches and perspectives on tasks. * Classroom activities encourage students to experience and take risks, emphasizing failure as a path to discovery and supports students in iteratively revising their work to troubleshoot their own bugs/errors. * Students interrogate the source of, and potential bias in, digital information, and analyze and discuss who is impacted by new technologies, applications, and social media, and how. |
| ELA / Literacy | On what topic or theme are students building knowledge in the unit?  How is text centered to support students to develop language, comprehension, and critical thinking through literary and other textual analysis, to deepen their understanding of the topic or theme?  *If the lesson focuses on foundational skills:*  What is the evidence-based systematic scope, sequence, and approach to early literacy development in which the foundational skills instruction is grounded?  How is explicit instruction and active practice of the foundational skill supporting students to develop language and literacy and promoting fluent word reading and language comprehension? | * The lesson incorporates texts that are high-quality, culturally relevant, exhibit grade-appropriate complexity, and support knowledge building of a topic or concept. Lessons reflect alignment of text to the purpose of the lesson. * Most questions, tasks, and assignments are text-based, work to support knowledge building of a topic or concept and require literary or other textual analysis.   *If the lesson focuses on foundational skills, it includes:*   * Direct teaching of foundational skills that contributes to the development of fluent reading, including instruction in print concepts (Grade K), phonological awareness (Grades K-1), advanced phoneme awareness (Grades 2-3), phonics and decoding (Grades K-5), and fluency (Grades 1-5). * Tasks are designed for students to engage in repetitive, playful, and efficient practice of foundational skills. * The use of decodable texts and activities are used purposefully for whole- and small-group instruction, based on student needs, interests, and identities, to promote transfer of phonics and decoding skills. |
| History and Social Science | What are the inquiry questions driving the learning of the unit and how do they build students' understanding of key concepts, relationships, issues and/or historical events?  How are the history and social science practices utilized to support students to develop language and literacy, to critically examine diverse sources and perspectives, as well as to deepen their understanding of the topic, issue, or concept at the center of the inquiry? | * Instructional materials are aligned to the vertical progression of [History and Social Science Practices](https://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/hss/vertical-progression.docx) from the History and Social Science Framework. * Sources used may include written texts, images, graphs, maps, physical artifacts, and other resources. |
| Mathematics | What is the mathematics concept or content on which students are building knowledge and skill in the unit?  How are the math practices and real-world application utilized to build upon students’ prior mathematical knowledge and support students to develop language, literacy, conceptual understanding and procedural fluency? | * Instructional tasks align with the specific [Math Practices](https://www.mass.gov/doc/standards-for-mathematical-practice-0/download) in the [Mathematics Framework](https://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/math/2017-06.pdf). * Instructional tasks address all aspects of mathematical rigor: * Conceptual understanding – e.g., using models/visuals/graphs/manipulatives to explore mathematical concepts * Procedural fluency – e.g., explain how algorithms/operations/algebraic manipulations work, strategic use of properties of operations * Real-world applications |
| Science and Technology/ Engineering (STE) | What is the phenomenon anchoring students’ learning in the unit, and how does it draw on students’ lived experiences?  How are the science and technology/engineering practices utilized to support students to develop language and literacy and promote student-driven investigation of the phenomenon to build and deepen their understanding? | * Instructional tasks align with the specific [Science and Engineering Practices](https://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/scitech/2016-04.pdf#page=[111]) in the Science and Technology Engineering Framework to engage students in scientific inquiry and engineering design that is grade-band appropriate. * Instructional tasks are carefully sequenced and structured to engage students in sensemaking of scientific concepts at the depth of the standard and practice. * Students are engaged in common phenomena-based learning experiences grounded in grade level appropriate science content. |
| World Languages | What cultural content or topics are students using the target language to investigate? To what extent is the target language used in teacher-student and student-student interactions? (90% is recommended for modern languages).  How are interactions that promote communication skills integrated to enable students to authentically use the target language and build cultural knowledge?  How are authentic cultural texts and artifacts leveraged to advance cultural and linguistic proficiency? | * Instructional tasks align with the specific [World Languages Practices](https://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/world-languages/2021.pdf#p=16) in the World Languages Framework to engage in learning that supports students to acquire cultural knowledge and linguistic proficiency in the target language. |