KANSAS STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OBSERVATION COACHING TOOLS GUIDANCE

Overview

The Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) Observation Coaching Tools were created to support districts as they work to strengthen the quality of instruction in classrooms across the state. These tools are designed to make the instructional vision for each content area visible in daily practice by translating each vision's focus areas into clear, observable indicators of high-quality teaching and learning.

Each content's Observation Coaching Tool is aligned to its respective content-area vision statement and reflects KSDE's expectations for rigorous, standards-aligned instruction. The tools are intended to support teachers in developing a shared understanding of effective instructional practices and to support school and district leaders as they engage in observation, feedback, and coaching conversations.

Please note that the Observation Coaching Tools are not evaluative in any way and **should <u>not</u> be used for formal teacher evaluation**. Instead, they are designed as coaching tools that promote reflection, collaboration, and continuous improvement.

Intended Uses of the Observation Coaching Tools

KSDE envisions multiple ways districts and schools may use the Observation Coaching Tools. The examples below illustrate common and recommended uses, though this list is not exhaustive.

A Tool for Teacher Collaboration and PLCs

The Observation Coaching Tools can be used by teachers within Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) or collaborative planning teams to deepen their understanding of high-quality instruction. As teachers plan lessons or units, the tool can serve as a reference point for reviewing instructional best practices aligned to the content-area vision.

Teachers might use the indicators and look-fors to:

- Reflect on upcoming lessons and consider how instructional choices align to high-quality practices
- Identify which instructional moves will best support student learning, engagement, and understanding of grade-level content
- Engage in shared planning conversations using common language for quality instruction
- Self-identify strengths and goals for continuous improvement, either individually or as a grade-level or content area team

Used in this way, the tool supports proactive planning rather than retrospective judgment, helping teachers intentionally incorporate effective practices before instruction occurs.

A Tool for Observation, Reflection, and Coaching Conversations

Principals, assistant principals, instructional coaches, and teacher-leaders may use the Observation Coaching Tools during classroom observations, or informal peer observations to identify strengths and opportunities for growth aligned to the tool's look-fors. Observers may choose to focus on a subset of indicators rather than attempting to capture all elements in a single visit.

KSDE envisions the tool being used as a starting point for collaborative conversation, not as a checklist or evaluation mechanism. After an observation, educators can engage in joint reflection by:

- Reviewing evidence aligned to specific indicators
- Discussing focus areas where instruction is particularly strong
- Identifying opportunities for growth that align to the instructional vision

This approach positions observation and coaching as a shared learning experience and reinforces trust, professional dialogue, and instructional growth.

A Tool for Identifying District or Schoolwide Instructional Priorities

At the school or district level, the Observation Coaching Tools may be used to identify broader instructional trends over time. For example, a leadership team might use the tool across multiple classrooms and multiple days to look for patterns of strengths and opportunities aligned to a specific content area.

Based on this collective evidence, districts or schools may use trend-level data to:

- Identify one or two priority focus areas for instructional improvement
- Narrow observations to only the relevant sections of the tool
- Align professional learning opportunities directly to the identified focus areas
- Provide targeted feedback to teachers that is coherent, consistent, and grounded in shared expectation

Using the tool in this way supports strategic professional learning and ensures that feedback and coaching are aligned to district-identified instructional priorities.

Summary

The KSDE Observation Coaching Tools are designed to promote clarity, coherence, and continuous improvement in instruction. When used as intended—formatively, collaboratively, and aligned to the instructional vision—they support teachers, leaders, and districts in advancing high-quality teaching and learning for all students.

Additional Learning

For additional learning on content-specific terms and concepts, utilize the **ELA Standards Alignment Toolkit**. For more information, contact Jennifer Hamlet, Assistant Director, at jennifer.hamlet@ksde.gov.