



Classroom Observation Tool

DESE INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING AND OBSERVATION TOOLS COLLECTION | PILOT VERSION SCHOOL YEAR 2024-2025



Guiding Question

To what extent are all students experiencing evidence-based, inclusive, and culturally and linguistically sustaining instruction that promotes deeper learning?

About this Tool

The Classroom Observation Tool articulates essential expectations for effective teaching and learning aligned to the [DESE Educational Vision and the Standards of Effective Practice](#).

- The look-fors provided are illustrative and do not serve as a checklist. They are also not exhaustive. Please use the rating scale at your discretion depending on your intended purpose and use of the tool.
- While schools and districts may have additional look-fors aligned to their unique instructional priorities, the look-fors provided in the tool reflect essential *daily* components of deeper learning through inclusive, culturally and linguistically sustaining practice that support all students to attain academic knowledge and skills, understand and value themselves and others, and engage with the world.
- For details on the purpose and use of this observation tool, please review the Classroom Observation Tools Guidance.
- The instructional tools and resources in the collection are being piloted during the 2024-25 school year. Please provide feedback through [this form](#). Link: tinyurl.com/ywy3ztn3



Classroom Observation

Subject: _____

Part of Lesson Observed: Beginning, Middle, End: _____

Grade Level: _____

Number Students and Teachers: _____

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.).

Grade-level content standards addressed:

Language objective addressed, if applicable:

High-quality instructional materials (HQIM) used:

Section 1: Learning Environment (Standard II-B)

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

a. 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 useable 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

b. 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.
- The teacher employs a range of strategies that honor students' identities and their cultural and linguistic diversity.

- Yes
- Mostly
- Partially
- Not yet

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

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

- The instructional materials, including lesson objectives, activities, and assessments, are aligned to targeted grade-level standards and practices.
- Instructional tasks are carefully sequenced and structured to engage 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

Please see content specific look-for addendums at the end of this document.

b. The lesson includes targeted language development as aligned to grade appropriate WIDA standards.

- The lesson is grounded in language objectives that highlight target language functions and features related to the content of the lesson.
- Students have opportunities to practice target language functions and features and disciplinary language aligned to content and language objectives.

- Yes
- Mostly
- Partially
- Not yet

c. 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 provides students opportunities to engage in sense-making and/or deepen their learning around an anchoring essential question, genuine topic, problem, issue, or phenomena connected to the standards and/or practices.
- The lesson provides students opportunities to engage in or make connections to relevant, real-world and/or for students to make relevant connections to their personal goals or interest.

- Yes
- Mostly
- Partially
- Not yet

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

Instructional practices and pedagogy are evidence-based, inclusive, and culturally and linguistically sustaining, so that all students engage in the complex thinking and ideas of the lesson.

<p>a. All students do the majority of the thinking during the lesson, in service of grade-level standards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher facilitates and organizes tasks to support every student to engage in the thinking. Students are actively participating and working on the assigned task from the beginning of the observed lesson to the end. Students are reading, writing, speaking, and/or listening to engage with the core content of the lesson. Students provide meaningful oral or written explanations that support their thinking and/or show their learning in various ways. When used, digital tools and educational technology are purposeful to enhance learning for all students. 	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> Not yet
<p>b. Students receive flexible scaffolds and supports, when necessary, so that all students can engage in grade-level work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher 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. The teacher 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. 	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> Not yet
<p>c. All students participate in high-quality student-to-student academic discourse (in pairs, small groups, and/or whole class) in order to clarify or improve their understanding of grade-level content.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher facilitates purposeful student to student discourse that is aligned to the goals of the lesson. Students use academic language and 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, and/or responding directly to their peers. Students engage with differences and diverse perspectives and respectfully challenge each other's thinking. 	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> Not yet
<p>d. All students receive and incorporate targeted and constructive feedback that clarifies misconceptions and/or deepens the quality of student work and thinking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher uses questions, tasks, or assessments with clear success criteria to assess students' progress toward learning goals, and to identify and respond to misunderstandings. Students receive whole-class and/or individual feedback, from peers or from the teacher, that provides clarity on their progress and their next steps towards meeting learning goals. The teacher provides asset-based feedback that maintains the cognitive lift on students. Students use feedback to re-engage in the text or task and revise their work. 	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> Not yet
<p>e. All students engage in learning that values and leverages their identities, experiences, interests, home languages, and/or cultures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers use questions and/or tasks that support students to actively draw upon their backgrounds and experiences to connect new concepts to their funds of knowledge, lived experiences, and cultural assets. Students have the opportunity to leverage their home language to explore new concepts and engage with peers. Teachers provide students the opportunity to reflect on their learning and growth, and to develop their metalinguistic and metacognitive awareness. 	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> Not yet
<p>f. All students think critically about the content and resources of the lesson to identify, analyze, and/or examine real-world topics or problems.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students make connections between the subject matter and real-world topics. Teachers use questions and/or tasks that help advance students' critical thinking about the content and real-world topics. Students examine and/or assess the content, credibility, and biases of diverse perspectives and resources. Students ask questions of their peers and/or their teacher(s) to deepen their understanding. 	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly <input type="checkbox"/> Partially <input type="checkbox"/> Not yet

Content Specific Addendums: Curriculum Planning Look-Fors

Section 2: Curriculum Planning

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.

a. 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	<p>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)?</p> <p>In the observed lesson, 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)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructional tasks are aligned to the standards and skills in the relevant Arts Framework 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 and Literacy, mathematics, science and technology/engineering, and/or world languages concepts/standards, as relevant.
Career Connected Learning / Pathways	<p>What is the topic, concept, or skill anchoring students' learning?</p> <p>In the observed lesson activity, 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?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructional tasks are aligned to standards and skills in the relevant CTE Frameworks. 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, ELA, and/or Science concepts/standards and the technical coursework.
Comprehensive Health and Physical Education (CHPE)	<p>What practice, process, concept, or skill are students developing knowledge about?</p> <p>In the observed lesson or activity, 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?</p>	<p>Instructional tasks are aligned to the specific Comprehensive Health and Physical Education Practices (pp 11-15) for the particular grade band in the Comprehensive Health and Physical Education Framework.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructional tasks focus on the development of self-efficacy in health and movement-related skills and knowledge.
Digital Literacy and Computer Science (DLCS)	<p>What is the digital literacy/computer science content or concept on which students are building knowledge and skill in the unit?</p> <p>In the observed lesson, 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?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructional tasks are aligned to the specific Digital Literacy and Computer Science Practices 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.

<p>ELA / Literacy</p>	<p>On what topic or theme are students building knowledge in the unit?</p> <p>In the observed lesson, how is text centered to support students to develop language, comprehension, and critical thinking through literary and other textual analysis, in order to deepen their understanding of the topic or theme?</p> <p><i>If the lesson focuses on foundational skills:</i></p> <p>What is the evidence-based systematic scope, sequence, and approach to early literacy development in which the foundational skills instruction is grounded?</p> <p>In the observed lesson, 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?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. <p><i>If lesson focuses on foundational skills, it includes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
<p>History and Social Science</p>	<p>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?</p> <p>In the observed lesson, 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?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructional materials are aligned to the vertical progression of History and Social Science Practices from the History and Social Science Framework. Sources used may include written texts, images, graphs, maps, physical artifacts, and other resources
<p>Mathematics</p>	<p>What is the mathematics concept or content on which students are building knowledge and skill in the unit?</p> <p>In the observed lesson, 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?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructional tasks are aligned to the specific Math Practices in the Mathematics Framework. Instructional tasks address all aspects of mathematical rigor: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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, etc.) Real-world applications
<p>Science and Technology/ Engineering (STE)</p>	<p>What is the phenomenon anchoring students' learning in the unit, and how does it draw on students' lived experiences?</p> <p>In the observed lesson, 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 in order to build and deepen their understanding?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructional tasks are aligned to the specific Science and Engineering Practices 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.
<p>World Languages</p>	<p>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% recommended for modern languages)?</p> <p>In the observed lesson, 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?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructional tasks are aligned to the specific World Languages Practices in the World Languages Framework to engage in learning that supports students to acquire cultural knowledge and linguistic proficiency in the target language.