

CCR Observation Tool for English Language Arts/Literacy

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With the goal of maximizing student learning in adult education classrooms across the Commonwealth, all publicly funded Virginia adult education programs are expected to offer standards-based instruction. The **College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education (CCRS)** are Virginia’s state-adopted standards for adult education. For English language acquisition and other instruction provided to English language learners, educators are encouraged to consult and use the **English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS)**, which provide standards and guidance for supporting language learners in reaching college and career readiness goals.

This observation tool¹ provides concrete examples of what college and career readiness (CCR) standards in English language arts/literacy look like in daily planning and practice. It is a tool for instructors, those who support instructors, and others working to implement CCR standards—it is not designed for use in evaluation. When observing multiple classrooms, this tool can be used with the Aggregation and Summary of Observation Data Tool to highlight program-wide strengths and weaknesses in standards implementation and suggest professional development priorities.

Key Advances Required by CCR Standards: The key advances identify the most significant elements of the CCR standards. At the heart of these advances is a focus in literacy instruction on the careful examination of the text itself. They include:

- 1. Complexity:** Regular practice with complex text and its academic language
- 2. Evidence:** Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from text
- 3. Knowledge:** Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction

¹ This tool has been adapted from the Standards-in-Action CCR Observation Tool for English Language Arts/Literacy to make use of a numeric rating system instead of yes/no scoring. StandardsWork Inc. produced the CCR Observation Tool under contract to the U.S. Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education as part of the CCR SIA (College and Career Readiness Standards-in-Action) project, 2013–2016, in which Virginia was a pilot participant.

Core Actions: The core actions revolve around the texts that students read and the kinds of questions students should address as they write and speak about them. They also focus on the close connection between comprehension of text and acquisition of knowledge. They are:

Core Action 1. Curriculum content of the lesson matches the demands of the CCR standards.

Core Action 2. Learning activities (questions and tasks) are text-specific and cognitively demanding.

Core Action 3. CCR standards are translated into lesson content that productively engages adult learners.

Core Action 4. The lesson is intentionally sequenced to build on and develop students' skills and knowledge.

Core Action 5. Students' level of understanding is assessed throughout the lesson, and instruction is adjusted accordingly.

Directions: In the column next to each core action indicator, note any evidence you observe. Evidence can be something the teacher or students do, or something you observe in the materials or in the classroom. Then, score the indicators appropriately:

Thoroughly Evident (4 points)

Mostly Evident (3 points)

Somewhat Evident (2 points)

Minimally Evident (1 point)

No Evidence (0 points)

If an indicator is not evident because it is not applicable in that particular observed lesson, then mark it as "N/A."

Remember, the process for observing effective teaching and learning practices is not linear. In many cases, determinations about whether certain core actions and indicators are evident will not become clear until the lesson is over. Others will be evident early in the lesson. It is fine to take detailed notes and then review them after the lesson. See the final page of this tool for recommended observation procedures.

CORE ACTION 1. Curriculum content of the lesson matches the demands of the CCR standards.		Thoroughly Evident 4	Mostly Evident 3	Somewhat Evident 2	Minimally Evident 1	No Evidence 0	N/A
<p>A. Instructor presents a lesson clearly reflecting the concepts and skills of a mixture of CCR reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language standards.</p>	<p>Evidence Observed:</p>						
<p>B. Instructor establishes well-defined standards-based lesson goals.</p>							
<p>C. A majority of class time is spent reading, writing, or speaking directly about a text or multiple texts.</p>							
<p>D. Students are working with texts that are at or above the expected level of complexity for the course or they are engaged in reading well-designed series of texts at a variety of complexity levels to build knowledge.</p>							
<p>E. The text(s) central to the lesson display exceptional craft and thought and/or provide useful information.</p>							

CORE ACTION 2. Learning activities (questions and tasks) are text-specific and cognitively demanding.		Thoroughly Evident 4	Mostly Evident 3	Somewhat Evident 2	Minimally Evident 1	No Evidence 0	N/A
A. Questions and tasks consistently or often stimulate student thinking beyond recall and ask them to draw evidence from the text(s) to support their ideas and inferences.	Evidence Observed:						
B. Questions and tasks consistently or often pertain to the words, phrases, and sentences in the text(s).							
C. Questions consistently or often are sequenced to support students' delving deeper into text(s) to build their understanding of the big ideas and key information from the text(s).							
D. Instructor consistently or often allows appropriate wait time (3 or more seconds) after asking questions of students before prompting them for responses.							
E. Instructor consistently or often expects evidence and precision from students and asks them to elaborate on and justify their answers.							

CORE ACTION 3. CCR standards are translated into lesson content that productively engages adult learners.		Thoroughly Evident 4	Mostly Evident 3	Somewhat Evident 2	Minimally Evident 1	No Evidence 0	N/A
A. All or most students actively participate in the lesson through class discussions and activities, group projects, etc., instead of doing solitary seatwork or listening to extended lectures.	Evidence Observed:						
B. All or most students have varied opportunities (beyond filling out worksheets) to apply what they are learning in authentic or practical adult-oriented contexts (e.g., reading and using trade manuals or other content for job training or citizenship).							
C. When discussing or collaborating, all or most students use evidence to build on each other's observations or insights.							
D. All or most students display persistence with challenging tasks on reading, speaking, and/or writing about demanding texts.							

CORE ACTION 4. The lesson is intentionally sequenced to build on and develop students' skills and knowledge.		Thoroughly Evident 4	Mostly Evident 3	Somewhat Evident 2	Minimally Evident 1	No Evidence 0	N/A
A. Instructor explicitly links lesson content to previous lessons or to build students' knowledge in a content area.	Evidence Observed:						
B. Instructor folds standards into a lesson in a way that builds on their logical connections to each other.							
C. Instructor actively offers students access to a broad range of texts on topics they are studying for sustained independent reading.							
D. Instructor ends the lesson by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing lesson goals; • Summarizing student learning with references to student work and discussion; and • Previewing how the next lesson builds on that learning. 							

CORE ACTION 5. Students' level of understanding is assessed throughout the lesson, and instruction is adjusted accordingly.		Thoroughly Evident 4	Mostly Evident 3	Somewhat Evident 2	Minimally Evident 1	No Evidence 0	N/A
<p>A. Instructor consistently or often checks whether students are mastering standards-based lesson content (e.g., walks around the room to check on students' work, monitors verbal responses).</p>	<p>Evidence Observed:</p>						
<p>B. Instructor consistently or often provides students with prompt, specific feedback to correct misunderstandings and reinforce learning.</p>							
<p>C. Instructor consistently or often provides strategic supports and scaffolds to students who need them (e.g., individualized or peer tutoring, re-teaching, review of basic skills).</p>							
<p>D. Instructor consistently or often provides extension activities for students who complete classwork early so they are not left idle or unchallenged.</p>							
<p>E. All or most students evaluate and reflect on their own learning.</p>							

Observation Procedures

1. Arrive early and stay in the classroom for the entire lesson to see the lesson's setup, flow, and conclusion.
2. Assume the role of researcher. You are collecting data on teaching practices, not evaluating teacher performance.
3. Come to lessons without the benefit of an advance meeting or detailed information about what to expect—just as students do.
4. Support the natural atmosphere of the classroom. This includes minimizing your interaction with students, such as asking questions or participating in activities. However, contact is allowed if done discreetly and with the purpose of understanding what students are thinking about and working on.
5. During whole-class discussion, if you cannot hear students working individually or in groups or need to see their work, walk around the room; otherwise, move to the side or back of the room.
6. Pay attention to students' responses, including how they are constructing their understanding, strategies they use to solve problems, and patterns of student error.
7. Pay attention to instructor-student interactions, including types of student engagement and how the instructor encourages engagement.
8. Pay attention to what the instructor says and does, as well as what he or she asks students to do.