



Early Literacy Observation and Feedback Protocol

This protocol is designed to be used by a school or system leader to prepare for and engage in an observation and feedback cycle.¹

Step 0: Prepare for and complete observation

Before observation

- ☐ Set up a coaching calendar that dedicates time for observation preparation, classroom observation, feedback preparation, and feedback sessions for each teacher participating in the observation and feedback cycle (e.g., [Early Literacy Leader Schedule](#)).
- ☐ Prepare for individual observations by reviewing the focus indicator(s) from the [Foundational Skills Classroom Observation Tool](#) identified in previous instructional rounds or from a previously named action step (aligned to a focus indicator) for an individual teacher. If classrooms have multilingual learners (MLs), refer also to [Being Responsive to Multilingual Learners in Early Literacy Instruction](#).
- ☐ Review the annotated early literacy lesson plan through the lens of the action step and/or focus indicator(s). Record any [low inference notes](#) that are in alignment.

During observation

- ☐ Collect low inference notes aligned to the action step and/or focus indicators.

After observation

- ☐ Inventory and align observed strengths to observation tool indicator(s). Be sure to include the progress made from the previous coaching action step.
- ☐ Select a high-leverage focus indicator from the [Foundational Skills Classroom Observation Tool](#) that will anchor for the coaching conversation (**note:** “high-leverage” means a coaching move that will lead to rapid, positive impact on instruction and student practice).
- ☐ Design a clear and concise action step based on the focus indicator.
- ☐ Outline your coaching conversation based on steps 1–6. Use the guided teacher planning questions provided in the [Observing Foundational Skills Coaching Guide](#) as a resource.

¹ Protocol adapted from: Bambrick-Santoyo, Paul. *Leverage Leadership 2.0: A Practical Guide to Building Exceptional Schools* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2018).



Step 1: Analyze observed strengths and offer praise

- ☐ Name observed strengths grounded in the **Foundational Skills Classroom Observation Tool**. Be sure to include the progress made from the previous coaching action step.
- ☐ Ask teachers to reflect on what concrete actions led to those successes. Consider using the following questions and prompts:
 - We set a goal to <insert goal>, and I noticed how you <insert success> by <concrete positive actions teacher took>.
 - What made that successful? What was the impact of <positive action>?
 - Do you need any support in continuing to <insert success>?

Step 2: Probe to check for understanding

- ☐ Ask, “What was the goal of the lesson? What evidence tells you that students met or did not meet the goal?” in order to ground in the goal/learning target for the lesson.

To analyze and close the gap between what the instruction looked like in relation to the targeted coaching indicator and what the instruction should look like:

- ☐ Name the gap by presenting low inference notes aligned to the targeted coaching indicator as classroom evidence. For example, “Do you remember what happened in class when <insert reference moment>? What effect did that have on the class/learning?”
- ☐ Ask questions like:
 - “What challenges/barriers for students surfaced that you needed to address?”
 - “How did you address them?”
 - “What was the challenge in implementing this effectively?”
- ☐ Take a next step toward the goal by either:
 - Presenting a model, watching an exemplar, or debriefing real-time feedback—if applicable, collaborate with specialists for students in priority groups (e.g., MLs) to plan and facilitate those experiences.
 - Asking a question like, “How might this <insert new approach> support students’ reading development?”

Step 3: Name a high-leverage, measurable, and bite-sized action step

- ☐ Name the action step by linking it to the **Foundational Skills Classroom Observation Tool** or other instructional practice-based resource to focus the relevant indicator clearly, and ask the teacher to restate the action step and write it down.
- ☐ Ask the teacher to embed the action step in an upcoming lesson; support as needed.



Step 4: Plan to implement the action step in upcoming lesson plans

Note: The guided planning questions linked [here](#) may be useful.

- ☐ Support teacher planning using action steps and an upcoming lesson by asking questions such as:
 - “Based on this lesson, where would be a good place to implement the action step?”
 - “Once the action step is implemented, what do you want to see students do as a result?”
- ☐ Based on the answers to those questions, ask the teacher to annotate the lesson plans with moves. If the teacher needs extra development, model relevant practices for the teacher then debrief (e.g., “What do you notice about how I did that?”).

Step 5: Practice how to implement the action step in upcoming lessons

- ☐ Ask the teacher to practice the portion of the lesson that was annotated step 4. Set norms for practice before beginning, including:
 - Be all in during practice. Stand up/move around the classroom to simulate the feeling of class.
 - Pause the practice to give immediate feedback.
 - Repeat until the practice is successful.

Note: The purpose of practice is for the teacher to get some in-the-moment practice and coaching on what the action step looks like in a lesson.

- ☐ Debrief practice by asking about what made the practice session successful.

Step 6: Plan follow-up

- ☐ Set expectations for implementing adjustments by asking questions such as:
 - “When would be the best time to observe your implementation of this?”
 - “When I review your plans, I’ll look for <insert relevant modification>.”
- ☐ Set dates for all of the following—both you and the teacher write them down:
 - Completed materials: when the teacher will complete revised lesson plans/materials
 - Leader observation: when you’ll observe the teacher
 - Teacher observation (when valuable): identify and schedule when the teacher will observe another teacher who can model the action step via classroom visit or recording