

K-2 ELA (KNOWLEDGE) OBSERVATION COACHING TOOL



ELA Observation Coaching Tools

This is one of three observation coaching tools to support K-12 literacy instruction:

K-2 Foundational Skills	K-2 ELA (Knowledge)	3-12 ELA
Can be used to observe instruction specific to foundational skills, including instruction on print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics, and fluency. Though the tool is labeled for K-2, it may also be used to foundational skills blocks in later elementary grades.	Can be used to observe ELA instruction in grades K-2 that is <i>not</i> specific to foundational skills. Often, this is referred to as the "knowledge block", where students read, talk about, and write about grade-appropriate texts that build knowledge.	Can be used to observe any ELA instruction in grades 3-12 where students read, talk about, and write about grade-appropriate texts that build knowledge.

About the K-2 ELA (Knowledge) Tool

The KSDE K-2 ELA (Knowledge) Observation Coaching Tool illustrates the most important elements of quality early literacy instruction as articulated in the [Vision for Quality Instruction in K-2 ELA](#). It provides a common language to articulate what quality early literacy instruction looks like in practice for each focus area and is made up of:

- **Focus Areas:** Core components, or elements, of quality instruction as defined by the vision
- **Indicators:** Brief descriptions of observable teacher actions that are most significant for the focus area (indicators are not exhaustive)
- **Look-Fors:** Student and teacher actions that can provide evidence for the indicator

This tool can be used in a variety of ways to support coaching, peer observations, and professional learning.

Please note that it is non-evaluative and should not be used for formal teacher evaluation. For recommended uses, refer to the Observation Coaching Tools Guidance document.

Best Practices

Observations should be no shorter than 10 minutes, though a minimum of **15-20 minutes** is recommended. Note that you may not observe evidence for all indicators in a single observation. Consider observing at different parts of the lesson to gather information across indicators. Many look-fors describe what students are doing or thinking; these should only be marked when there is evidence that a clear majority of students (over 70%) are participating in the identified action.

Use the note-taking templates to make note of the lesson's topic and objectives, target standard(s), number of students and curricular materials being used (if any). Take [low-inference notes](#) to reduce the influence of assumptions, opinions, and judgment on your ratings.

Additional Learning

For additional learning on content-specific terms and concepts embedded in the observation coaching tool, utilize the [ELA Standards Alignment Toolkit](#). For more information, contact Dr. Laurie Curtis, Early Literacy/Dyslexia Program Manager, at ELitDyslexia@ksde.gov.

Kansas leads the world in the success of each student.

Focus 1: Complex, Developmentally Appropriate Texts

- 1A. The lesson is anchored on text(s) that are at or above grade-level, based on both qualitative and quantitative measures of text complexity.
- 1B. The lesson allows students to engage with rigorous, grade-appropriate tasks and activities aligned to standards.
- 1C. The teacher determines and scaffolds the mode of student engagement with the text.

Focus 2: Knowledge-Building Through Reading and Listening

- 2A. The lesson centers on texts that support interdisciplinary learning and design tasks that help students apply new knowledge and language in ways that deepen understanding and communication.
- 2B. Students' build knowledge through explicit and strategic vocabulary instruction on both domain-specific and Tiers 1-2 words that are integral to understanding the text.

Focus 3: Close Reading and Early Comprehension

- 3A. The teacher leads students in multiple, purposeful readings of the text—beginning with a baseline understanding and progressing to key aspects such as vocabulary, structure, or complex ideas—to deepen comprehension and build insight.
- 3B. The teacher asks carefully sequenced, text-dependent, and text-specific questions that focus on the text's meaning, guiding students to analyze, interpret, and deepen their comprehension of key ideas.

Focus 4: Foundational Writing and Oral Language Development

- 4A. The teacher provides multiple opportunities for all students to talk about what they are reading and learning, using structured dialogue and expressive activities.
- 4B. The teacher provides direct instruction in writing mechanics, including handwriting, spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure.
- 4C. The teacher creates opportunities for shared, interactive, and independent writing across subjects.

Focus 5: Engaging, Child-Centered Instruction

- 5A. The teacher designs joyful, developmentally appropriate lessons that include songs, movement, play, and exploration.
- 5B. The teacher creates a print-rich environment filled with meaningful text, labels, and student work.
- 5C. The teacher encourages student voice through choice, sharing, and multimodal activities.

LESSON CONTEXT			
Teacher:	Date/Time:	Grade/Subj:	# of Students:
Materials: ☐ Teacher-Created ☐ Adopted (name below)	Learning Target:	Standard(s) & Text(s):	

Focus 1: COMPLEX, DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE TEXTS	
Indicator	Look For
1A. The lesson is anchored on text(s) that are at or above grade-level, based on both qualitative and quantitative measures of text complexity.	☐ Students engage with grade-level texts and participate in daily read-alouds of rich, complex literature. ☐ The majority of the lesson is spent reading, writing, and speaking about the text. ☐ In conversation the teacher consistently draws students attention back to the text. ☐ Important portions of the text are reread to encourage deeper understanding. ☐ The teacher uses appropriate scaffolding strategies in order for all students to access the text rather than supplementing the text.
1B. The lesson allows students to engage with rigorous, grade-appropriate tasks and activities aligned to standards.	☐ Students work on grade-level tasks that build listening, reading, speaking, and writing. ☐ Lesson activities connect clearly to grade-level standards and goals. ☐ Most of the lesson time is spent reading, talking, drawing, or writing about the text. ☐ Students use words or details from the text to share their ideas. ☐ The teacher gives support (like modeling, visuals, or sentence starters) while students do the thinking.
1C. The teacher determines and scaffolds the mode of student engagement with the text.	☐ The teacher selects an appropriate mode of reading (e.g., read aloud, partner reading, or independent reading) based on the complexity of the text. ☐ The selected mode supports student access to grade-level text while keeping the thinking with students.
Direct Observation Notes	
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Focus 2: KNOWLEDGE-BUILDING THROUGH READING AND LISTENING		
Indicator	Look Fors	
2A. The lesson centers on texts that support interdisciplinary learning and design tasks that help students apply new knowledge and language in ways that deepen understanding and communication.	☐ <i>Students make connections between texts, such as: shared vocabulary, text type (ex. expository, narrative), genres, interdisciplinary, real-world contexts</i>	☐ <i>Students exhibit their connections via discussion (whole group, small group, partner, etc.).</i> ☐ <i>The teacher has a system for displaying new knowledge (ex. KWL chart, anchor charts).</i>
2B. Students' build knowledge through explicit and strategic vocabulary instruction on both domain-specific and Tiers 1-2 words that are integral to understanding the text.	☐ <i>Vocabulary taught includes words needed to understand the text and topic.</i> ☐ <i>Students practice using new words in reading, writing, speaking, and drawing.</i> ☐ <i>The teacher uses explicit strategies (modeling, visuals, gestures, examples) to teach and reinforce word meanings.</i> ☐ <i>Students revisit and use vocabulary throughout the lesson to build knowledge.</i>	
Direct Observation Notes		

Focus 3: CLOSE READING AND EARLY COMPREHENSION

Indicator	Look Fors
3A. The teacher leads students in multiple, purposeful readings of the text—beginning with a baseline understanding and progressing to key aspects such as vocabulary, structure, or complex ideas—to deepen comprehension and build insight.	☐ <i>The teacher reads the text with students more than once.</i> ☐ <i>The first reading focuses on basic comprehension (main events, ideas, or information).</i> ☐ <i>The teacher is intentional about rereading the most important parts of the text.</i> ☐ <i>Later readings highlight key words, text structure, or big ideas.</i> ☐ <i>Each rereading has a clear purpose that builds on the last.</i> ☐ <i>Students' understanding grows with each reading and discussion.</i>
3B. The teacher asks carefully sequenced, text-dependent, and text-specific questions that focus on the text's meaning, guiding students to analyze, interpret, and deepen their comprehension of key ideas.	☐ <i>The teacher asks questions that have students focus on key qualitative and quantitative complexities of the text.</i> ☐ <i>The teacher strategically sequences questions that increase in complexity to build to the central understanding of the text.</i> ☐ <i>The teacher directs time and attention to rereading the most critical parts of the text multiple times to deepen understanding.</i>

Direct Observation Notes

Focus 4: FOUNDATIONAL WRITING AND ORAL LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Indicator	Look Fors
4A. The teacher provides multiple opportunities for all students to talk about what they are reading and learning, using structured dialogue and expressive activities.	☐ <i>The teacher gives students many chances to talk about what they read and learn.</i> ☐ <i>Students face one another, use eye contact, and follow conversational rules.</i> ☐ <i>Students take turns, stay on topic, and use an appropriate tone.</i> ☐ <i>Students ask clarifying questions to build understanding.</i> ☐ <i>Teacher-provided supports (sentence stems, vocab cards, anchor charts, sound wall) guide student talk.</i>
4B. The teacher provides direct instruction in writing mechanics, including handwriting, spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure.	☐ <i>The teacher gives explicit instruction in handwriting, spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure.</i> ☐ <i>Students use correct terms for writing (punctuation marks, stroke talk, grammar words).</i> ☐ <i>Students practice mechanics through shared writing, guided writing, and independent writing tasks.</i> ☐ <i>Students apply spelling routines and strategies taught by the teacher when writing independently.</i> ☐ <i>Teacher tools (anchor charts, CHOPS routine, sound wall) support student writing.</i>
4C. The teacher creates opportunities for shared, interactive, and independent writing across subjects.	☐ <i>Students participate in dictation activities, shared writing tasks and demonstrate independence in expressing ideas through writing.</i>
Direct Observation Notes	

Focus 5: ENGAGING, CHILD-CENTERED INSTRUCTION

Indicator	Look Fors
5A. The teacher designs joyful, developmentally appropriate lessons that include songs, movement, play, and exploration.	☐ <i>The teacher engages students in motions/gestures, interactive and shared reading experience, songs and/ or chants that support learning, songs, fingerplays or rhymes.</i> ☐ <i>Students actively participate in playful, interactive literacy experiences with enthusiasm and curiosity.</i>
5B. The teacher creates a print-rich environment filled with meaningful text, labels, and student work.	☐ <i>Sound wall and anchor charts are visible and actively referenced during instruction.</i> ☐ <i>Student work and classroom labels are displayed to support literacy.</i> ☐ <i>Books and learning materials/manipulatives are accessible and used by students.</i> ☐ <i>Students use classroom print (e.g., graphic organizers, teacher-created charts, sound walls, books) to support reading and writing.</i>
5C. The teacher encourages student voice through choice, sharing, and multimodal activities.	☐ <i>Students have opportunities to choose topics, texts, or formats for tasks (e.g., selecting a book, choosing how to present learning).</i> ☐ <i>Students share ideas and perspectives during discussions, partner work, or collaborative activities.</i> ☐ <i>Students engage in multimodal expression (e.g., writing, speaking, drawing, using digital tools) to demonstrate understanding.</i>
Direct Observation Notes	