

Some Classroom “Look-Fors” Focused on English Learners

Developed in collaboration with the Title III Professional Learning Cadre

Nebraska educators strive to provide an equitable education to more than 23,000 English learners representing 110 different languages. This tool provides a lens for educators to use in classrooms with ELs in regard to instruction, student engagement, and assessment. The Title III Professional Learning Cadre has identified various users and uses for the “Look-Fors,” including but not limited to:

Audience	Potential Uses
Principals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Walk-throughs• Pre-observation discussions• Goal setting discussions
Instructional Coaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Classroom observations• Targeted data collection (e.g., on student engagement)
Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-reflection• Instructional guide• Student teachers’ resource• Use for goal setting• Instructional rounds• Lesson planning to include appropriate accommodations• Team teaching (EL/general ed)• Unit planning
Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Talking points for lesson planning during grade level meetings/staff meetings• New teacher academy
College Instructors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To share with students about classroom expectations when they are teaching

This document is not meant to be used as an evaluative tool, but as a launching point for meaningful discussions about what is observed and not observed in general education classrooms that include English learners (ELs).

The look-fors may call attention to practices that principals usually do not consider during non-EL observations, such as teacher use of slower rate of speech and sentence frames/starters. As for all audiences, the instruction, student engagement, and assessment look-fors are either observed or not observed. It is highly unlikely a principal would observe everything on this document. There would be cause for concern only when a specific item is not observed, such as a student-talk. The observed/not observed format helps bring specific items linked to EL pedagogy to principals' attention.

Instructional coaches may want to use the look-fors with general education classroom teachers to target specific data collection. For example, classroom teachers may want to know how often they provide opportunities for ELs and others to engage in authentic conversations related to the learning goals. EL teachers may want an instructional coach to observe one of the components of instruction, student engagement, or assessment in order to set student achievement goals. Perhaps if a coach is observing for engagement, and charts who is doing the talking in five-minute increments, this might reveal more teacher talk at a time when there could be more student talk. The teacher could therefore set a goal of using more structures for academic talk, such as Numbered Heads Together or Mix-Freeze-Pair.

Both general education and EL teachers can use the look-fors as a planning tool for team teaching. For instance, a middle school teacher is planning for students to practice, review, and apply what they've been learning in an ancient civilization unit. The EL teacher sets up a structured way for students to compare and contrast two ancient civilizations with a word bank containing the academic language of compare/contrast (although, in contrast, compared with, similarly). After modelling, the classroom teacher could facilitate while the EL teacher listens for and tracks usage of content vocabulary and academic language.

This document will be useful for professional development's multiple adult learning opportunities. New teacher orientation is one such occasion to share instructional, engagement, and/or assessment expectations for ELs in their classrooms.

College instructors could use the look-fors as a way to share with prospective teachers what will be expected of them when in classrooms with ELs. During pre-service practicum classes, this document can provide direction on what to observe and what to implement.

