



TEAM Observation Considerations English Learners

An English learner (EL)-focused classroom allows an observer the opportunity to gather evidence of instructional practice in a setting where student work may look or sound differently than a classroom setting with English only speaking students. Educators with ELs in their classrooms serve students who are currently unable to communicate fluently or access instruction effectively in English. These students often come from non-English-speaking homes and backgrounds and may require specialized or modified instruction in both the English language and in their academic courses. ELs are bright and capable students in the process of acquiring the communication skills necessary to demonstrate competency when assessed in a non-native language.

Research indicates that EL students who interact with other students will naturally enhance their English language development while also experiencing the scaffolding needed to help these students achieve in content areas, such as:

- Adequate wait time to help formulate a response in a large group context.
- A think, pair, share strategy where students first think about a question for themselves, then talk about the question with a partner, and finally share their thoughts with the larger group.
- Cooperative learning opportunities where each team member contributes to the final product.

Additional strategies to support EL students to make meaning of text, regardless of content, are essential. These include:

- Previewing content to activate prior learning and build background knowledge.
- Predicting outcomes to motivate and build anticipation.
- Connecting the text to personal experiences.
- Using graphic organizers to help learners build understanding.

Strong instructional practice leads to improved student outcomes, and ESL classes are no exception. In an ESL classroom, an observer should be prepared to see a variety of students and approaches to instruction. In a classroom with EL learners, an observer might see:

Modified Speech Patterns

- Slower, more careful enunciation with a natural tone and rhythm.

- Frequent use of visual aids, gestures with speech, and precise modeling of directions and pictures.
- Adjusted questioning techniques so that students can respond in a way that is appropriate for their stage of English proficiency.

Vocabulary Development

- Developing background knowledge by specifically introducing new terms, reviewing terms that have been introduced previously, or classifying terms in a conceptual framework.
- Allowing students to discuss content in both English and their native language, so they may engage more deeply with the content and enhance their understanding of English in context of the content.

Through the collaborative process of observation, feedback, and support, every teacher can see areas to improve student learning, and every observer can support a rigorous vision of excellent instruction throughout a school. While this document focuses on EL specific connections, the approach to using the TEAM rubric remains the same for any content area.

In this document, you will find information on:

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Observer Considerations: Pre-Conference

The educator's lesson plan should serve as the foundation for the pre-conference. Using the planning and environment rubrics to guide pre-conference questions helps focus the conversation on student outcomes and provides evidence for instructional practice. Educators should be encouraged to discuss the lesson plan's components and how that plan supports successful student outcomes. Observers should consider the pre-conference the first stage of collecting evidence of instructional practice.

Possible Pre-Conference Question on Instructional Practice	Planning or Environment Rubric Connection	Instructional Rubric Connection
<p>How do you plan for EL instruction that addresses the individualized needs of the student while challenging the group as a whole? On what data do you base your decisions for EL student instruction? How do you increase the opportunities for EL students to engage in group or collaborative work with native speakers?</p>	<p>Instructional Plans</p>	<p>Standards and Objectives Motivating Students Presenting Instructional Content Lesson Structure and Pacing Activities and Materials Grouping Students Teacher Content Knowledge Teacher Knowledge of Students</p>
<p>In a classroom with ELs, student work is often performance- or project-based. How do you assess student background knowledge to support increased comprehension? In what ways have you planned for students to demonstrate skills like analysis, drawing conclusions, and interpreting information? How does assessment drive future instruction?</p>	<p>Student Work Assessment</p>	<p>Motivating Students Presenting Instructional Content Activities and Materials Questioning Academic Feedback Teacher Content Knowledge Thinking Problem Solving</p>
<p>What are some techniques you use to establish the learning environment for ELs in the classroom? How do you encourage EL students to allow themselves time for improvement and motivate them to practice their language acquisition skills?</p>	<p>Expectations Managing Student Behavior Environment Respectful Culture</p>	<p>Motivating Students Lesson Structure and Pacing Questioning Academic Feedback Grouping Students Teacher Content Knowledge Teacher Knowledge of Students</p>

Teacher Considerations: Pre-Conference

During a pre-conference, teachers of EL should be prepared to share the lesson alignment to content and English Language Development (ELD) standards, the reasoning behind the plans for instruction and differentiation, larger goals of the instructional plans, considerations for IEP goals, and how student success will be measured.

Considerations for Lesson Plans	Rubric Connections
Alignment and Rigor of Content and Standards	Instructional Plans Assessment Standards and Objectives Teacher Content Knowledge Teacher Knowledge of Students
Instructional Plan	Student Work Lesson Structure and Pacing Questioning Activities and Materials Teacher Content Knowledge Assessment
Instructional Technique	Managing Student Behavior Environment Expectations Motivating Students Presenting Instructional Content Grouping Academic Feedback Presenting Instructional Content Teacher Knowledge of Students
Differentiation/Access Points	Teacher Content Knowledge Teacher Knowledge of Students Questioning Grouping Academic Feedback Expectations Respectful Culture
Student Engagement	Student Work Lesson Structure and Pacing Questioning Teacher Knowledge of Students Thinking Problem Solving

Observer Considerations: Evidence Collection

Evidence for practice performance levels may come from pre-conference conversations, classroom observation, or conversations with the teacher **after** the observation but **prior** to the post-conference. In all cases, the observer should seek to understand the teacher's approach to instruction and, more importantly, the students' responses to the instructional practices implemented during instruction. Observers should gather evidence on how the learning lift is managed between the teacher and the students.

Indicator	Possible Evidence
Instructional Plans	Pre-conference notes should provide evidence on how the instruction leverages language acquisition and skill attainment. Notes should reflect how skillfully the teacher articulates each student's knowledge/skill set as they enter the lesson and the unique support planned for each learner. Observers should note how frequently the teacher indicates opportunities for students to engage, reflect, and provide/be provided feedback for language and academic improvement.
Student Work	Pre-conference notes should capture the planned student work, which in classes with ELs may have multiple end points to demonstrate understanding (drawing pictures, physical demonstration, or oral response vs. written assessments). Notes should reflect methods the teacher plans to use to support students with language barriers. Evidence should reflect how effectively the teacher has planned and aligned the student work to access grade level standards as well as bridging the ELD standards.
Assessment	Pre-conference notes should capture how students can demonstrate mastery of the grade level standard(s). Capture evidence on how skillfully the teacher includes rubrics and performance criteria to assess student progress. Capture evidence of non-verbal assessments such as picture drawing or physical demonstration. Capture evidence on how successfully oral or written assessments are used to determine student level of mastery.
Expectations	Observer notes should reflect how effectively the teacher communicates classroom procedures and instructions through multiple modalities including active modeling. Observers should seek evidence of opportunities for every student to have successful engagement with both the content and classmates. Note how effectively students independently manage themselves in the instructional space. Note the level of consistency in communicating expectations both by using similar phrases in all situations and by reinforcing expectations consistently.
Managing Student Behavior	Observer evidence might include notes on how students interact with other students at different skill levels. Note how effectively the teacher interacts with students and how consistently the teacher communicates behavioral expectations. Seek evidence of self-directedness so that all students engage in activities and use their voices/communication skills. Seek evidence that the teacher has developed methods by which the EL student can communicate needs and questions at their unique level of language

	acquisition.
Environment	Seek evidence for how consistently expectations are communicated and behavioral corrections are implemented so that students may successfully work through the lesson both academically and socially. Seek evidence that EL students are given appropriate time to process information before assistance is provided. Capture evidence on student-to-student engagement and how they support one another's attempts at progression. Capture evidence of how well students understand the rules of the classroom and abide by them. Note if students demonstrate a growth mindset, empathy, and the ability to support one another.
Respectful Culture	Seek evidence that social skills are being taught and implemented successfully in the classroom. Look for the frequency of accurate and useful student-to-student feedback and the level of student-to-student support. Note how appropriate instruction is placed for student success. Capture evidence that each student's culture is represented, honored, and shared with the class. This may occur through use of native languages, stories, songs, etc. Seek evidence that EL students are allowed time to process information and develop responses.
Standards and Objectives	Capture evidence of differentiated instructional plans and how instructional goals are communicated during instruction. Note how well students connect the assigned task to broader ideas. Seek evidence of creative connections between disciplines, enhanced insight, or synthesis of ideas from students. Note how effectively the teacher integrates multiple standards/disciplines in the daily plan, including language acquisition.
Motivating Students	Capture evidence of how often students are allowed time to engage, especially outside of their comfort zone. Seek evidence for how effectively the teacher supports students to see relevance to other parts of their lives, including the ability to risk-take with oral and written communication, and/or with native speaking peer interactions. Capture evidence on how the teacher and/or classmates reinforce and reward individual effort. Capture evidence that indicates the level of student independence and/or interdependence as they engage with the lesson. Note how effectively the teacher includes EL learners' native cultures with instruction.
Presenting Instructional Content	Note places in the lesson where students can engage in authentic situations to solve problems that require a team approach. Note how effectively students engage with the teacher during direct instruction and how modeling is used to support student learning. Note how often and effectively the teacher implements EL specific instructional practices with such as extended wait time, supporting oral instruction with visuals, explicit modeling of processes, sentence frames to support academic conversation, and using native language to scaffold.
Lesson Structure and Pacing	Seek evidence for student and teacher awareness of time needed vs. time spent in transitions such as grouping and regrouping for activities, and distribution/return of class supplies/equipment. Note if quiet time is strategically and effectively used to ensure ideas and thoughts are given time to germinate. Seek evidence that the teacher gives EL students early access to instructional material for additional exposure/time prior to in-

	class instruction.
Activities and Materials	Look for evidence that all students are given access to grade level standards. Seek evidence that students are given multiple ways/opportunities to demonstrate progress toward skill mastery with each task. Seek evidence that students are interacting and providing feedback/support to each other that leads to individual improvement.
Questioning	Capture question and answer sessions between teacher and students for evidence of the question types that are being used. Note how often the teacher uses questions specifically designed to engage EL students in thoughtful conversation (for example, by using question stems to support sentence structure). Capture evidence of teacher wait time and purposeful application of student knowledge to answer questions. Capture the types of questions students ask as an indicator of how deeply they understand the topic. Note how the teacher encourages student wait-time for each other. Seek evidence that students authentically connect to each other and the topic through discussion.
Academic Feedback	Note how feedback is used to explain where a student is both correct and incorrect. Capture evidence of how effectively feedback given hones a specific skill or improves knowledge. Capture evidence that students can use feedback for self-correction and/or improvement of outcomes. Note if feedback remains focused on discrete skills and provides a model or example of success. Capture how frequently students support each other with feedback that enhances comprehension.
Grouping Students	Note the composition of the student groups and their applicability to ensuring group and/or individual success. Seek evidence that all students understand individual roles and expectations. Note how students engage with each other and if team members work together to meet the goal of the day's activity. Note if EL students are effectively prepared both academically and socially to engage in the group, and how effectively the teacher supports any gaps in student readiness such as knowing how to take turns or engage in appropriate eye contact/listening skills.
Teacher Content Knowledge	Note how the teacher utilizes access points in the curriculum. Seek evidence of how the teacher leverages different strategies (such as conversational questioning or scaffolding in the native language) to ensure EL students are both supported and allowed to time to process at an appropriate pace. Capture evidence of how effectively the teacher adjusts the pace of the lesson to reflect learner needs. Note how the teacher challenges learners but provides support to encourage language learners to risk take, possibly be incorrect, and move forward from mistakes with a positive attitude (particularly with language acquisition).
Teacher Knowledge of Students	Seek information on how the teachers with ELs in their classrooms support students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, not only with academic needs but also social-emotional needs. Note the techniques used by the teacher to ensure each student remains highly engaged. Capture evidence that the teacher includes each student's culture in instruction to help anchor new learning. Note how the teacher differentiates instruction to allow grade level access for all learners.

Thinking	Capture evidence of how successfully students self-analyze both areas of progress and areas of improvement. Seek evidence of how well students can connect the activities of the day to broader concepts. Capture evidence that students are encouraged to verbalize, demonstrate, or otherwise share their thinking.
Problem Solving	Seek evidence of how well a teacher provides students the opportunity to engage in several types of problem solving, which might include students self-identifying mistakes along with successes. Note how effectively the teacher supports students with engaging in self-correction then applying those new skills across content areas or within language acquisition.

Observer Considerations: Preparing for the Post-Conference and Using the Performance Level Guide

After the observation, observers should ask clarifying questions as needed **prior** to the post-conference. This opportunity for questions might happen immediately after the observation or occur later after reviewing evidence notes.

Questions might include:

- What steps have you taken to develop an inclusive classroom environment?
- How were the groups created for this lesson and how often do they change?
- What data supports the instructional decisions you make for your EL students?
- How do you engage students in determining mastery of their own learning?
- How do you ensure EL students are engaging in social and emotional skills effectively?
- What types of individualized support do you include in your classes? How do you determine what strategies to use when?
- How do you measure the impact of this work on overall student outcomes?
- What unique strategies do you use to support classroom management?

Observers should **always** analyze student work after every lesson in any classroom. For a classroom with ELs, this work might involve reviewing pictures or videos of students in action.

Consider:

- Do the activities in which students were engaged assess the standards presented and are they grade level appropriate?
- To what extent does the student work provide evidence of individual mastery of the lesson's objectives?
- To what extent does the student work require thinking and/or problem solving?
- How does the educator use the data from student work to inform future lessons?
- How does the teacher capture data on the progression of each student?
- How does the student work support language acquisition skills?

Using the Performance Level Guide

Observers should use the performance level guide and appropriate general educator rubric to support alignment of evidence (coding) to scores. Each Performance Level has nuanced differences as described below. This guide helps identify the expertise in implementing the practice. Note that both consistency and impact are considered when determining Performance level.

Performance Level Guide

1	Significantly Below Expectations: A teacher at this level has limited knowledge of the instructional skills, knowledge, and responsibilities described in the rubric and struggles to implement them. The teacher has little to no impact on student outcomes .
2	Below Expectations: A teacher at this level demonstrates some knowledge of the instructional skills, knowledge, and responsibilities described in the rubric but implements them Inconsistently . The teacher's impact on student outcomes is below expectations .
3	At Expectations: A teacher at this level understands and implements most of the instructional skills, knowledge, and responsibilities described in the rubric. The teacher's impact on student outcomes meets all expectations .
4	Above Expectations: A teacher at this level comprehends the instructional skills, knowledge, and responsibilities described in the rubric and implements them skillfully and consistently . The teacher makes a strong impact on student outcomes .
5	Significantly Above Expectations: A teacher at this level exemplifies the instructional skills, knowledge, and responsibilities described in the rubric and implements them adeptly and without fail . The teacher meets ambitious teaching and learning goals and makes a significant Impact on student outcomes . Performance at this level should be considered a model of exemplary teaching .

After evidence gathered throughout the observation process has been coded and scored, the observer will **design the post-conference**. This conference should focus on three things:

- Identified areas of reinforcement and refinement.
- Resources for the teacher to use as they hone their refinement area practice.
- A follow-up plan for the leader to support teacher progress and success.

More detailed support for post-conferences may be found in the [Teacher Evaluation Handbook](#).

With additional questions, please contact TEAM.Questions@tn.gov.