

User Guide: College and Career Readiness Expectations for Literacy

INTRODUCTION

The College and Career Readiness Instructional Expectations for Literacy is a tool designed to measure the teacher actions that are central to readying students for college and career success in Literacy. The tool is the result of a high-level collaboration between multiple states, local education agencies, and several experts in the field. The tool is designed within a college and career-readiness framework and so draws on detail found in the Common Core State Standards. However, this tool is not part of the Standards themselves.

These expectations that comprise this tool are summarized in the three shifts below:

1. Building knowledge through content-rich non-fiction and informational texts
2. Reading and writing grounded in evidence from text
3. Regular practice with complex text and its academic vocabulary

It is important to note that these shifts and the accompanying observation tool do not represent the entirety of teacher actions required for effective instruction. Many practices that are necessary for effective teaching—such as classroom management and lesson planning—are not included in this observation tool. This is not meant to diminish the importance of these practices as many of them are essential for student success. However, this tool focuses specifically on college and career readiness, and through that lens, on the teacher actions that can be most directly observed to determine whether students are effectively being prepared by teachers for success.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The design of the College and Career Readiness Instructional Expectations tool was based on three key principles:

1. *Focused and specific*

Teachers should not be required to demonstrate their full repertoire of instructional practices during every observation. Rather than a comprehensive list of every possible aspect of a teacher's practice, this tool is grounded in specific practices that cultivate college and career readiness and the Common Core State Standards. An observation using this tool should result in a simplified but rich portrait of instruction. This tool should be effective in both brief and full class observations.

2. *Observable and clear*

Expectations for teachers should be straightforward and unambiguous. That is, whether or not a teacher meets each expectation should be inescapably clear to an observer and should not require references to additional material. A principal or other observer should be able to use this tool consistently and reliably.

3. *Fair and humane for teachers*

The expectations for teachers must be equitable, aligned to clear instructional priorities, and achievable over the course of a lesson. Further, the expectations should form the backbone of professional development support for teachers and should be phased in in appropriate ways.

PURPOSE

The ultimate goal of the College and Career Readiness Instructional Expectations for the Literacy tool is to improve instruction by making clear the essential expectations for teachers. To this end, it represents a framework to observe and offer targeted feedback to individual teachers on a focused set of the most important instructional expectations. If implemented consistently across a school or district, this tool provides an opportunity to gather data that can be aggregated to determine an overall picture of teacher effectiveness in a school or school district. The tool should also drive professional development for teachers that is focused on achieving these key instructional expectations.

To accomplish this purpose, the tool is organized in three headings: *Expectations*, *Observed Practice*, and *Notes to Guide Observation*. *Expectations* outline the key instructional practices for teachers while *Observed Practice* is the scale for measuring those competencies (the scale is dichotomous or incremental based on the nuance required for meaningful measure). The *Notes to Guide Observation* provide additional information and clarification to the *Expectations* when appropriate.

TEACHER EXPECTATIONS

The expectations in this tool represent the instructional choices and outcomes that an observer should look for in each observation. They are divided into three categories, or domains: (1) *Engaging Students Directly with High Quality Texts*, (2) *Quality of Questions and Instructional Strategies*, and (3) *Assessing Student Work through Evidence in Speaking and Writing*. A fourth category—*Key Practices and evidence to look for over the course of the year*—includes expectations that cannot be observed discretely through an individual observation, but which must be aggregated to determine alignment across multiple observations or over the course of a full year.

Importantly, the expectations in this tool are tightly linked to the observable student behaviors that provide the strongest evidence of effective teaching. For example, this tool asks “Do students show

persistence in continuing to examine difficult tasks?” rather than “Does the teacher encourage students to show persistence in continuing to examine difficult texts.”

In implementing these expectations, schools leaders should consider two key factors. First, teachers must have the responsibility and autonomy to make the choices necessary to meet these expectations. For example, it is unfair to require teachers to choose appropriate, complex texts without ensuring that they have the authority to select texts for instruction. Second, and equally important, is that teachers have access to the tools and resources necessary to achieve these expectations. For example, the procurement of complex texts that align with the Common Core State Standards is a parallel responsibility that school leaders must own. School leaders must be cognizant of both of these factors when implementing this observation tool.

OBSERVER EXPECTATIONS

The College and Career Readiness Instructional Expectations for Literacy tool is designed for simplicity and ease of use; competent observers should be able to derive reliable and rich observational data by adhering closely to the guidelines of the tool. The observer is responsible for carefully observing the classroom for the length of the observation—which could be as short as 10-15 minutes or as long as a full class period—and providing prompt feedback to the teacher based upon the framework. Further, the tool is intended to be used in multiple observations over the course of the year – a strong recommendation is at least six separate instances – in order to ensure teacher buy-in and gather sufficient data. Multiple observations are critical both to ensure teachers feel confident that observers have had sufficient exposures to their practice and to gather data over time to determine alignment and improvement within and across years. When appropriate, the observer should work with teachers to develop an action plan to improve practice in the key expectations outlined in the framework.