



**2024–25 Foundational Skills Classroom  
Observation Tool (based on the Instructional Practice Guide)**

**Teacher:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Time:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Grade:** \_\_\_\_\_ **School:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Select observation type**

- Whole-group observation  
 Small-group observation

Standard Alignment: The observed instruction and student task work meets the foundational skills standard(s).		
Indicator	Look-fors	Scale (the degree to which the look-fors are present in instruction)
Instruction meets the demands of the foundational skills standard(s).	Explicit whole-group instruction meets the grade-level standard(s)/targeted skill(s). Student task work or small-group instruction meets the grade-level standard(s) <b>or</b> additional K–2 foundational skills standard(s) based on assessment data.	Standard(s): _____ 4 — Fully meets      3 — Mostly meets 2 — Partially meets    1 — Does not meet
<b>Criteria 1. Systematic and Explicit Approach: The school/district/network uses a systematic, explicit, and research-informed approach that addresses the foundational skills outlined in the standard(s) to include: phonological awareness, in-/out-of-context practice with phonics/word recognition, fluency, and comprehension experiences.</b>		
A. The teacher is using a systematic, explicit approach (including program and/or lesson structure) for foundational skills instruction that is research-informed and enacted as intended in order to provide purpose-driven instruction.	<p><b>Whole group/Small group:</b> The teacher facilitates the lesson from the systematic and explicit program as intended (e.g., scripted lesson plan, anchor charts, letter/sound cards, vocabulary cards with images, task sheets, decodable readers provided by the curriculum, and multilingual resources).</p> <p><b>Small group:</b> The teacher facilitates a research-informed lesson structure as intended (e.g., intentional approach to attending to the research-informed components in a way that supports students in reaching mastery of the targeted skill[s]).</p>	Program/Lesson structure used: _____ 4 — Fully enacted as intended 3 — Mostly enacted as intended 2 — Partially enacted as intended 1 — Not based on a systematic, explicit program/lesson structure
<p><b>B. Whole group</b> Any complementary materials used in addition to Tier I materials provide a deeper level of access to instruction for every student.</p> <p><b>Small group</b> Materials in use are either provided by the Tier I program or supplemented in order to provide a deeper level of access to instruction for every student.</p>	<p><b>Whole group</b> When, and if appropriate, additional, <i>complementary</i> materials are used to reinforce and/or provide deeper access to instruction based on individual students' needs. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sound and/or word cards in another language</li> <li>• handwriting support materials</li> </ul> <p><b>Small group</b> Tier I whole-group instructional materials and/or any necessary complementary materials are used to increase access to instruction for every student. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• portions of the Tier I program whole-group lesson script or materials are used</li> <li>• articulation cards are incorporated that are not provided by the Tier I program</li> <li>• complementary sound and/or word cards in another language are used</li> <li>• handwriting support materials not provided by the Tier I program are incorporated</li> </ul>	Complementary materials used, if any: _____  <p><b>Whole group</b> Any complementary materials in addition to those provided by the Tier I program provide deeper access and enhance instruction for every student.</p> <p><b>Small group</b> Materials in use provide deeper access and enhance instruction for every student.</p> <p>4 — Consistently 3 — Mostly 2 — Rarely 1 — Never N/A</p>

**Criteria 2. Quality Instruction: Foundational skills instruction for every student is explicit and provides adequate and appropriate time for teacher direction and student practice. Abundant practice materials are readily available and can be used independently and/or with support. The instruction and materials provide opportunities for practice both in and out of context as indicated by grade-level standards. The teacher has created an environment where students feel safe to take risks, make mistakes, and interact with their teachers and peers.**

<p>A. The teacher provides explicit and accurate foundational skills instruction modeling explanations, visuals, and/or examples.</p>	<p>Instruction is explicit, accurate, and accessible to every student.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sharing objectives and lesson purpose with students</li> <li>• accurate modeling of content-specific tasks includes pronunciation of sounds (phonemes), articulation gestures, blending, segmenting, and letter formation</li> <li>• using visual aids that every student can access clearly (e.g., examples of words with the target sound/sound pattern, articulation gestures chart)</li> <li>• making connections to students’ primary languages, including English language dialects and varieties</li> </ul> <p>See <a href="#">Instructional Strategies</a> for examples and explanations specific to the needs of multilingual learners.</p>	<p>The teacher provides clear and accurate models, visuals, and examples as outlined in the lesson script (and additional techniques if needed) to make the foundational skills instruction more explicit.</p> <p>i: Clear and accurate models 4 — Consistently 3 — Mostly 2 — Rarely 1 — Never N/A</p> <p>ii: Clear and accurate pronunciation of sounds: 4 — Consistently 3 — Mostly 2 — Rarely 1 — Never N/A</p> <p>iii: Clear use of visual aids: 4 — Consistently 3 — Mostly 2 — Rarely 1 — Never N/A</p> <p>iv. Clear connections to primary languages 4 — Consistently 3 — Mostly 2 — Rarely 1 — Never N/A</p>
<p>B. The teacher provides opportunities for every student to practice the newly acquired skills in a variety of ways both in and out of context. Students are engaged in the practice opportunities provided.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Out-of-context: Tasks such as letter tile work, games, puzzles, music, movement, worksheets, or other discrete oral or written tasks.</li> <li>• In-context: Tasks occur in the context of phonetically controlled text.</li> </ul>	<p>The teacher provides opportunities for students to practice targeted skill(s) both in and out of context in a variety of ways (e.g., oral, manipulative, written practice with targeted skills).</p> <p>For example, students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use letter tiles to create words with the targeted skill followed by decoding words on a task sheet or in a decodable reader</li> <li>• format letters in the air, with a dry erase marker, and with a crayon or pencil on a task sheet</li> <li>• read a decodable aligned to the targeted skill</li> </ul> <p><i>Note: In-context practice is applicable once students have learned enough sound-spelling patterns and high-frequency words to read connected text (e.g., decodables). Targeted skills can also be reinforced during read-alouds and familiar texts (e.g., chants).</i></p> <p><i>For example: During the introduction of a read-aloud text, the teacher tells students that the pattern we are learning this week will help us read this text (e.g., two-syllable words or vowel team “ie” as in “pie”). As the read-aloud unfolds, the teacher points out the words and tells students explicit practice will happen during foundational skills instruction.</i></p> <p>See <a href="#">Instructional Strategies</a> for classroom examples explained.</p>	<p>Teacher-driven and student-driven practice are aligned to targeted skills and reflect a variety of opportunities for students to practice in and out of context.</p> <p>i: In context: 4 — Consistently 3 — Mostly 2 — Rarely 1 — Never N/A</p> <p>ii: Out of context: 4 — Consistently 3 — Mostly 2 — Rarely 1 — Never N/A</p> <p>iii. Students are attentive, focused, and engaged in the practice opportunities provided.</p> <p>4 — Most students 3 — Many students 2 — Few students 1 — No students N/A</p>
<p>C. The pacing of instruction and student practice opportunities is adequate and appropriate.</p>	<p>There is appropriate pacing of instruction within the skills and the task(s); students have sufficient time to practice targeted skills through reading, writing, speaking, and/or listening.</p>	<p>The lesson is appropriately paced, giving students ample time for both instruction and application of the targeted skills.</p> <p>4 — Consistently 3 — Mostly 2 — Rarely 1 — Never</p>
<p>D. The teacher looks for and expects precision in student responses and work and provides precise coaching and feedback during the lesson.</p>	<p>The teacher provides on-the-spot feedback, corrections, and mid-lesson adjustments based on student performance (e.g., if students voice an incorrect sound for a phoneme, the teacher models the correct sound), and/or the teacher confirms student answers.</p> <p>Common areas to look for precision: oral sound production, letter/sound ID, letter formation, encoding of sounds, decoding.</p>	<p>Teachers provide feedback to students, and students adjust their work accordingly.</p> <p>4 — Consistently 3 — Mostly 2 — Rarely 1 — Never</p>

<p>E. The teacher has established a safe community for learning where students feel comfortable taking risks and interacting with the teacher and peers.</p>	<p>The teacher encourages all students as they engage in grade-level standards/targeted skills. Students appear eager to participate in class discussion and task work, and they seem comfortable as they communicate with the teacher and peers (e.g., students are eager to try new things such as reading a decodable, volunteering to segment a word, forming letters or words on a white board).</p>	<p>The teacher has established a safe community of learning where all students are comfortable as they participate in class discussion and learning tasks and interact with the teacher and peers.</p> <p>4 — Most students    3 — Many students 2 — Few students    1 — No students or little evidence</p>
<p>F. All students receive supportive and precise feedback that affirms their skills and success as readers and writers and references their unique strengths in learning the content.</p>	<p>The teacher provides supportive feedback that affirms student abilities and potential as readers and writers.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adults' language toward and about students is asset based (e.g., "Student can't do 'X' yet"; "We are all readers and writers").</li> <li>• Students' primary language is described as an asset (e.g., "being multilingual is a superpower").</li> <li>• Procedures and routines support restorative practices.</li> <li>• The teacher normalizes mistakes, speaking about them as an integral part of the learning process.</li> </ul>	<p>4 — The teacher consistently provides feedback that affirms the abilities and potential of a variety of individual students and includes precision and nuance unique to each student's work. 3 — The teacher consistently provides feedback that affirms the abilities and potential of a variety of individual students and extends beyond stating answers are right or wrong. 2 — The teacher provides feedback that affirms the abilities and potential of a limited set of individual students and extends beyond stating answers are right or wrong. 1 — The teacher does not provide feedback that affirms the abilities and potential of individual students beyond stating answers are right or wrong. N/A</p>
<p>G. The teacher provides opportunities to support comprehension and language development (both oral and written) connected to foundational skill instruction.</p>	<p>The teacher strategically builds comprehension and student use of selected words presented.</p> <p>For example, during oral and/or written practice teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• describe, show images of, and/or act out new vocabulary</li> <li>• support students in using new vocabulary in sentences</li> <li>• prompt students to answer and discuss comprehension questions</li> <li>• highlight within decodable texts</li> </ul> <p>See <a href="#">Instructional Strategies</a> for classroom examples explained.</p>	<p>The teacher provides practice opportunities for comprehension and language development (both oral and written) connected to the foundational skills being taught.</p> <p>i. In context 4 — Consistently    3 — Mostly    2 — Rarely    1 — Never    N/A</p> <p>ii: Out of context: 4 — Consistently    3 — Mostly    2 — Rarely    1 — Never    N/A</p>
<p><b>Criteria 3. Data-Driven Instruction: Student progress is consistently monitored over the course of the lesson and the data collected is used to inform next steps for instruction.</b></p>		
<p>A. The teacher records evidence of student progress toward mastery of the lesson's targeted skill(s).</p> <p><i>Targeted skills include the primary focus of the lesson and the prerequisite knowledge and skills that are needed to meaningfully engage in the grade-level content.</i></p>	<p>The teacher records evidence of student progress toward mastery of the targeted skill. The teacher is recording notes on students' auditory, oral, and/or written responses while they are responding to direct instruction and engaging in practice opportunities.</p> <p>Examples of how the data might be collected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teacher observation and/or anecdotal record systems</li> <li>• notes/checklists</li> <li>• assessment forms</li> </ul>	<p>The teacher records evidence of student progress toward mastery of the targeted skill(s).</p> <p>4 — Consistently    3 — Mostly    2 — Rarely    1 — Never</p>

<p>B. The teacher uses data collected within and across lessons to inform the student instructional experience.</p>	<p>The teacher is using data collected within and across lessons as evidenced by scaffolds that have been put in place to help student(s) access grade-level content or scaffolding that has been removed based on students' demonstrated mastery.</p> <p>For example, teachers may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• strategically call on students who need additional practice around a lesson skill</li> <li>• write a sound pattern symbol beneath targeted words in a decodable reader</li> <li>• write additional tracing opportunities onto a letter formation task page for a student who is struggling to form the letters correctly</li> <li>• remove practice with Elkonin boxes because students have demonstrated accurate decoding or spelling of a digraph</li> </ul>	<p>There is evidence that the teacher adjusts the students' instructional experience based on data collected within and across lessons.</p> <p>4 — Consistently 3 — Mostly 2 — Rarely 1 — Never</p>
<p><b>Student Mastery: Students master or move toward mastery of the content of the lesson.</b></p>		
<p>Every student demonstrates progress toward mastery of the targeted skill(s) of the lesson.</p>	<p>Evidence across student groups indicates that they are progressing toward mastery of targeted skill(s).</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every student uses phonetic spellings in writing.</li> <li>• Every student demonstrates the ability to read decodable text from the lesson.</li> <li>• Multilingual students demonstrate increased consistency in articulating sounds that are absent in their primary language(s).</li> </ul>	<p>Students demonstrate progress toward mastery of targeted skill(s).</p> <p>4 — Most students 3 — Many students 2 — Few students 1 — No students or little evidence</p>

