

ELA/LITERACY CORE ACTIONS AND GUIDING QUESTIONS

Core Action 1

Lesson content is rigorous and relevant for the level defined by the state-adopted standards.

Indicator A. Instructor establishes well-defined standards-based lesson goals.

Guiding questions:

- Do students engage in a variety of literacy tasks and activities reflective of a range of standards? Note instances and examples.
- Does the instructor refer to lesson goals during the lesson? What does s/he say and do? Note: When possible, refer to the lesson plan for evidence of the target concepts and skills for the lesson.

Indicator B. Students are working with texts at or above the expected complexity for the level(s) as defined by the standards.

Guiding questions:

- Was the text evaluated for complexity?
- Is the text at the right level of complexity?
- What evidence is there that the text(s) exhibit(s) exceptional craft and thought and/or provide useful information? Note: When possible, refer to the lesson plan for evidence.

Indicator C. Students spend most class time engaged with some combination of reading, writing, or speaking directly about knowledge-building text(s).

Guiding questions:

- About how much time are students engaged in a blend of reading, writing, and speaking tasks related to the lesson's text?
- About how much time does the instructor spend providing instructions, making transitions, etc.?

Core Action 2

Questions and tasks are text-specific and cognitively demanding.

Indicator A. Instructor consistently sequences questions to support students delving deeper into text(s) to build their understanding of key information.

Guiding questions:

- Is there a mix of questions that reinforce student understanding of the text(s)? Note them.
- How are the questions sequenced? Do they help students delve deeper into the text?

Indicator B. Instructor consistently includes systematic work with high-value words, phrases, and syntactically complex sentences from the text(s).

Guiding questions:

- How do students interact with the words, phrases, and sentences in the texts?
- How often do they do so?

Indicator C. Instructor asks students to elaborate and justify their thoughts and responses with precision by drawing evidence from text(s).

Guiding questions:

- Does the teacher pose questions that require students to provide evidence and explanation? Or do questions require only a yes or no response? Note how often s/he explicitly asks students to refer to the text.
- How does the instructor encourage precision in student responses?

Core Action 3

Lesson content and activities productively engage students.

Indicator A. Students participate actively in sustained class discussions where they use evidence from their readings to build on each other's insights.

Guiding questions:

- Is the lesson dominated by teacher talk or by student talk? Estimate the minutes of each.
- Do only some, many, most, or all students actively participate in the activities? What do you notice about the students: are they bored or animated, or is it hard to tell? Note how you know.
- Are there opportunities for students to collaborate, ask each other questions, and express their ideas? Note instances and examples.

Indicator B. Students have varied opportunities to apply what they are learning in authentic adult-oriented contexts.

Guiding questions:

- Are the activities practical and valuable in real life? Note instances and examples in the lesson.
- Does the instructor explicitly tie lesson objectives to student goals and interests?
- In what ways can you say that the instructor knows about the lives and interests of the students? Note what's been said that indicates that knowledge.

Indicator C. Most students display persistence with tasks about demanding text(s).

Guiding questions:

- Do students remain engaged and on task throughout the lesson?
- Do students participate in all literacy activities with attention and effort?
- Do students ask for support from the instructor or their classmates to help them complete tasks?
- When working alone or in groups, do students seem to give up quickly on the task(s)?

Core Action 4

Lesson content is intentionally sequenced to develop students' skills and knowledge.

Indicator A. Instructor explicitly links lesson content to previous lessons or students' prior knowledge.

Guiding question:

- Does the instructor refer to previous lessons and students' funds of knowledge and experience?

Indicator B. Instructor offers a range of brief and engaging resources to build students' knowledge about the topics of the central texts.

Guiding questions:

- Are there indications that the anchor text of the lesson is one of a sequence designed to build knowledge about a topic?
- Are there any extension texts or research projects connected with the lesson? How do they build knowledge?

Indicator C. Instructor ends the class by:

- Reviewing lesson objectives;
- Summarizing student learning with references to student work and discussion; and
- Previewing the next class session and explaining how it will build upon today's activities.

Guiding questions:

- How does the instructor close the class?
- Does the instructor review the lesson objectives?
- What does the instructor say about the next lesson?

Core Action 5

Students' levels of understanding are checked throughout the lesson, and instruction is adjusted accordingly.

Indicator A. Instructor consistently uses informal yet deliberate methods to provide students with prompt, specific feedback to correct misunderstandings and reinforce learning.

Guiding questions:

- How does the instructor check on students' understanding?
- What strategies does the instructor use to correct misunderstandings or reinforce learning? Note instances and examples throughout the lesson.
- When giving feedback, does the instructor use questioning to lead students to answers, or does s/he provide the answers?

Indicator B. Instructor consistently provides strategic supports and scaffolds to help learners focus on what is essential to make sense of what they are reading.

Guiding question:

- What supports does the instructor provide? Are they needed? Explain.

Indicator C. Instructor provides opportunities for students to evaluate and reflect on their own learning.

Guiding question:

- Does the instructor ask students to reflect on their learning at the end of the lesson? How so, and is it effective?