

# Foundational Skills Observation Tool

## Components of Foundational Skills

<p><b>Print Concepts</b></p> <p>Understand the organization and basic features of print.</p>	<p><b>Phonological Awareness</b></p> <p>Identify and manipulate units of oral language- such as words, syllables, onset/rime, and phonemes.</p>
<p><b>Phonics and Word Recognition</b></p> <p>Know and apply sound and spelling patterns and word analysis skills in order to recognize and decode words in print.</p>	<p><b>Fluency</b></p> <p>Read with sufficient accuracy, rate, and expression to support comprehension.</p>

### About the Foundational Skills Observation Tool:

Comprehensive college- and career-ready literacy instruction in grades K–2 requires developing strong foundational skills and growing knowledge and vocabulary through rich read alouds with complex texts. Effective foundational skills instruction for *all* students necessitates spending at least 45 minutes a day on the teaching of foundational skills through direct instruction and related practice opportunities for students.<sup>1</sup> This observation tool is designed to help K–2 teachers, and those who support teachers, to build understanding and experience with best practices to support the explicit teaching of foundational skills: Print Concepts, Phonological Awareness, Phonics and Word Recognition, and Fluency. Designed to aid teacher development rather than evaluation, this tool can be used for coaching, as well as planning, reflection, and collaboration.

This tool is a complement to the [Foundational Skills Guidance Documents](#) and should be used along with instructional materials that provide explicit and systematic instruction and practice. For reading/listening comprehension lessons, refer to the [K–2 Instructional Practice Guide](#).

### Using the Foundational Skills Observation Tool:

Depending on the grade level and time of school year, lessons could emphasize a variety of foundational skills. For all uses, refer to the [Common Core State Standards for Reading: Foundational Skills](#). During each observed lesson it will be important to note the interactions between aligned content, teacher moves, and student practice. Evidence for the indicators might include content from the lesson plan; observed exercises, tasks and assessments; and student work, discussion, or behavior. 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 unobserved and some portion of this tool blank. Each of the indicators includes an optional rating scale (yes/no or 1 through 4). “N/A” is included when an indicator may not be applicable to a particular lesson; “N/O” is included when the indicator is not observed.

A foundational skills lesson may include any of the following: whole class instruction, student independent practice, collaborative tasks, small group instruction, and centers. The observation tool can be used with any of these classroom structures.

Classroom observations are most effective when followed by a coaching conversation based on evidence collected during the observation. After discussing the observed lesson using this observation tool as a support, use the [Beyond the Lesson Discussion Questions](#) to put the content of the lesson in the context of the broader instructional plan for the unit or year.

### Companion Resources:

Additional resources to support professional development and instructional practice can be found at [achievethecore.org/foundational-skills](https://achievethecore.org/foundational-skills). These include a modular course for professional development as well as classroom resources for decodable readers and assessment.

<sup>1</sup> Refer to the [Foundational Skills Guidance Documents](#) for research supporting the components of effective foundational skills instruction.

# Foundational Skills Observation Tool

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Targeted Foundation Skill(s) / Objective(s): \_\_\_\_\_

## Foundational Skills Observation Tool Indicators

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### Aligned Content

The indicators in this section represent the intentional and explicit focus of the lesson as well as age-appropriate delivery of content.

- AC1. The foundational skill(s) observed in the lesson reflect grade-level standards.
  - AC2. The foundational skill(s) observed in the lesson is part of a systematic scope and sequence.
  - AC3. The elements of the lesson are presented in an engaging and child-friendly manner.
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### Teacher-Directed Instruction

The indicators in this section represent the teacher-driven moves in the lesson, such as what the teacher says, models, and assigns.

- TD1. Foundational skill(s) instruction is explicit and clear.
  - TD2. Instruction and materials provide opportunities to connect acquisition of foundational skills to making meaning from reading and listening.
  - TD3. The lesson includes adequate time for aligned teacher instruction and student practice of targeted skill(s).
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### Student Practice

The indicators in this section represent what students say and do throughout the lesson. This format may change throughout the lesson, and can include whole group, small group, independent, and teacher-supported tasks/practice.

- SP1. Practice materials and written/oral tasks are aligned to targeted content and skills.
  - SP2. Practice materials include opportunities for students to work in context with connected text.
  - SP3. Practice materials include multiple opportunities for students to work out of context.
  - SP4. Students actively participate in the content of the lesson.
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### Assessment & Differentiation

The indicators in this section represent strategic collecting of data as well as adjustments to instruction based on observed student need.

- AD1. Teacher collects student data (formal and/or informal).
- AD2. Teacher responds to data and adjusts instruction accordingly to support students.

# Foundational Skills Observation Tool

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Targeted Foundation Skill(s) / Objective(s): \_\_\_\_\_

## Aligned Content

The indicators in this section represent the intentional and explicit focus of the lesson as well as age-appropriate delivery of content.

Indicator/Rating	What To Look For
<b>AC1. The foundational skill(s) observed in the lesson reflect grade-level standards.</b>  <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	The following area(s) of focus may be observed; please check all that apply:  <input type="checkbox"/> Phonological Awareness (K-1) <input type="checkbox"/> Print Concepts (K-1) <input type="checkbox"/> Phonics and Word Recognition (K-2) <input type="checkbox"/> Fluency (K-2)  All elements may not be addressed in each lesson. <i>Refer to the <a href="#">Reading Foundational Skills standards</a> as needed.</i>
<b>AC2. The foundational skill(s) observed in the lesson is part of a systematic scope and sequence.</b>  <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	Classroom displays and/or student work that shows past and current foundational skills foci, connections made by teacher to previously taught skills
<b>AC3. The elements of the lesson are presented in an engaging and child-friendly manner.</b>  <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	Crucial skills taught and practiced through movement, songs, chants, and high-energy activities (see examples in the <a href="#">Effective Enhancements for Foundational Skills Instruction</a> document)

## Teacher-Directed Instruction

The indicators in this section represent the teacher-driven moves in the lesson, such as what the teacher says, models, and assigns.

Indicator/Rating	What To Look For
<b>TD1. Foundational skill(s) instruction is explicit and clear.</b>  <input type="radio"/> 4-Always <input type="radio"/> 3-Often <input type="radio"/> 2-Sometimes <input type="radio"/> 1-Rarely <input type="radio"/> N/O	Clear and accurate teacher pronunciation of sounds (phonemes), visual aids, explanation of rules for sound and spelling patterns, articulation of objective to students, and modeling of blending, segmenting, or other content-specific tasks
<b>TD2. Instruction and materials provide opportunities to connect acquisition of foundational skills to making meaning from reading and listening.</b>  <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> N/A	Decodables accompanied with text-dependent questions, unfamiliar words connected to definitions, use of newly decoded/blended words in meaningful sentences
<b>TD3. The lesson includes adequate time for aligned teacher instruction and student practice of targeted skill(s).</b>  <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	Appropriate pacing for the task provided, opportunities for students to practice targeted skill(s) through reading, writing, speaking, and/or listening

### Notes for Indicators of Aligned Content and Teacher-Directed Instruction

# Foundational Skills Observation Tool

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Targeted Foundation Skill(s) / Objective(s): \_\_\_\_\_

## Student Practice

The indicators in this section represent what students say and do throughout the lesson. This format may change throughout the lesson, and can include whole group, small group, independent, and teacher-supported tasks/practice.

Indicator/Rating	What To Look For
<b>SP1. Practice materials and written/oral tasks are aligned to targeted content and skills.</b>  <input type="radio"/> 4-All <input type="radio"/> 3-Most <input type="radio"/> 2-Some <input type="radio"/> 1-Few/None	Practice of new and/or previously taught skill(s)
<b>SP2. Practice materials include opportunities for students to work in context with connected text.</b>  <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	Use of connected texts (decodable text containing previously taught high-frequency words and sound/spelling patterns) read and/or reread for accuracy/automaticity <i>Note: This indicator is applicable once students have learned enough sound and spelling patterns and high-frequency words to read meaningful text.</i>
<b>SP3. Practice materials include multiple opportunities for students to work out of context.</b>  <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	Tasks such as games, puzzles, music, movement, worksheets, or other discrete oral or written tasks
<b>SP4. Students actively participate in the content of the lesson.</b>  <input type="radio"/> 4-All Students <input type="radio"/> 3-Most Students <input type="radio"/> 2-Some Students <input type="radio"/> 1-Few/No Students	Student to student and student to teacher interaction with content, adequate support provided for students to participate actively in centers and with independent tasks

## Assessment & Differentiation

The indicators in this section represent strategic collecting of data as well as adjustments to instruction based on observed student need.

Indicator/Rating	What To Look For
<b>AD1. Teacher collects student data (formal and/or informal).</b>  <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	Data collecting system in place, collection of student work and grading system (see examples in the <a href="#">Foundational Skills Assessment Protocol</a> )
<b>AD2. Teacher responds to data and adjusts instruction accordingly to support students.</b>  <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> N/O	On-the-spot feedback, corrections or confirmations of student answers (e.g., students use inventive spelling, teacher holds students accountable for taught sound and spelling patterns), adjustments made to task based on observations of student work/practice, differentiated groups and materials, evidence of planned supports based on student data

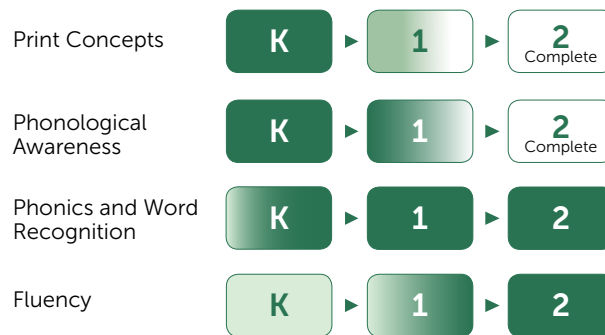
### Notes for Indicators of Student Practice and Assessment & Differentiation

# Beyond the Lesson: Discussion Guide

## Foundational Skills Observation Tool

The Beyond the Lesson Discussion Guide is designed for the post-observation conversation using the Foundational Skills Observation Tool. The questions put the content of the lesson in the context of the broader instructional plan for the unit or year.

Begin the conversation by reflecting on the evidence collected during the observation; discuss what worked, areas for improvement, and resources to support development. Then use the Beyond the Lesson Discussion Guide questions to help clearly delineate what practices are in place, what has already occurred, and what opportunities might exist—in another lesson, further in the unit, or over the course of the year—to incorporate the learning from the [Foundational Skills Guidance Document](#) into the classroom.



*This visual shows each content focus area by grade. The darker the shading, the greater the emphasis on that component.*

### Aligned Content

1. Beyond this lesson, what steps are being taken to ensure students receive at least 45 minutes of daily foundational skill instruction and opportunities for practice?

2. Is this lesson part of a scope and sequence for foundational skills?

**K-1** What phonemic awareness/phonological awareness skills are students learning this week?

**K-2** What sound and spelling pattern(s) are students learning this week?

3. How are all students supported in progressing towards independently reading grade-level text by the end of 2nd grade?

**K-early 1st** How are students being supported in developing reading accuracy?

**early-mid 1st** How are students being supported to read with accuracy and automaticity?

**1st (as appropriate), 2nd** How are students being supported in developing rate and prosody/expression?

**K-2** How are students using decodable texts to demonstrate progress with accuracy, automaticity, prosody, and expression? (For sample activities refer to the [Decodable Readers Protocol](#)).

### Teacher-Directed Instruction

4. How does the classroom environment support student needs in regards to foundational skills? How does the classroom culture promote and support this work?

### Student Practice

5. What varied opportunities do students have to practice newly taught skills this week? Do they have five or more opportunities to independently practice this week's taught skills? What opportunities are provided for students who need more or far more practice?

### Assessment and Differentiation

6. What opportunities are provided for students who are reading above grade level to engage more deeply with grade-level or above-grade-level texts?

7. How are students monitored (daily, weekly, and through unit/benchmark assessments) to identify discrete skills needed for additional practice? How is assessment data tracked?

8. Are systems for responding to student data clear, concrete, systematic, and manageable?

9. How are decisions made about differentiated groups, tasks, and supports in the lesson?