



SAMPLE MATERIAL

Balanced Literacy Evaluation Checklist

Young Scholars' Academy for Discovery and Exploration, New York

Topic: Turning Around Chronically Low-Performing Schools

Practice: Focus on Instruction

This observation checklist helps administrators at Young Scholars' Academy for Discovery and Exploration evaluate the effectiveness of literacy instruction in the elementary school classroom. The checklist includes criteria for various components of instruction (e.g., read alouds, shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, modeled writing, shared writing, guided writing, and independent writing) and the classroom environment.

After conducting classroom observations, administrators use their notes from the checklist to guide the process of providing feedback to teachers. Additionally, teachers use it as a self-assessment tool to monitor their progress in instructional improvement between observations.

Young Scholars' Academy for Discovery and Exploration 2010-2011
Balanced Literacy Program Evaluation Checklist

Date _____

Observer/Recorder _____

Teacher Observed _____

Grade Level _____

Read Aloud: When conducting a read aloud these are the expectations...

Is the introduction to the text appropriate?	Not Met	On the way	Met	Notes
Scholars gathered appropriately for listening				
Teacher places herself/himself strategically				
Text appropriate based on scholar interest, need or curriculum				
Teacher introduced text to the scholars by engaging scholars and stating the focus or purpose of the read aloud				
Teacher activated prior knowledge, assisted to make connections				
Teacher introduced and discussed new ideas and new vocabulary				
Teacher models some "thinking aloud" during introduction, with teacher continuing to model "think aloud"				
Is there evidence of planning (i.e., post it in teachers book)				
Teacher asks scholars higher order questions to provoke critical thinking				

Is the reading of the text expressive and engaging?	Not Met	On the way	Met	Notes
Teacher stopped at strategic places to discuss and making connections				
Story or text came alive through dynamic voice presentation				

How does the teacher conclude the Read Aloud Lesson?	Not Met	On the way	Met	Notes
Teacher, with scholars, summarized the story or piece, gathering threads together.				
Teacher drew the discussion to a close, bringing out the big idea that was discovered.				
Teacher reviewed the purpose.				
Text was added to appropriate display area for further use.				

Shared Reading: When conducting a shared reading these are the expectations...

Is the selection of the text purposeful, meaningful and relevant?	Not Met	On the way	Met	Notes
Evidence of planning				
Text appropriate to purpose, and purpose stated – purpose to include a strategy to be taught, with follow up work involving a skill				
New text provided sufficient challenge, but suitable for children to read along with				
Text well written, worth reading and re-reading, with print large enough to be seen by everyone				
Teacher is familiar with the text				
Evidence of reading class-constructed shared writing, and re-reading of favorite big books				

Is the reading of the text expressive and engaging?	Not Met	On the way	Met	Notes
Text introduced succinctly through questioning and discuss with a focus on the strategy or strategies to be learned				
Teacher and scholars sat closely together to read text				
Scholars supported to become active participants				
Text read in an appropriate time frame				
Unusual and/or interesting vocabulary discussed				
Teacher led the reading, varying voice				
Teacher modeled fluent, expressive oral reading				
Teacher modeled strategies scholars need to be successful readers				
Teacher checked for literal understanding				
Everybody engaged in a co-operative learning experience				
Scholars encouraged to make connections and to use other strategies				
Scholars shared an enjoyable experience				
Scholars are exposed to a variety of genres				

Are scholars encouraged to respond authentically?	Not Met	On the way	Met	Notes
Scholars justified responses by referring back to text				
Scholars interacted by sharing opinions, ideas and interpretations				
Questioning was open ended				
Scholars have some follow up work				
Scholars are to explore various reading strategies and behaviors, with connections made to strategies that children could use in their independent reading				

Guided Reading: When conducting a guided reading lesson these are the expectations...

Is there evidence of purposeful planning for reading groups based on current data?	Not Met	On the way	Met	Notes
Evidence of planning				
Teacher has access to a variety of leveled texts and genre from a school source				
Scholars are grouped based on reading assessment				
The text selected is appropriate for small group instruction				
The text is usually an unfamiliar text				
The lesson has a focus that includes the strategy to be practiced				
Introduction of the text activates prior knowledge and discussion on the topic including unusual vocabulary				
Thinking, talking, questioning through text				
Purpose is set for each segment of reading				
Scholars reading independently (not round robin)				
Discussion after reading of each section				
Teacher observing scholars' reading behaviors and takes conference notes				
Meaningful extension activities provided for early finishers related to the text				
A reading strategy given and pursued by scholars				
Scholars are given the opportunity to reread the text				
Pacing of lesson is appropriate				
A variety of texts used over time and evident				
Connections made to how strategy can be used in independent reading, and is observed in subsequent independent reading sessions				
A follow up literacy activity can be given				

Independent Reading: When scholars are reading independently these are the expectations...

Are children engaged in organized, meaningful and independent reading activities based on current reading levels?	Not Met	On the way	Met	Notes
There are routines set in place for getting books, having books, finding a place to read.				
Teacher conference with scholar:				
- Develops a clear instructional purpose				
- Takes notes during the conference				
- Conference ends with clear action for scholar				
Evidence of Running Records being taken at appropriate level				
Scholars know how to choose a "just right book"				
Scholars are reading a variety of genres				
Portfolios of scholar work and assessment in an accessible place (i.e., writers notebooks and reading logs)				
Evidence of appropriate assessment strategies:				
- Anecdotal notes				
- Running records				
- Reading conference notes				
- Reading log				
- Reading response journal kept by scholar				
There is evidence of scholar record keeping (i.e., data binders)				
Organized classroom library which includes: fiction and non-fiction texts, picture books, reference materials, leveled texts, and scholastic magazines				
Areas in the room designated for book display, book reviews, response to literature, author studies, social studies projects, poetry, strategy charts, etc.				
Materials organized for easy access and return				
There is opportunity for reflection on what has been read				
The beginning of this session is usually a mini lesson focusing on management or literacy analysis or strategies				

There is time for scholars to share with a partner				
There is an opportunity for sharing as a whole class				
Teacher encourages “scholar to scholar” talk (accountable talk)				
Evidence of scholars reading towards 25 books				
The majority of this time is spent reading				
The level of scholar noise is low and scholar engagement is high				
Scholars are actively engaged with their reading and implementing the strategy lesson taught				

Modeled Writing: When conducting a modeled writing lesson these are the expectations...

Are children engaged in organized, meaningful modeled writing activities?	Not Met	On the way	Met	Notes
Teacher is demonstrating an aspect of writing				
Purpose is related to the scholars' need				
Teacher is explicit with scholars about the purpose				
Modeled Writing is part of the writing workshop				
Teacher demonstrates and talks through the process, making his/her thinking public				
Teacher talks about the audience she or he is writing for				
Teacher presents the series of steps for completing the process				
Teacher talks aloud about the process and content of the writing				
Teacher constructs the text				
Teacher provides support to scholars while they are grasping the new learning				
Scholars given the opportunity to involve themselves at their level, during independent writing time				
Scholars articulate what they learned during this lesson				
There is evidence of where scholars are in the writing process				

Shared Writing: When conducting a shared writing lesson these are the expectations...

Are children engaged in organized, meaningful shared writing activities?	Not Met	On the way	Met	Notes
Purpose for the shared writing is clear				
Purpose is based on assessment of scholar needs				
Teacher and scholars are constructing text together				
Scholars are close to the text being written				
Scholars are comfortable				
Much discussion about the writing				
Shared reading and rereading occurs as the text is constructed				
Teacher is talking through the process				
Partner discussion is encouraged and practiced				
Evidence in the room of a variety of genres				
All equipment/materials are accessible				
Scholars have opportunity to practice the new writing strategy or skill during their independent writing				
Teacher conferences during the independent writing time, supporting scholars who still need help with new learning				

Guided Writing: When conducting a guided writing lesson these are the expectations...

Are children engaged in organized, meaningful guided writing activities?	Not Met	On the way	Met	Notes
Teacher gathers together small group for guided writing, while remainder of class is engaged in independent writing				
The purpose of the lesson is explained				
Scholars observe teacher modeling the aspect being learned				
Scholars have the opportunity to discuss and internalize new learning				
Scholars practice the lesson being taught				
Teacher provides support to scholars while they are grasping the new learning				
Scholars articulate what they have learned during this lesson				

Independent Writing: When scholars are engaged in independent writing lesson these are the expectations...

Are children engaged in organized, meaningful independent writing activities?	Not Met	On the way	Met	Notes
Evidence of scholars' work, including drafts, on display				
Evidence or responses to a variety of genres				
Writing materials readily accessible				
Scholars' published work available for other scholars to read				
Scholars wrote for a sustained period of time				
Scholars were aware of writing for an audience and purpose				
Scholars developing self editing strategies				
Scholars utilized classroom print environment				
A mini lesson took place to begin the writing lesson - Small group - Whole class				
Conferences had one focus - Content or - Process or - Evaluation and - Noted were taken				
Evidence of appropriate assessment strategies: - Anecdotal notes - Writing analysis - Portfolios - Writing log				
Evidence of spelling as part of the writing program				
Opportunities to share and talk about their writing				

Classroom Environment

Is the classroom attractive and interesting?	Not Met	On the way	Met	Notes
Scholar produced and/or teacher generated messages, charge, word work and/or texts which are accessible, and that children can read				
Rubrics on walls, as needed				
Evidence of scholar reading towards 30 books				
Scholar work displayed with a sense of design and purpose including drafts				
Evidence of a working daily schedule which includes teaching points				
Guidelines about how procedures are followed – choosing a book, participating in class discussion, generated by children so they can read it				
Are strategy charts current and displayed				

Is the classroom attractive and interesting?	Not Met	On the way	Met	Notes
Organized classroom library which includes: fiction and non-fiction texts, trade books, picture books, reference materials, leveled texts, catalogues, magazines, comics and big books, displayed attractively with front covers in view where possible				
Defined areas such as a meeting area, writing materials, listening post, computers				
Materials clearly labeled, simple written directions where appropriate				
Neat, usable places to store, remove and replace scholar work				
Portfolios for scholar work and assessment in an accessible place				
An arrangement of desks or tables appropriate to the style of teaching				
Areas in the room designated for all content areas				

Materials organized for easy access and return				
Word walls are plentiful, visible, and meaningful				
Uses a variety of equipment and materials such as:				
Big Book stand (pre-k-2)/Easel (3-5)				
Scholar work has feedback and next steps				

Is there a positive tone in the classroom?	Not Met	On the way	Met	Notes
Teacher values each scholar as an individual				
Teacher uses a quiet modulated voice				
Scholar/teacher relationship is caring, respectful, enthusiastic, encouraging and affirming				
Scholar cooperation and collaboration is evident				
Scholars are actively engaged in independent work				
Teacher gives meaningful feedback to children				
Risk taking environment				
Meaningful feedback to scholars				
Activities which allow each scholar to be challenged yet successful				
Positive attitudes and expectation about each child's potential				
Time to practice skills in context				