

CCRS + ELPS Observation Tool for English Language Acquisition

April 2022

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, which include the ELPS, look like in daily planning and practice. It is a tool for instructors, those who support instructors, and others working to implement CCR + ELP standards—it is not designed for use in evaluation.

According to the American Institutes for Research, the ELPS are essential to ensuring that adult English language learners receive the focused and effective instruction they need to access the CCRS.² Therefore, changes were made to the CCR Observation Tool for English Language Arts/Literacy only when its language was not appropriate for second language instruction, or when an important second language teaching principle needed to be included. This tool continues to function with the Aggregation and Summary of Observation Data Tool.

¹ This tool has been adapted from the Standards-in-Action CCR Observation Tool for English Language Arts/Literacy for use in English language acquisition classes using the ELPS. While including substantially the same core actions and indicators as the Standards-in-Action tool, it also makes 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.

² U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education (2016). *Adult English language proficiency standards for adult education*. Washington, DC. See page 1.

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, where texts are broadly construed as oral presentations and literary and informational text.³ 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

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 + ELP standards.

Core Action 2. Learning activities (questions and tasks) are level-appropriate,⁴ text-specific, and cognitively demanding.

Core Action 3. CCR + ELP 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' language, knowledge, and skills.⁵

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.

³ *ibid.* See, for instance, page 14.

⁴ In keeping with the language of the ELPS, the term "level-appropriate" is added throughout this tool.

⁵ The wording of this core action has been modified from "students' skills and knowledge" to read "students' language, knowledge, and skills" to more closely align with the language of the ELPS. (See, for instance, ELPS page 1).

CORE ACTION 1. Curriculum content of the lesson matches the demands of the CCR + ELP standards.		Thoroughly Evident 4	Mostly Evident 3	Somewhat Evident 2	Minimally Evident 1	No Evidence 0	N/A
A. Instructor presents a lesson clearly reflecting the concepts and skills of a mixture of productive, interpretive, interactive, and linguistic structure-focused ⁶ ELP standards.	Evidence Observed:						
B. Instructor establishes well-defined standards-based lesson goals.							
C. A majority of class time is spent reading, writing, or speaking directly about a text or multiple texts.							
D. Students are working with texts that are at or above the expected level of complexity for the course or they are engaged in meaning-making ⁷ activities related to well-designed series of texts at a variety of complexity levels to build knowledge.							
E. The text(s) central to the lesson display exceptional craft and thought and/or provide useful information in a level-appropriate manner.							

⁶ These are the four language foci of the ELPS.

⁷ The term “construct meaning,” or make meaning, is used in the ELPS to include both decoding and comprehension skills in the process of second language acquisition.

CORE ACTION 2. Learning activities (questions and tasks) are level-appropriate, 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 are level-appropriate and consistently or often stimulate student thinking beyond recall and ask them to draw evidence from the text(s) in a level-appropriate manner to support their ideas and inferences.	Evidence Observed:						
B. Questions and tasks are level-appropriate and consistently or often pertain to words, phrases, and sentences in the text(s).							
C. Questions are level-appropriate and consistently or often are sequenced to support students' delving deeper into text(s) to build their understanding of the language forms and functions, big ideas, and key information from level-appropriate text(s).							
D. Instructor consistently or often increases wait time (3 or more seconds) ⁸ 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 in a level-appropriate manner.							

⁸ Wait time for English language learners may be longer than for English-only speakers.

CORE ACTION 3. CCR + ELP 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
<p>A. All or most students actively participate in the lesson through class discussion; group projects; and whole group, small group, and pair activities, instead of doing solitary seatwork or listening to extended lectures.</p>	<p>Evidence Observed:</p>						
<p>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., making meaning of trade manuals or other content for job training, accessing community services, or citizenship).</p>							
<p>C. When discussing or collaborating, all or most students use evidence to build on each other's observations or insights in a level-appropriate manner.</p>							
<p>D. All or most students display persistence with challenging tasks on reading, speaking, listening, writing, and working with the linguistic structure of level-appropriate and demanding texts.</p>							

CORE ACTION 4. The lesson is intentionally sequenced to build on and develop students' language, knowledge, and skills.		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 on students' language, knowledge, and skills.	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 level-appropriate 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
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).	Evidence Observed:						
B. Instructor consistently or often provides students with prompt, specific feedback to correct misunderstandings and reinforce learning.							
C. Instructor consistently or often provides strategic supports and level-appropriate scaffolds. ⁹							
D. Instructor consistently or often provides extension activities for students who complete classwork early so they are not left idle or unchallenged.							
E. All or most students evaluate and reflect on their own learning in a level-appropriate manner.							

⁹ See Table C-1 in the ELPS for level-appropriate scaffolds for English language learners.

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.