WALK-THROUGH PRACTICE GUIDE

Encouraging Schoolwide Conversations About Effective Literacy Instruction

Contents

The purpose of the Literacy Walk-Through Tool:

What it is:
This tool was designed to support administrators, coaches, reading specialists, and teachers in the implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction. It aims to drive schoolwide, vertical conversations about best practice from multiple stakeholders. In addition, it's designed to remove the burden of proof from teachers and improve student learning.

What it is not:
This tool was not designed for evaluative purposes.

Walk-throughs should focus on evidence-based practices for design, delivery, and engagement.

Walk-through tools that promote dialogue between teachers, teams, specialists, coaches, and administrators ensure that schools focus on lesson quality and help build a culture of continuous improvement.
When you visit classrooms often, you:

- Are seen as an instructional leader (Steiner and Kowal, 2007)
- Directly impact student achievement (Fullan & Pinchot, 2018; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008)
- Build strong literacy teams (Leithwood, K. et al., 2006)
- Promote equitable outcomes for all learners (Eagle, et al., 2015)

Adapted from Lead for Literacy

Effective literacy leaders build strong foundations.

You must know:

- The content and curriculum—especially how skilled reading develops
- How to provide ongoing professional development to support teachers and teams to implement best practices
- How to create and improve effective school systems

You must be able to:

- Recognize effective delivery of instruction and impactful student engagement
- Demonstrate understanding of and prioritize the adoption/implementation of evidenced-based practices
- Gather information about what's working or not working and provide feedback

Walk-throughs fit into schoolwide literacy plans that:

- **Make reading a schoolwide priority.**
  Create a clear vision and mission for improved reading achievement. Share often with staff to set schoolwide instructional goals for literacy.

- **Focus on continuous improvement.**
  Work strategically to embed procedures into your school structures to continuously review goals.

- **Implement high-quality reading instruction.**
  Determine what resources—programs, practices, and materials—your school needs to meet the literacy needs of all learners.

- **Use data to inform instruction in meaningful and actionable ways.**
  Support staff with their data collection and analysis processes to ensure that data drives instructional planning and evaluation.

- **Build and maintain expertise through professional learning and collaboration.**
  Use various methods to deliver professional development to grow staff capacity for evidenced-based literacy instruction practices.

Ways the tool can be used by different stakeholders:

Principals
The tool can be used to deepen understanding of what evidence-based literacy instruction (EBLI) looks like in classrooms, guide conversations around implementation of evidence-based literacy practices (build positive relationships with teachers), and informally observe where the school is in terms of implementation. This tool can also help identify needed supports for the implementation of EBLI.

Reading Specialists
The tool can be used to support teachers or grade levels with implementing evidence-based literacy practices within core instruction, as well as to align core with intervention services.

Literacy Coaches
The tool can be used to guide coaching conversations around shifts to evidence-based literacy practices, support with new curriculum adoption/implementation, and create goals or next steps. This tool can also help identify needed supports for the implementation of EBLI.

Teachers
This tool can be used by teachers for peer-to-peer observations/coaching or to aid self-evaluation.

Directions For Use:

01

Step 1: Read the Walk-Through Practice Guide including the Walk-Through Look-Fors

- The Practice Guide offers guidance on the purpose of the Walk-Through Tool and important notes on how to use the tool effectively. The Walk-Through Look-Fors offer an explanation of the practices which characterize evidence-based literacy instruction within each of the component skills involved in reading.

02

Step 2: Select which element of evidence-based literacy instruction to focus on for the walk-through

- In order to be effective, the walk-through and post-conference should focus on one evidence-based literacy practice (i.e., Explicit Instruction/Gradual Release Model, Scaffolding/Differentiation, Effective Use of Resources, Student Engagement and Opportunities for Practice, OR Use of Assessment Data). Selecting one area to target within a given walk-through allows for greater depth and more meaningful dialogue following the walk-through. Again, careful consideration to the context of the relationship should be given during the selection of an evidence-based practice to target (e.g., allowing the teacher to help select an area or considering an area of strength for a new teacher, rather than focusing on an area that needs more support).

03

Step 3: Complete the Walk-Through Tool

- Complete the tool focusing on the evidence-based instructional practice selected in Step 2. More detailed notes will provide greater evidence to support the follow-up conversation during the post-conference.

04

Step 4: Use Guiding Questions for Post-Conferences

- Prior to conducting the post-conference, familiarize yourself with the guiding questions for the post-conference. Questions may be added or adjusted as needed. Try to schedule the post-conference as soon as possible following the walk-through, so that the details of the observed lesson can be more easily recalled.

05

Step 5: Conduct Post-Conference

- Again, careful consideration to the context of the relationship should be given during the post-conference. The guiding questions from Step 4 are intended to provide a framework for positively engaging the teacher in self-reflection; however, questions may be added or adjusted based on observed instruction.

EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES LOOK-FORS

Literacy leaders know the content and curricula—specifically how decoding/encoding skills and language comprehension lead to reading comprehension. You must be able to recognize the specific elements of evidence-based literacy instruction. When you visit a classroom, **what do you look for?**

Use the indicators below to better understand the components of effective instructional practices.

Phonological and Phonemic Awareness

Look-Fors:

Explicit Instruction and Gradual Release Model:

- The teacher accurately models mouth formation and articulation for all 44 sounds of English
Watch Video
- Explicit instruction in primary grades includes rhyme (c<u>at</u>, p<u>at</u>), alliteration (<u>b</u>ook, <u>b</u>all, <u>b</u>lanket), onset-rime (r-ain), syllables (rab-bit), and/or individual phonemes (/p/ /i/ /g/)
- Sounds are explicitly connected to letters
- Explicit instruction and opportunities for practice related to:
  - Identifying the initial (<u>f</u>ish), final (fi<u>sh</u>), and medial (f<u>i</u>sh) sounds in this order of difficultly
  - Matching phonemes to pictures and objects (/d/ for dog, doll)
  - Oral blending of compound words, syllables, onset-rime, and/or individual phonemes (/sh/ /i/ /p/ = ship)
  - Oral segmenting of words in a sentence, compound words, syllables, onset-rime, and/or individual phonemes (ship = /sh/ /i/ /p/)

Scaffolding/Differentiation:

- Scaffolding is provided to students who have difficulty blending and segmenting orally and with letters
- Teacher effectively provides extensions for students who are ready for more, including adding letters to oral phonemic skills
- Differentiation and scaffolding includes use of pictures, manipulatives, and hand motions

Effective Use of Resources:

- Instruction follows a research-based scope and sequence of phonemic awareness concepts and is consistently utilized among teachers and grade levels
- Use of manipulatives, text resources, and hand motions enhance and support lessons and do not distract from skills being taught

Student Engagement and Opportunities for Practice:

- Teacher provides opportunities to use hand motions or gestures when needed to account for syllables, onset-rime, and individual phonemes
- Teacher provides opportunities to use manipulatives when needed such as chips, magnetic wands, blocks, or felt to push, move, and count sounds

Use of Assessment:

- Teacher uses embedded informal checks for understanding to gain insight into students' development of phonemic awareness
- Teacher provides meaningful and specific feedback to students based on their assessment responses

Phonics

Look-Fors:

Explicit Instruction and Gradual Release Model:

- Explicit and systematic instruction of phoneme/grapheme correspondence with extensive modeling and cumulative review
- The teacher gradually releases responsibility throughout instruction
- Use of explicit routines for decoding and encoding words within a logical sequence based on complexity

Scaffolding/Differentiation:

- Students are placed in skill-based small groups based on targeted area of need
- Effective use of scaffolds for students needing more support to access phonics concepts (including visuals, motions, manipulatives, etc.)
- Teacher effectively provides extensions for students who are ready for more

Effective Use of Resources:

- Teaching follows a research-based scope and sequence of instruction in phonics concepts that moves from simple word types, lengths, and complexities to more complex words, syllable types, and multi-syllable words
- Evidence of use or implementation of approved evidence-based core programming and supplements
- Text resources, digital tools, and manipulatives are intentional in use and utilized to improve learning outcomes

Student Engagement and Opportunities for Practice:

- Teacher utilizes consistent instructional routines for explicit instruction in phonics concepts including frequent opportunities to spell (encode) words at (word and sentence level) embedded within phonics lessons
- Teacher provides opportunities to practice applying phonics concepts in aligned decodable text with teacher feedback given to students
- Students are asked to read things, say things, write things, and do things when practicing phonics concepts

Use of Assessment:

- Teacher uses formal or informal checks for understanding to gain insight into how students are learning phonics concepts
- Teacher provides meaningful and specific feedback to students based on their assessment responses

Fluency

Look-Fors:

Explicit Instruction and Gradual Release Model:

- Explicit and systematic instruction of reading accuracy aligned to previously mastered phonics/decoding skills
- Explicit prosody instruction includes modeling, with an emphasis on phrasing, intonation, and punctuation, to enhance comprehension
- Use of explicit routines to promote automaticity and build fluent reading habits

Scaffolding/Differentiation:

- Differentiated support provided to all students in either independent tasks or small group activities
- Teacher uses flexible student groups to deliver targeted fluency instruction to those who demonstrate the need for more
- Teacher uses the same visual, auditory, and kinesthetic routines from decoding strategies to scaffold automatic word reading

Effective Use of Resources:

- Texts and activities match student need and promote automaticity of phonics and decoding skills
- A variety of texts are chosen to fit the primary instructional purpose and practice fluent reading at the grapheme, word, phrase, sentence, and/or passage level
- When applicable, texts are selected to allow for the reader to make meaning

Student Engagement and Opportunities for Practice

- Teacher provides varied practice opportunities for modeling fluent reading, which may include listening to expert readers, readers theater, echo reading, choral reading, partner reading, and repeated reading
- Students are given ample practice opportunities for the cumulative review of previously taught content to build fluency and automaticity
- Teacher embeds well-rehearsed instructional routines for:
  - Opportunities to practice and build automaticity
  - Reading and re-reading familiar texts
  - Feedback for accuracy errors which directly relate to decoding strategies
  - Feedback for monitoring errors, especially modeling/prompting corrections

Use of Assessment:

- Teacher provides meaningful and specific feedback to students based on their opportunities to respond
- Teacher uses assessment tools tied to the purpose of instruction and student need:
  - Fluency rubric to monitor progress with phrasing and prosody
  - Oral Reading Fluency measure to monitor progress with rate and accuracy

Vocabulary

Look-Fors:

Explicit Instruction and Gradual Release Model

- Explicit instruction building word networks, specifically with semantic connections, morphological connections, and multiple meanings
- Many meaningful exposures to Tier 2 unfamiliar words; such as providing examples, non-examples, words in sentences, identifying characteristics, and providing visuals
- Teacher gives opportunities for students to talk and share their thinking

Scaffolding/Differentiation:

- Teacher provides visual and/or manipulatives to support target word knowledge
- Sentence stems are provided to encourage dialogue with unfamiliar words
- Teacher provides multiple opportunities for students who are ready to apply the target word in authentic ways (in their writing assignments or dialogue with peers)

Effective Use of Resources:

- It is evident that the teacher chose high quality trade books to read and familiarized themselves with the text prior to the lesson to select tier 2 vocabulary word(s) or content specific vocabulary word(s)
- Meaningful digital tools and manipulatives selected to enhance and clarify meaning of unfamiliar word(s)

Student Engagement and Opportunities for Practice:

- Students are given multiple opportunities to engage with the unfamiliar word on an ongoing basis through writing, reading, listening, and speaking
- Students engage in discussions about target word(s) with other students and teacher

Use of Assessment:

- Teacher uses embedded informal checks for understanding (e.g., turn and talks) to evaluate mastery of taught vocabulary and provides meaningful and specific feedback to students based on their responses
- Teacher uses assessment data in an ongoing manner and adjusts instruction to meet student needs

Comprehension

Look-Fors:

Explicit Instruction and Gradual Release Model:

- **Before Reading:** The teacher builds background knowledge, pre-teaches relevant vocabulary, and establishes objectives for knowledge and literacy.
- **During Reading:** The teacher models fluent reading and guides rereading for a specific purpose. The teacher supports comprehension of complex sentences and text features by modeling with a think-aloud or by posing questions at specific junctures of the text.
- **After Reading:** Students are given an opportunity to express the meaning of a text in a way that helps solidify their mental model.

Scaffolding/Differentiation:

- Texts are carefully selected for the lesson purpose and broken up into manageable chunks or excerpts
- All students are given access to complex text through the use of scaffolding (e.g., a first read could be provided by the teacher aloud, a second read could involve partner reading, and a third read could be independent)
- Students are directed to read through passages multiple times so that the focus transitions from literal understanding to deeper thinking

Effective Use of Resources:

- Students engage with complex literature and informational texts that are appropriate for the lesson purpose
- Digital tools, graphic organizers, anchor charts, and manipulatives are aligned with the instructional purpose and introduced with modeling prior to student use
- The learning environment is organized and promotes student engagement

Student Engagement and Opportunities for Practice:

- Teacher employs different types of grouping throughout instruction to facilitate peer support and encourage engagement (e.g., partners and small groups)
- Students engage in varied levels of thinking and response, moving from literal understanding to higher-order reasoning
- Students receive opportunities for choice related to demonstrating evidence of their learning after reading a text

Use of Assessment:

- Text comprehension is evaluated through a variety of oral, visual, and written responses both embedded throughout instruction and as a response to instruction
- Teacher provides meaningful and specific feedback to students based on their assessment responses
- Teacher uses assessment data in an ongoing manner and adjusts instruction to meet student needs (e.g., additional modeling and opportunities for practice)

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR POST-CONFERENCES

The characteristics identified as "observable evidence of practice" are delineated in greater detail within the specific instructional look-fors of the Effective Instructional Practices tables. This table is intended for use as a follow-up tool after completing a walk-through and will help you consider how you will frame your feedback based on your observations to encourage reflective conversations.

Evidence-based literacy practice: Explicit Instruction and Gradual Release Model

Observable evidence of practice:

- Follows gradual release of responsibility model (I Do, We Do, You Do)
- Expectations are clear and concise
- Teacher provides models and multiple examples
- Teacher implements research-based instructional routines for the literacy component(s) observed
- Teacher provides meaningful feedback
- The pace of the lesson is brisk and appropriate for student engagement

Observed   Not Observed

If observed, component of literacy:

Phonemic Awareness   Phonics

Fluency   Vocabulary   Comprehension

Guiding questions for all post-conferences:

- What was the objective of the observed lesson?
- How did you implement a gradual release model?
- How was instruction tied to previous learning?
- Describe the instructional routines that you employed during the lesson. How do you select and integrate routines within literacy instruction?
- Based on your reflections from today's lesson, what are your next steps?

If explicit instruction was not observed:

- I noticed that you [describe observed strategy, e.g., lectured, facilitated student work on projects, etc.]. Explain your decision-making regarding that strategy. Did students respond as you anticipated? Were you satisfied with student responses?
- If you were to teach this lesson again, how could you add more explicit instruction?
- Describe your confidence level with delivering explicit instruction on [observed topic/literacy component].
- What supports (e.g., time, peer observation, text resources, information etc.) would be helpful to you in providing more explicit instruction on [observed topic/literacy component]?

Evidence-based literacy practice: **Scaffolding/Differentiation**

Observable evidence of practice:

- Scaffolding and differentiation are appropriately aligned with student needs
- Classroom structures are in place that support students who need more
- Effective use of small group and whole group formats
- Instruction is responsive to culturally and linguistically diverse students

Observed   Not Observed

If observed, component of literacy:

Phonemic Awareness   Phonics

Fluency   Vocabulary   Comprehension

Guiding questions for all post-conferences:

- Explain your thinking regarding the organization and structure of the observed lesson, including the use of whole group and small group formats.
- How did you determine which students needed additional support?
- Describe the types of scaffolds that you regularly employ when delivering instruction on [observed topic/literacy component].
- How does student data inform scaffolding and differentiation?
- How do you design instruction that is responsive to the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse learners?

If scaffolding was not observed:

- Were there any parts of the observed instruction that you would differentiate further? How so?
- Describe your confidence level with differentiating instruction on [observed topic/literacy component].
- What supports (e.g., time, peer observation, resources, etc.) would be helpful to you in providing more scaffolded support for [observed topic/literacy component]?

Evidence-based literacy practice: **Effective Use of Resources**

Observable evidence of practice:

- Effective use of curriculum materials
- Effective use of support staff or volunteers
- Effective use of time
- Additional resources support and enhance the lesson objective
- Resource use is modeled for students
- Instructional resources are responsive to culturally and linguistically diverse students

Observed   Not Observed

If observed, component of literacy:

Phonemic Awareness   Phonics

Fluency   Vocabulary   Comprehension

Guiding questions for all post-conferences:

- Explain your thinking regarding how you employ curricular materials.
- How did you select the resources you utilized in the lesson on [observed topic/literacy component]?
- Do you feel that students were successful in utilizing [observed resource/tool] to support their learning? How so?
- Were there any parts of the observed instruction that you would modify by incorporating additional resources? Which resources would you utilize?

If effective resource use was not observed:

- Describe your confidence level with selecting appropriate resources to support instruction on [observed topic/literacy component].
- What supports (e.g., time, peer observation, access to specific resources, etc.) would be helpful to you in using curriculum materials and selecting appropriate instructional resources for [observed topic/literacy component]?
- Describe your use of support staff (if available). What supports would be helpful to you in maximizing the effectiveness of support staff?

Evidence-based literacy practice: Student Engagement and Opportunities for Practice

Observable evidence of practice:

- The teacher provides frequent opportunities for practice
- Opportunities for practice are varied so that students can respond in multiple ways
- The teacher provides immediate corrective and affirmative feedback
- Opportunities for practice are accessible to culturally and linguistically diverse students

Observed   Not Observed

If observed, component of literacy:

Phonemic Awareness   Phonics

Fluency   Vocabulary   Comprehension

Guiding questions for all post-conferences:

- How do you plan for and facilitate student engagement throughout lessons on [observed topic/literacy component]?
- I noticed that you [describe observed strategy, e.g., elicited oral responses or written responses or hand gestures, etc.]. Explain your decision-making regarding that strategy. Did students respond as you anticipated? Were you satisfied with student responses?
- Based on your reflections from today's lesson, what are your next steps to support student engagement?

If practice opportunities were not observed or student engagement was inconsistent:

- Were there any areas of the observed lesson in which you would integrate more opportunities for practice? How so?
- Moving forward, how can you facilitate student engagement during instruction on [observed topic/literacy component]?
- Describe your confidence level with providing multiple opportunities for student practice throughout instruction on [observed topic/literacy component].
- What supports (e.g., time, peer observation, access to specific resources, etc.) would be helpful to you in designing opportunities to practice [observed topic/literacy component]?

Evidence-based literacy practice: Use of Assessment Data

Observable evidence of practice:

- Formative assessment is utilized throughout instruction
- The teacher modifies or adjusts instruction in response to formative assessment data
- Assessment is responsive and appropriate for culturally and linguistically diverse students

Observed   Not Observed

If observed, component of literacy:

Phonemic Awareness   Phonics

Fluency   Vocabulary   Comprehension

Guiding questions for all post-conferences:

- How did you utilize student data when designing your lesson on [observed topic/literacy component]?
- How did you collect evidence of student learning throughout your lesson on [observed topic/literacy component]?
- How do you feel students responded to your instruction on [observed topic/literacy component]?
- How will you follow-up on the evidence of student learning that you collected/observed?

If use of assessment data was not observed:

- Describe your confidence level with utilizing assessment data to inform instruction on [observed topic/literacy component].
- What supports (e.g., time, peer observation, access to specific resources, coaching, etc.) would be helpful to you in collecting and using student data to support instruction on [observed topic/literacy component]?

LITERACY WALK-THROUGH TOOL

The purpose of this observational tool is to support administrators, teachers, and reading specialists in the implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction to improve student learning. This tool is not designed for evaluative purposes. Follow-up instructional conversations should be prioritized.

Evidence-based literacy practice: **Explicit Instruction and Gradual Release Model**

Observable evidence of practice:

- Follows gradual release of responsibility model (I Do, We Do, You Do)
- Expectations are clear and concise
- Teacher provides models and multiple examples
- Teacher implements research-based instructional routines for the literacy component(s) observed
- Teacher provides meaningful feedback
- The pace of the lesson is brisk and appropriate for student engagement

Observed   Not Observed

If observed, component of literacy:

Phonemic Awareness   Phonics

Fluency   Vocabulary   Comprehension

Notes:

Evidence-based literacy practice: **Scaffolding/Differentiation**

Observable evidence of practice:

- Scaffolding and differentiation are appropriately aligned with student needs
- Classroom structures are in place that support students who need more.
- Effective use of small group and whole group formats
- Instruction is responsive to culturally and linguistically diverse students

Observed   Not Observed

If observed, component of literacy:

Phonemic Awareness   Phonics

Fluency   Vocabulary   Comprehension

Notes:

Evidence-based literacy practice: **Effective Use of Resources**

Observable evidence of practice:

- Effective use of curriculum materials
- Effective use of support staff or volunteers
- Effective use of time
- Additional resources support and enhance the lesson objective
- Resource use is modeled for students
- Instructional resources are responsive to culturally and linguistically diverse students

Observed   Not Observed

If observed, component of literacy:

Phonemic Awareness   Phonics

Fluency   Vocabulary   Comprehension

Notes:

Evidence-based literacy practice: **Student Engagement and Opportunities for Practice**

Observable evidence of practice:

- The teacher provides frequent opportunities for practice
- Opportunities for practice are varied so that students can respond in multiple ways
- The teacher provides immediate corrective and affirmative feedback
- Opportunities for practice are accessible to culturally and linguistically diverse students

Observed   Not Observed

If observed, component of literacy:

Phonemic Awareness   Phonics

Fluency   Vocabulary   Comprehension

Notes:

Evidence-based literacy practice: **Use of Assessment Data**

Observable evidence of practice:

- Formative assessment is utilized throughout instruction
- The teacher modifies or adjusts instruction in response to formative assessment data
- Assessment is responsive and appropriate for culturally and linguistically diverse students

Observed   Not Observed

If observed, component of literacy:

Phonemic Awareness   Phonics

Fluency   Vocabulary   Comprehension

Notes: