

# INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE GUIDE

## ELA / LIT 3–12

SUBJECT

GRADES

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Date

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Teacher Name

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School

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Grade / Class Period / Section

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Topic / Lesson / Unit

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Learning Goal

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Standard(s) Addressed in this Lesson

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Observer Name

## About The Instructional Practice Guide

Content-specific feedback is critical to teacher professional development. The Instructional Practice Guide (IPG) is a K–12 classroom observation rubric that prioritizes what is observable in and expected of classroom instruction when instructional content is aligned to college- and career-ready (CCR) standards, including the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), in ELA/literacy ([corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy](https://corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy)). It purposefully focuses on the limited number of classroom practices tied most closely to content of the lesson.<sup>1</sup>

Designed as a developmental rather than an evaluation tool, the IPG supports planning, reflection, and collaboration, in addition to coaching. The IPG encompasses the three Shifts by detailing how they appear in instruction:<sup>2</sup>



Complexity: Practice regularly with complex text and its academic language.



Evidence: Ground reading, writing, and speaking in evidence from text, both literary and informational.



Knowledge: Build knowledge through content-rich nonfiction.

This rubric is divided into the Core Actions teachers should be taking. Each Core Action consists of indicators which further describe teacher and student behaviors that exemplify CCR-aligned instruction.

## Using The Instructional Practice Guide

For each observation, you should make note of what you see and hear. It may be helpful to supplement what you've recorded with further evidence from artifacts such as lesson plans, tasks, or student work. Although many indicators will be observable during the course of a lesson, there may be times when a lesson is appropriately focused on a smaller set of objectives or you observe only a portion of a lesson. In those cases you should expect to not observe some of the indicators and to leave some of the tool blank. Whenever possible, share evidence you collected during the observation in a follow-up discussion.

After discussing the observed lesson, use the Beyond the Lesson Discussion Guide to put the content of the lesson in the context of the broader instructional plan. The questions in the Beyond the Lesson Discussion Guide help delineate what practices are in place, what has already occurred, and what opportunities might exist to incorporate the Shifts into the classroom during another lesson, further in the unit, or over the course of the year.

To further support content-specific planning, practice, and observation, explore the collection of free IPG companion tools, resources, and professional development modules at [achievethecore.org/instructional-practice](https://achievethecore.org/instructional-practice).

1. Refer to Aligning Content and Practice ([achievethecore.org/IPG-aligning-content-and-practice](https://achievethecore.org/IPG-aligning-content-and-practice)) for the research underpinning the Core Actions and indicators of the Instructional Practice Guide and to learn more about how the design of the tool supports content-specific observation and feedback.

2. Refer to College- and Career-Ready Shifts in ELA/literacy ([achievethecore.org/shifts-ela](https://achievethecore.org/shifts-ela)) and the 3–12 Publishers' Criteria for the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy ([achievethecore.org/publisherscriteria-ela-3-12](https://achievethecore.org/publisherscriteria-ela-3-12)) for additional information about the Shifts.



# CORE ACTIONS AND INDICATORS

For the complete Instructional Practice Guide, go to [achievethecore.org/instructional-practice](https://achievethecore.org/instructional-practice).

ELA / LIT  
SUBJECT

3–12  
GRADES

## Core Action 1

Focus each lesson on a high-quality text (or multiple texts).

- A. A majority of the lesson is spent reading, writing, or speaking about text(s).

Name of Text: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Text(s) (circle): Informational / Literary / Other Media or Format

- B. The anchor text(s) are at or above the complexity level expected for the grade and time in the school year.

Quantitative Measure(s) used: \_\_\_\_\_

Quantitative Score(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Approximate Grade Band: \_\_\_\_\_

To approximate the grade band for the text, consider the quantitative measure or score, the qualitative features, and the related task.

- C. The text(s) exhibit exceptional craft and thought and/or provide meaningful information in the service of building knowledge.
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## Core Action 2

Employ questions and tasks, both oral and written, that are text-specific and accurately address the analytical thinking required by the grade-level standards.

- A. Questions and tasks address the text by attending to its particular qualitative features: its meaning/purpose and/or language, structure(s), or knowledge demands.
- B. Questions and tasks require students to use evidence from the text to demonstrate understanding and to support their ideas about the text. These ideas are expressed through written and/or oral responses.
- C. Questions and tasks attend to the words (academic vocabulary), phrases, and sentences within the text.
- D. Questions and tasks are sequenced to build knowledge by guiding students to delve deeper into the text and graphics.
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## Core Action 3

Provide all students with opportunities to engage in the work of the lesson.

- A. The teacher poses questions and tasks for students to do the majority of the work: speaking/listening, reading, and/or writing. Students do the majority of the work of the lesson.
- B. The teacher cultivates reasoning and meaning making by allowing students to productively struggle. Students persevere through difficulty.
- C. The teacher expects evidence and precision from students and probes students' answers accordingly. Students provide text evidence to support their ideas and display precision in their oral and/or written responses.
- D. The teacher creates the conditions for student conversations where students are encouraged to talk about each other's thinking. Students talk and ask questions about each other's thinking, in order to clarify or improve their understanding.
- E. The teacher deliberately checks for understanding throughout the lesson and adapts the lesson according to student understanding. When appropriate, students refine written and/or oral responses.
- F. When appropriate, the teacher explicitly attends to strengthening students' language and reading foundational skills. Students demonstrate use of language conventions and decoding skills, activating such strategies as needed to read, write, and speak with grade-level fluency and skill.



**CORE ACTION 1: Focus each lesson on a high-quality text (or multiple texts).**

**INDICATORS / NOTE EVIDENCE OBSERVED OR GATHERED FOR EACH INDICATOR**

**RATING**

**A. A majority of the lesson is spent reading, writing, or speaking about text(s).**

Name of Text: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Text(s) (circle):

Informational / Literary / Other Media or Format

Yes- The lesson is focused on a text or multiple texts.  
No- There is no text under consideration in this lesson.

**B. The anchor text(s)<sup>3</sup> are at or above the complexity level expected for the grade and time in the school year.<sup>4</sup>**

Quantitative Measure(s) used: \_\_\_\_\_

Quantitative Score(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Approximate Grade Band: \_\_\_\_\_

To approximate the grade band for the text, consider the quantitative measure or score, the qualitative features,<sup>5</sup> and the related task.

Yes- The anchor text(s) are at or above both the qualitative and quantitative complexity expected for the grade and time in the school year.  
No- The anchor text(s) are below the qualitative and/or quantitative complexity expected for the grade and time in the school year.  
N/A- Anchor text not observed

**C. The text(s) exhibit exceptional craft and thought and/or provide meaningful information in the service of building knowledge.**

Yes- The text(s) exhibits exceptional craft and thought and/or provides meaningful information in the service of building knowledge.  
No- The text(s) does not exhibit exceptional craft and thought and/or provide meaningful information in the service of building knowledge.

3. Anchor texts are texts used as the centerpiece of instructional time, distinct from varied texts students might read on their own for a variety of purposes.  
4. Refer to [achievethecore.org/ela-literacy-common-core/text-complexity/](https://achievethecore.org/ela-literacy-common-core/text-complexity/) for text complexity resources.  
5. The SCASS rubric is a qualitative tool to determine the levels of meaning or purpose, text structure, language, knowledge demands (life experiences, cultural/literary knowledge, content knowledge).



**CORE ACTION 2: Employ questions and tasks, both oral and written, that are text-specific and accurately address the analytical thinking required by the grade-level standards.**

INDICATORS <sup>6</sup> / NOTE EVIDENCE OBSERVED OR GATHERED FOR EACH INDICATOR	RATING
<p>A. Questions and tasks address the text by attending to its particular qualitative features: its meaning/purpose and/or language, structure(s), or knowledge demands.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> NOT OBSERVED</p>	<p>4- Most questions and tasks attend to the qualitative features of the text to build understanding.</p> <p>3- Many questions and tasks attend to the qualitative features of the text to build understanding.</p> <p>2- Few questions and tasks attend to the qualitative features of the text to build understanding.</p> <p>1- Questions and tasks do not attend to the qualitative features of the text to build understanding.</p> <p>N/A- There is no text present in the lesson.</p>
<p>B. Questions and tasks require students to use evidence from the text to demonstrate understanding and to support their ideas about the text. These ideas are expressed through written and/or oral responses.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> NOT OBSERVED</p>	<p>4- Most questions and tasks require students to cite evidence from the text.</p> <p>3- Many questions and tasks require students to cite evidence from the text.</p> <p>2- Few questions and tasks require students to cite evidence from the text.</p> <p>1- Questions and tasks can be answered without evidence from the text.</p> <p>N/A- There is no text present in the lesson.</p>
<p>C. Questions and tasks attend to the words (academic vocabulary), phrases, and sentences within the text.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> NOT OBSERVED</p>	<p>4- Vocabulary questions and tasks consistently focus students on the words, phrases, and sentences that matter most and how they are used in the text.</p> <p>3- Vocabulary questions and tasks mostly focus students on the words that matter most and how they are used in the text.</p> <p>2- Vocabulary questions and tasks rarely focus students on the words that matter most and how they are used in the text.</p> <p>1- No questions and tasks focus students on the words that matter most and how they are used in the text.</p> <p>N/A- There is no text present in the lesson.</p>
<p>D. Questions and tasks are sequenced to build knowledge by guiding students to delve deeper into the text and graphics.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> NOT OBSERVED</p>	<p>4- Most questions and tasks are intentionally sequenced to support building knowledge.</p> <p>3- Some questions and tasks are intentionally sequenced to support building knowledge.</p> <p>2- Few questions and tasks are intentionally sequenced to support building knowledge.</p> <p>1- Questions and tasks seem random and are not intentionally sequenced to support building knowledge.</p> <p>N/A- There is no text present in the lesson.</p>

6. These actions may be viewed over the course of 2–3 class periods.

**CORE ACTION 3: Provide all students with opportunities to engage in the work of the lesson.**

**INDICATORS / NOTE EVIDENCE OBSERVED OR GATHERED FOR EACH INDICATOR / RATING**

- 4- Teacher provides many opportunities, and most students take them.
- 3- Teacher provides many opportunities, and some students take them; or teacher provides some opportunities and most students take them.
- 2- Teacher provides some opportunities, and some students take them.
- 1- Teacher provides few or no opportunities, or few or very few students take the opportunities provided.

<p><b>A. The teacher poses questions and tasks for students to do the majority of the work: speaking/listening, reading, and/or writing.</b></p> <p><b>Students do the majority of the work of the lesson.</b></p>	<p style="text-align: right;">4 3 2 1 <input type="checkbox"/> NOT OBSERVED</p>
<p><b>B. The teacher cultivates reasoning and meaning making by allowing students to productively struggle.</b></p> <p><b>Students persevere through difficulty.</b></p>	<p style="text-align: right;">4 3 2 1 <input type="checkbox"/> NOT OBSERVED</p>
<p><b>C. The teacher expects evidence and precision from students and probes students' answers accordingly.</b></p> <p><b>Students provide text evidence to support their ideas and display precision in their oral and/or written responses.</b></p>	<p style="text-align: right;">4 3 2 1 <input type="checkbox"/> NOT OBSERVED</p>
<p><b>D. The teacher creates the conditions for student conversations where students are encouraged to talk about each other's thinking.</b></p> <p><b>Students talk and ask questions about each other's thinking, in order to clarify or improve their understanding.</b></p>	<p style="text-align: right;">4 3 2 1 <input type="checkbox"/> NOT OBSERVED</p>
<p><b>E. The teacher deliberately checks for understanding throughout the lesson and adapts the lesson according to student understanding.</b></p> <p><b>When appropriate, students refine written and/or oral responses.</b></p>	<p style="text-align: right;">4 3 2 1 <input type="checkbox"/> NOT OBSERVED</p>
<p><b>F. When appropriate, the teacher explicitly attends to strengthening students' language and reading foundational skills.<sup>7</sup></b></p> <p><b>Students demonstrate use of language conventions and decoding skills, activating such strategies as needed to read, write, and speak with grade-level fluency and skill.</b></p>	<p style="text-align: right;">4 3 2 1 <input type="checkbox"/> NOT OBSERVED</p>

7. The CCSS for Reading: Foundational Skills are applicable for grades 3–5 only.



# BEYOND THE LESSON: DISCUSSION GUIDE

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS / LITERACY

### INTRODUCTION

The Beyond the Lesson Discussion Guide is designed for the post-observation conversation using the Instructional Practice Guide ([achievethecore.org/instructional-practice](https://achievethecore.org/instructional-practice)) or any other observation rubric. The questions put the content of the lesson in the context of the broader instructional plan for the unit or year. The conversation should first reflect on the evidence collected during the observation to consider what worked, what could improve, and what resources are available to support improvement. If any parts of the Lesson Planning Tool ([achievethecore.org/lesson-planning-tool](https://achievethecore.org/lesson-planning-tool)) were used in preparing for the lesson, refer to that information during the discussion. After discussing the observed lesson, use the “Beyond the Lesson” questions to help clearly delineate what practices are in place, what has already occurred, and what opportunities might exist in another lesson, further in the unit, or over the course of the year to incorporate the Shifts into the classroom.

1. **Why was this text selected for today’s lesson? Is this text one of a sequence of texts designed to build knowledge? Please explain.** For more information refer to page 33 of the Standards.
2. **What content knowledge are students expected to gain from reading this sequence of resources?** For sample resources refer to [achievethecore.org/text-set-project](https://achievethecore.org/text-set-project)
3. **Beyond this lesson, what steps have been taken to ensure that students are reading a range and volume of literary and informational texts as recommended by the CCSS? (Remember, Grades K–5 focus on 50% Literary and 50% Informational, while Grades 6–12 focus on 30% Literary and 70% Informational.)** For more information refer to page 5 of the Standards.
4. **What steps have been taken to ensure students are given frequent opportunities to read independently and engage with a high volume of texts? How are students held accountable for reading independently?** For sample resources refer to [achievethecore.org/text-set-project](https://achievethecore.org/text-set-project)
5. **Beyond this lesson, what steps have been taken to ensure all students are reading texts of increasing complexity with increasing independence over the course of the year?** For sample resources refer to [achievethecore.org/text-set-project](https://achievethecore.org/text-set-project)
6. **How are students monitored as they progress toward being able to read and comprehend grade-level literary and informational texts independently and proficiently?** For more information refer to page 5 of the Standards.
7. **How are all students supported in working with grade-level text? What scaffolds are provided for students who are reading below grade level? What opportunities are provided for students who are reading above grade level to engage more deeply with grade-level or above-grade-level texts?**
8. **How are students increasingly taking charge of speaking & listening, language, and writing tasks expected by the grade-level standards?**
9. **Beyond this lesson, what steps have been taken to ensure that student writing tasks reflect the range of tasks recommended by the CCSS? (Remember, CCSS recommends 30% argument, 35% explanatory or informational, and 35% narrative.)** For more information refer to page 5 of the Standards.
10. **What steps have been taken to ensure students regularly conduct both short and more sustained research projects?** For sample resources refer to [achievethecore.org/text-set-project](https://achievethecore.org/text-set-project)

### CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT: IMPORTANT TO CREATING A LITERACY-RICH ENVIRONMENT

In addition to the discussion between observer and teacher, be aware that the following environmental factors may also provide useful information. The classroom library organization supports the following:

- Reading a wide range of text genres and resources at varying levels of complexity (poetry, fiction, bibliographies, informational texts, videos, etc.)
- Building knowledge about a range of topics (history, social studies, science, technical subjects, arts, music, etc.)
- Integrating authentic response options for students (book reviews, recorded reading, writing, discussions, etc.)

