

Observing Foundational Skills

Coaching Tool

How to use this tool

This document is designed for use with an aligned and systematic foundational skills curriculum (FS-Criteria 1A).

Aligned with the **Foundational Skills Classroom Observation Tool** indicators, this guide contains look-fors and guiding questions to support coaches as they observe classroom instruction, identify trends, and prepare for next steps in coaching and training. Coaches can highlight the specific guiding questions they want to focus on with teachers during post-observation conversations.

You can find this same tool with a notes section instead of guiding questions, which can be used as an additional resource during a classroom observation, [here](#).

Criteria 1: Systematic and Explicit Approach

Indicator	Coaching look-fors	Guiding questions for teacher planning
1A: The teacher is using a systematic, explicit program for instruction.	<i>No look-fors needed.</i>	<i>No guiding questions needed.</i>
1B: The lesson from the systematic and explicit program is being enacted with integrity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the teacher following the scripted lesson from the curriculum to facilitate whole-group instruction or using small-group guidance from the curriculum materials to drive small-group instruction? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the focus skills for this lesson? How do this lesson and the approach to this lesson impact student performance on the end-of-unit assessments? Have you read through and internalized the lesson in its entirety?



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Is the teacher using the language of an aligned curriculum during instruction as well as curricular materials (e.g., anchor charts, letter/sound cards/task sheets, and decodable readers provided by the curriculum)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Are you familiar with all associated lesson materials and taskwork? ● Are you at a place with the lesson that you can facilitate such that instruction is adequately paced and you can move through each component, referring to the script only as needed? ● How will materials be organized to ensure that all students can access them easily when needed without losing instructional time?
--	--	---

Criteria 2: Quality Instruction

Indicator	Coaching look-fors	Guiding questions for teacher planning
<p>2A: The teacher provides explicit and accurate foundational skills instruction through the use of modeling, explanations, visuals, and/or examples.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Is the teacher producing the sounds accurately? ● Are visual aids and anchor charts being used such that all students can access and easily see the content? ● Is the teacher providing clear models for students (modeling blending, segmenting, and other content-specific tasks)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Do you know how to pronounce each of the sounds correctly and make any associated hand gestures for segmenting or blending of words? ● How will you ensure that your visual aids and models can be clearly seen by all of your students? ● Are you comfortable explaining all of the models within the lesson using the language/visuals/gestures from the curriculum? Are there any special notes that you need to record in your script to help you remember? ● Is there a portion of the lesson that might be particularly challenging for students? Are there additional supports or scaffolds that might be needed to ensure that ALL students understand and engage in the lesson?
<p>2B: Opportunities are provided for all students to practice the newly acquired</p>	<p>Is the teacher providing students with the opportunity to practice targeted skill(s) both in (as grade appropriate) and out of</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What are the most important practice opportunities in this lesson?



<p>skills in a variety of ways both in and out of context, and students are fully engaged in the practice.</p>	<p>context in a variety of ways through whole-group, small-group, and/or independent practice.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Providing oral, manipulative, and written practice with targeted skills• Using letter tiles to create words with the targeted skill followed by decoding words on a task sheet or in a decodable reader• Forming letters in the air, with a dry erase marker, and with a crayon or pencil on a task sheet	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How will you support each student practicing in a productive way?• Are there planned opportunities both within and after the lesson for students to practice the newly acquired skills both in (if applicable) and out of context?• Are there any enhancements that you may need to add for students to remain engaged or for students who need additional support to access and complete the taskwork?• If a decodable is part of the lesson, how will students interact with the decodable text both within and after the lesson?
<p>2C: The balance of time spent on lesson component(s) and student practice opportunities is adequate and appropriate.</p>	<p>Are the instruction and practice opportunities paced in a way that students have the right amount of time to both receive direct instruction and practice the targeted skills (practice can include reading, writing, speaking, and/or listening)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the suggested times provided by the curriculum for each component of the lesson? How does this align with the time you have designated for foundational skills instruction?• How will this impact your planning and pacing? How will you ensure that you stay on pace?• How will you pace the lesson to ensure the right balance of time for students to both receive instruction and apply their new learning?• Based on your knowledge of your students, are there components in the lesson where additional time may be needed? Less time?



<p>2D: The teacher looks for and expects precision in student responses and work and provides precise coaching and feedback during the lesson.</p>	<p>Does the teacher provide on-the-spot feedback, corrections, and/or mid-lesson adjustments based on student performance or confirm student answers (e.g., if students voice an incorrect sound for a phoneme, the teacher models the correct sound and students respond by modeling the correct pronunciation)?</p> <p>Common areas to look for precision: ___ Oral production of sounds ___ Letter ID ___ Letter formation ___ Encoding of sounds ___ Decoding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● How will you ensure that you are able to monitor student work, respond accordingly, and adjust instruction for individual students or the whole class as needed?● How will you provide feedback to students (or caregivers if applicable) as they engage in the work of the lesson?● What will be the method of feedback if students or caregivers need additional feedback on student progress at the conclusion of the lesson?
<p>2E: The teacher has established a safe community for learning where students feel comfortable taking risks and interacting with the teacher and peers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● How does the teacher work to build community with students?● How is the teacher encouraging students to participate and creating a safe space to discuss the lesson and apply what they have learned without fear of making a mistake?● Do students seem eager to engage in the learning and comfortable interacting with their teacher and classmates?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● What moves will you make to build community with your students both with students and yourself and between classmates?● What moves will you make to ensure that ALL students feel comfortable, supported, and unafraid to engage in things that are hard during the lesson?● How will you make sure that you provide encouragement to and interact with each member of your class in some way?



Criteria 3: Data-Driven Instruction

Indicator	Coaching look-fors	Guiding questions
Indicator 3A. The teacher is monitoring the progress of each student on a regular basis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is the teacher using some form of data collection system(s) to record the progress of students throughout the lesson?• Does the teacher use some form of a data collection system to monitor student practice at the conclusion of the lesson?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What data collection system(s) will be used to monitor how students are progressing with the new skill(s) over the course of the lesson (e.g., exit tickets, checklists, submitted photos or recordings, caregiver feedback forms)?• How will the data be organized so that the individual progress of students can be easily identified in order to make plans for small groups and individual student needs?• How will this data be shared with caregivers as needed?
3B: The teacher is using data collected to inform instructional moves in whole-group, small-group, and independent work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is there evidence that a student has received some form of scaffolding (if needed) to help them access grade-level content (e.g., the sound pattern symbol is written beneath targeted words in a decodable reader, additional tracing opportunities are written onto a letter formation task page for a student who is struggling to form the letters correctly)?• Are small groups or individual students working on varying skills or taskwork based on their needs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How will you use the data collected to drive next steps in whole-group instruction, small-group instruction, and independent work?• What scaffolds or supports do you need to build into the lesson/materials for individuals or groups of students based on data collected prior to this lesson?



Student Mastery

Indicator	Coaching look-fors	Guiding questions teacher during planning
Students exhibit a strong grasp of the content of the lesson.	Is there evidence within student work samples that indicates that students are grasping the content within the lesson (e.g., oral and written taskwork, student ability to read decodable text from the lesson, caregiver feedback forms regarding student progress)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How will you know if your students mastered the lesson content?• How will student progress be recorded and used to drive both small-group and whole-group instructional moves in future lessons?• How will this data be shared with caregivers as needed?