



4th-5th Grade Observation Look Fors

Our collective goal is to ensure our students graduate ready for college and career. This will require a comprehensive, integrated approach to literacy instruction that ensures that students become college and career ready readers, writers, and communicators. To achieve this, students must receive literacy instruction aligned to each of the elements of effective literacy program seen in the figure to the right.

This planning and coaching tool is for teachers and those who support teachers in Shelby County to build their understanding and experience with College and Career Ready (CCR)¹ instruction aligned to the Comprehensive Literacy Improvement Plan. Designed as a developmental tool, it can be used for planning, reflection, collaboration, and coaching.



The three CCR shifts in instruction for ELA/Literacy provide the framing for this tool:

- (1) Regular practice with complex text and its academic language.
- (2) Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from text, both literary and informational.
- (3) Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction.

The Core Actions and indicators should be evidenced in planning and observable in instruction. For each lesson, evidence might include a lesson plan, exercises, tasks and assessments, teacher instruction, student discussion and behavior, and student work. Although many indicators will be observable during the course of a lesson, there may be times when a lesson is appropriately focused on a smaller set of objectives or only a portion of a lesson is observed, leaving some indicators blank.

¹ You can see more information about the College and Career Ready Standards and Shifts here: http://www.tncore.org/english_language_arts/standards_and_shifts.aspx

Systems & Routines

Indicator	Evidence Observed
A. The teacher has a dedicated literacy block that lasts for the required number of minutes (120 minutes for 4 th -5 th grade) during which students access core/Tier 1 content.	
B. The teacher maximizes time ² by employing the 4th-5th grade CLIP instructional design (including the whole group-small group – whole group structure and the required number of minutes for each component of the instructional design).	
C. The teacher gradually releases responsibility throughout the lesson, modeling new skills before giving students the opportunity to practice together and independently.	
D. The teacher provides the conditions for all students to focus on the text, and students clearly know the routines and procedures in the classroom.	

Core Action 1: Focus each lesson on a high quality text (or multiple texts).

This core action is aligned to Shift 1 (Regular practice with complex text and its academic language) and Shift 3 (Building knowledge through content-rich non-fiction).

Indicator	Evidence Observed
A. A majority of the lesson is spent reading, speaking, or writing about text(s).	
B. The text(s) are at or above the complexity level expected for the grade and time in the school year.	
C. The text(s) exhibit exceptional craft and thought and/or provide useful information.	
D. Texts are selected strategically to develop a coherent body of knowledge.	

Core Action 1 for Foundational Skills: Ensure that instruction and materials explicitly and systematically provide all students with the opportunity to master foundational skills.

Indicator	Evidence Observed
A. The foundational skills being taught are aligned to the standards for this grade.	
B. Instruction and materials address foundational skills by attending to phonics, word recognition, and fluency.	
C. Instruction and materials provide sufficient opportunities for all students to practice reading and writing newly acquired foundational skills.	
D. Instruction and materials connect acquisition of foundational skills to making meaning from reading.	
E. Instruction and materials provide opportunities for students to demonstrate understanding of the skills being taught through frequent monitoring of student progress.	
F. The teacher effectively uses small group instruction/guided reading time to differentiate for students to ensure that all students master foundational skills.	
G. The teacher effectively uses small group instruction/stations to differentiate for students to ensure that all students master foundational skills.	

² TEACH 7 on the TEM Observation rubric

Core Action 2: Employ questions and tasks that are text-dependent and text-specific.

This core action is aligned to Shift 2 (Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from the text) and Shift 3 (Building knowledge through content-rich non-fiction)

Indicator	Evidence Observed
A. Questions and tasks address the text by attending to its particular structure, concepts, ideas, events and details.	
B. Questions and tasks require students to use evidence from text to demonstrate understanding and to support their ideas about the text. These ideas are expressed through a variety of means.	
C. Questions and tasks attend to the words, phrases, and sentences within the text.	
D. Questions are sequenced to build knowledge by guiding students to delve deeper into text and graphics.	
E. The teacher sets clear text-based objectives for literacy throughout the lesson.	
F. The teacher implements specific literacy stations, including the required 4 th and 5 th grade literacy stations (decoding/word work, comprehension, vocabulary.).	

Core Action 3: Provide all students with opportunities to engage in the work of the lesson.

This core action is aligned to Shift 1 (Regular practice with complex text and its academic language), Shift 2 (Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from the text), and Shift 3 (Building knowledge through content-rich non-fiction)

Indicator	Notes
A. The teacher keeps all students persevering with challenging tasks.	
B. The teacher expects evidence and precision from students and probes students' answers accordingly.	
C. The teacher encourages reasoning and problem solving by posing challenging questions and tasks that offer opportunity for productive struggle.	
D. The teacher demonstrates awareness and appropriate action regarding the variations present in student progress towards reading independently.	
E. When appropriate, the teacher explicitly attends to strengthening students' language and foundational skills.	
F. The teacher provides differentiated support for students throughout the course of the lesson, particularly in small-group instruction.	
G. The teacher allows all students to synthesize their learning in the closing of the lesson, assessing students' understanding of the text and mastery of specific skills during the lesson closing.	

4th-5th Grade Instructional Design

We have the opportunity to ensure that our fourth and fifth grade students have built their capacity as readers to the point that they are ready to enter middle school. To ensure that time for literacy instruction is used well, we have developed the 4th and 5th grade CLIP instructional design. It clearly lays out how to leverage time and effective lesson design in the literacy block.

The purpose of this instructional design is to ensure that **all** 4th and 5th grade students receive the high-quality instruction to meet our vision for effective literacy instruction. This instructional design is *not* intended to replace teachers’ professional judgment about how to spend time with their particular students but is intended to ensure that all teachers can clearly define how a strong literacy block is paced and the components of a strong literacy block.



All fourth and fifth grade teachers should ensure that their literacy (reading and writing) block is 120 minutes long. Teachers should use **the gradual release of responsibility model** (“I do, we do, they do, you do”) **to ensure that students have the opportunity to read, write, discuss and think about complex texts**, as described in our vision for effective literacy instruction and in the [4th-5th Grade Observation Look Fors](#).

4th and 5th grade students should generally have the following experiences:

Reading Appropriately Complex Texts ³		Writing About Texts (and ELA) ⁴
Tier 1, Grade-Level Instruction for All Students		
Whole Group	Collaborative reading of texts sequenced to build student knowledge	Modeled and shared writing; modeling writing skills
Small Group	Homogeneous and heterogeneous groupings; practice and apply skills to read appropriately complex texts	Independent and group writing; practice and apply skills
Whole Group	Closure and assessment	Closure, assessment, sharing of student work

³ The reading block should last for approximately 90 minutes in 4th and 5th grade classrooms.

⁴ The writing block should last for approximately 30 minutes in 4th and 5th grade classrooms.