

Characteristics of Highly Effective Language Arts Teaching and Learning

Section One: Learning Climate

Learning Climate: a safe environment supported by the teacher in which high, clear expectations and positive relationships are fostered; active learning is promoted

Teacher Characteristics:

A- Teacher creates learning environments where students are active participants as individuals and as members of collaborative groups. The teacher:

1) cultivates active participation among students by incorporating strategies such as reading groups, literature circles, debates, writing and reading workshops, and inquiry projects.

B- Teacher motivates students and nurtures their desire to learn in a safe, healthy and supportive environment which develops compassion and mutual respect. The teacher:

1) fosters compassion and respect by thoughtfully guiding students with reading selections and topics for writing, researching and exploring.

2) regularly models and shares the thinking processes and communication skills of a literate person, emphasizing curiosity and enthusiasm about literary and non-literary texts and the uses of language.

C- Teacher cultivates cross cultural understandings and the value of diversity. The teacher:

1) encourages students to share confusions and difficulties with texts and recognizes the diverse perspectives and resources brought by each member of the class.

2) provides opportunities for students to read texts from a variety of perspectives and cultures.

D- Teacher encourages students to accept responsibility for their own learning and accommodates the diverse learning needs of all students. The teacher:

1) Sets expectations for all students to attain individual literacy goals.

E- Teacher displays effective and efficient classroom management that includes classroom routines that promote comfort, order and appropriate student behaviors. The teacher:

1) uses classroom routines and procedures to develop a literate community.

F- Teacher provides students equitable access to technology, space, tools and time. The teacher:

1) encourages students to use technology to access appropriate and engaging texts, conduct research and communicate.

G- Teacher effectively allocates time for students to engage in hands-on experiences, discuss and process content and make meaningful connections. The teacher:

1) actively uses literacy skills as tools to help students learn and make connections and immerses students in language and words.

H- Teacher designs lessons that allow students to participate in empowering activities in which they understand that learning is a process and mistakes are a natural part of learning. The teacher:

1) promotes the idea that learning is a process and mistakes are part of that process by creating a literate community that encourages students to share their ongoing work and take risks.

I- Teacher creates an environment where student work is valued, appreciated and used as a learning tool. The teacher:

1) displays student writing and uses it as a model to help students improve their work.

Student Characteristics:

A- Student accepts responsibility for his/her own learning. The student:

1) sets and attains literacy goals and accepts responsibility for revising work and actively participating in academic conversations and activities.

B- Student actively participates and is authentically engaged. The student:

1) Interacts with a wide variety of texts (print and non-print), including his/her own works.

C- Student collaborates/teams with other students. The student:

1) works with other students to complete inquiry projects and participate in class discussions about language and words.

D- Student exhibits a sense of accomplishment and confidence. The student:

1) exhibits a sense of accomplishment by valuing literacy and sharing literacy experiences.

E- Student takes educational risks in class. The student:

1) understands that, like learning, writing is a process and mistakes are part of the process.

F- Student practices and engages in safe, responsible and ethical use of technology. The student:

1) Demonstrates communication skills by practicing and engaging in safe, responsible and ethical use of technology.

Section Two: Classroom Assessment and Reflection

Classroom Assessment and Reflection: the teacher and student collaboratively gather information and reflect on learning through a systematic process that informs instruction

Teacher Characteristics:

A- Teacher uses multiple methods to systematically gather data about student understanding and ability. The teacher:

1) observes group interactions (e.g. lit circles); uses discussion protocols, writing checklists, anecdotal notes, writing to learn products such as exit slips, journals, reading logs.

B- Teacher uses student work/data, observations of instruction, assignments and interactions with colleagues to reflect on and improve teaching practice. The teacher:

1) uses results from observations, achievement data, constructed response, essays, on demand writing situations to inform instructional practices.
2) analyzes student reading/writing (e.g. writing folders, running records) to provide instruction at start of each year and periodically to understand literacy skills.
3) collaborates to analyze reading/writing work samples in formats such as Professional Learning Communities and/or tuning protocols to guide instructional practices.

C- Teacher revises instructional strategies based upon student achievement data. The teacher:

1) designs writing instruction and mini lessons in response to student need, using explicit modeling in teaching, think alouds, flexible reading/writing groups.

D- Teacher uncovers students' prior understanding of the concepts to be addressed and addresses students' misconceptions/incomplete conceptions. The teacher:

1) uses discussion strategies to activate prior knowledge and uncover misconceptions about processes of reading, writing, and communicating.

E- Teacher co-develops scoring guides/rubrics with students and provides adequate modeling to make clear the expectations for quality performance. The teacher:

1) guides students in development of rubrics aligned with language arts standards; uses models to clarify expectations of literacy products.

F- Teacher guides students to apply rubrics to assess their performance and identify improvement strategies. The teacher:

1) incorporates developmentally appropriate rubrics for literacy assignments, allowing students to identify and address gaps in their understanding and uses differentiated assessments when appropriate to respond to student needs and backgrounds.

G- Teacher provides regular and timely feedback to students and parents that moves learners forward. The teacher:

1) provides parents and students access to reading assessments, writing folders, journals, goal setting records and feedback on literacy performance.
2) uses coaching and ethical markings to provide feedback on student writing and products.

H- Teacher allows students to use feedback to improve their work before a grade is assigned. The teacher:

1) guides students in using descriptive feedback by allowing for multiple revisions of writing and products.

I- Teacher facilitates students in self- and peer-assessment. The teacher:

1) provides opportunities for students to evaluate their own and others' work and to participate in writing response groups/peer conferencing.

2) engages students in reflection on their writing and reading and arranges for students to talk and write about themselves as readers and writers.

J- Teacher reflects on instruction and makes adjustments as student learning occurs. The teacher:

1) reflects on student progress toward literacy goals and adjusts instruction based on students' needs.

Student Characteristics:

A- Student recognizes what proficient work looks like and determines steps necessary for improving his/her work. The student:

1) uses models, examples, rubrics for improving literacy achievement.

B- Student monitors progress toward reaching learning targets. The student:

1) sets literacy goals; understands literacy objectives, monitors own progress, comprehension and use of strategies to understand texts and metacognition.

C- Student develops and/or uses scoring guides periodically to assess his/her own work or that of peers. The student:

1) develops and uses rubrics to understand characteristics of quality writing, to apply vocabulary knowledge and to understand different types of texts.

D- Student uses teacher and peer feedback to improve his/her work. The student:

1) uses and recognizes value of feedback and makes appropriate choice to improve writing, listening, reading and speaking skills.

E- Student reflects on work and makes adjustments as learning occurs. The student:

1) reflects on processes and products and makes adjustments in writing, listening, reading, speaking.

Section Three: Instructional Rigor and Student Engagement

Instructional Rigor and Student Engagement: a teacher supports and encourages a student's commitment to initiate and complete complex, inquiry-based learning requiring creative and critical thinking with attention to problem solving

Teacher Characteristics:

A – Teacher instructs the complex processes, concepts and principles contained in state and national standards using differentiated strategies that make instruction accessible to all students. The teacher:

1) teaches the complex skills, processes and relationships among the strands of literacy (reading, writing, speaking, listening and observing)

2) explicitly teaches comprehension strategies (e.g., summarizing, inferring, visualizing, predicting, questioning the text) appropriate for a variety of challenging texts (expository, narrative and persuasive).

3) builds written and oral vocabulary through effective instruction (e.g., multiple exposures, context clues)

B – Teacher scaffolds instruction to help students reason and develop problem-solving strategies.

The teacher:

1) scaffolds instruction of genre-specific and literacy process terminology.

2) scaffolds instruction to help students apply metacognitive skills to challenging, developmental and/or age appropriate texts.

C - Teacher orchestrates effective classroom discussions, questioning, and learning tasks that promote higher-order thinking skills. The teacher:

1) challenges students to analyze, synthesize and evaluate individual and multiple texts for a variety of purposes.

2) orchestrates engaging classroom discussions and questioning to construct meaning and make connections about a variety of texts.

D -Teacher provides meaningful learning opportunities for students. The teacher:

1) explicitly teaches revision strategies throughout instruction and provides time for revision of current and past work to allow students to apply and refine skills.

2) flexibly structures literacy tasks to promote choice and student ownership.

E -Teacher challenges students to think deeply about problems and encourages/models a variety of approaches to a solution. The teacher:

1) challenges students to communicate complex written and spoken arguments and to substantiate each point clearly

F -Teacher integrates a variety of learning resources with classroom instruction to increase learning options. The teacher:

1) uses technology effectively to differentiate literacy instruction and support student learning.

2) integrates a variety of learning resources with classroom literacy instruction to increase learning options and products.

G -Teacher structures and facilitates ongoing formal and informal discussions based on a shared understanding of rules and discourse. The teacher:

1) provides opportunities for and encourages students to communicate effectively in a variety of forms for a variety of audiences and purposes.

H -Teacher integrates the application of inquiry skills into learning experiences. The teacher:

1) integrates the application of inquiry and research skills into a variety of experiences to support literacy skill development.

I -Teacher clarifies and shares with students learning intentions/targets and criteria for success. The teacher:

The teacher:

1) clarifies and shares learning intentions/targets and criteria for success focused on specific literacy skills with students

Student Characteristics:

A -Student articulates and understands learning intentions/targets and criteria for success. The student:

1) articulates and understands learning intentions/targets and criteria for success focused on specific literacy skills.

B - Student reads with understanding a variety of texts. The student:

1) selects and uses technology appropriate for literacy tasks

C -Student applies and refines inquiry skills. The student:

1) interacts with a variety of challenging texts

- a. selects appropriate sources and applies appropriate strategies
- b. thinks critically and applies a variety of reading strategies to make meaning
- c. makes and shares connections with a variety of texts

2) applies appropriate inquiry and research skills

- a. asks and identifies questions to guide research
- b. locates, uses and appropriately documents resources

3) communicates with a variety of audiences

- a. set purposes for a variety of forms
- b. incorporates real world problems and interests
- c. revises current and past work

Section Four: Instructional Relevance

Instructional Relevance: a teacher's ability to facilitate learning experiences that are meaningful to students and prepare them for their futures.

Teacher Characteristics:

A – Teacher designs learning opportunities that allow students to participate in empowering activities in which they understand that learning is a process and mistakes are a natural part of the learning. The teacher:

- 1) provides opportunities for reading, writing, listening, speaking and/or observing activities through which students learn that literacy development is a recursive process.
- 2) provides students access to texts of different difficulty levels, lengths, genres and topics.

B – Teacher links concepts and key ideas to students’ prior experiences and understandings, uses multiple representations, examples and explanations. The teacher:

- 1) links interactions with print and non-print texts (reading and responding orally or in writing) to students’ prior experiences and understandings.
- 2) uses comprehension strategies (i.e. graphic organizers, advance organizers, reciprocal teaching), multiple representations and other tools to enable all students to understand and respond to text.
- 3) builds student background knowledge through various learning experiences (e.g. virtual field trips, multimedia presentations, read-alouds, discussions, simulations).
- 4) scaffolds instruction (through comprehension strategies, use of adaptive technology, etc.) to facilitate understanding and engage all students in literacy activities.

C – Teacher incorporates student experiences, interests and real-life situations in instruction. The teacher:

- 1) incorporates student experiences, interests and real-life situations when designing authentic literacy instruction (e.g. activities, assignments, assessments).
- 2) allows for student choice (e.g. reading selections, topics and purposes for writing and discussion).

D – Teacher selects and utilizes a variety of technology that support student learning. The teacher:

- 1) selects and utilizes a variety of technology that support student comprehension, interaction and response to text.

E – Teacher effectively incorporates 21st Century Learning Skills that prepare students to meet future challenges. The teacher:

- 1) effectively incorporates technologies that prepare students to meet future literacy and job-related challenges, as articulated by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills. For example,
 - “focus on creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration”
 - “develop, implement and communicate new ideas to others effectively”
 - “articulate thoughts and ideas effectively using oral, written and nonverbal communication skills in a variety of forms and contexts”
 - “listen effectively to decipher meaning, including knowledge, values, attitudes and intentions”

2)poses questions that promote inquiry, expand thinking, increase curiosity, and are of interest to the student; sets high expectations for meaningful oral and written responses.

F – Teacher works with other teachers to make connections between and among disciplines. The teacher:

1)works with other teachers to make connections between and among disciplines to show how reading, writing, listening, speaking and observing are a part of other major subjects.

G –Teacher makes lesson connections to community, society and current events. The teacher:

1)connects learning to community, society, and current events through meaningful dialogue, debate and written expression.

2)provides opportunities for authentic social and collaborative communications that emphasize research, discussion, communication and interaction.

3)facilitates connections to the world of work through the exploration of careers which require the advanced application of literacy skills.

Student Characteristics:

A – Student poses and responds to meaningful questions. The student:

1)makes meaningful connections to texts (e.g. text to self, text to community, text to text) and shares these connections orally and/or in writing.

2)thoughtfully poses and responds to meaningful questions (e.g. written response, small- and whole-group discussion, interviews, online communication).

B – Student uses appropriate tools and techniques to gather, analyze and interpret quantitative and qualitative data. The student:

1)investigates a variety of self directed topics that he/she will analyze, synthesize and then communicate in a variety of forms.

2)evaluates sources of information for reliability and bias; provides correct documentation of those sources.

C – Student develops descriptions, explanations, predictions and models using evidence. The student:

1) in response to real-life problems, prompts, questions and discussions, he/she writes, researches and logically organizes written and spoken evidence

D – Student works collaboratively to address complex, authentic problems which require innovative approaches to solve. The student:

1)develops schema for understanding new and challenging texts.

2) collaborates to address complex, authentic problems -- through reading, writing, listening, speaking and/or observing.

E – Student communicates knowledge and understanding in a variety of real-world forms. The student:

1) develops and justifies a variety of oral and written responses (e.g. descriptions, explanations, predictions, persuasions).

2) chooses appropriate print and non-print texts, tools and techniques to access, create and communicate ideas and knowledge.

Section Five: Knowledge of Content

Knowledge of Content: a teacher's understanding and application of the current theories, principles, concepts and skills of a discipline.

Teacher Characteristics:

A- Teacher demonstrates an understanding and in-depth knowledge of content and maintains an ability to convey this content to students. The teacher:

1) demonstrates an understanding and in-depth knowledge of the skills and concepts related to English/Language Arts (ELA) and an ability to teach students to understand and apply these skills and concepts

2) develops independent readers and writers

3) understands how students learn to read and write and understands that reading and writing are processes that are developmental in nature

4) understands that language is a dynamic social construct

5) understands the complex relationship between audience and media

6) demonstrates knowledge of language history, theory and development, and language structure and understands the instructional implications of these theories

7) demonstrates familiarity with the main theories of discourse, including how speaking and listening skills develop

B- Teacher maintains on-going knowledge and awareness of current content developments. The teacher:

1) stays current with research related to English Language Arts

C- Teacher designs and implements standards-based courses/lessons/units using state and national standards. The teacher:

1) understands that English Language Arts standards involve teaching skills and concepts through a variety of literary and non literary texts

2) understands the benefit of integrating content-oriented curriculum and English Language Arts curriculum

D- Teacher uses and promotes the understanding of appropriate content vocabulary. The teacher:

- 1) uses semantic mapping in vocabulary instruction to help students generate a range of associations from a word or its root
- 2) teaches students prefixes and suffixes and word analysis to determine meanings of words

E- Teacher provides essential supports for students who are struggling with the content. The teacher:

- 1) troubleshoots literacy difficulties using specific strategies
- 2) teaches students how to use a variety of literacy strategies independently to access content

F- Teacher accesses a rich repertoire of instructional practices, strategies, resources and applies them appropriately. The teacher:

- 1) teaches students to develop and use a range of strategies to identify and explain how authors employ elements of language, story, sense, and devices to convey meaning and achieve effects
- 2) knows the processes and strategies that skilled readers use to decode, comprehend, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate texts and how to teach these processes and strategies to students
- 3) teaches students to identify the type of text they are reading in order to activate their textual intelligence about how such texts are made and how they work to create meaning
- 4) teaches students to synthesize, summarize, clarify, and question texts and the relation of the text to past, present and future reading and learning
- 5) embeds authentic literacy instruction and makes critical connections between literacy stages (e.g. before, during, after)

Student Characteristics:

A- Student demonstrates growth in content knowledge. The student:

- 1) reflects on growth in literacy
- 2) summarizes passages in his/her own words and check to makes sure words make sense in larger context of text
- 3) synthesizes multiple texts to deepen understanding of themes, issues, and arguments

B- Student uses and seeks to expand appropriate content vocabulary. The student:

- 1) discusses the ways authors use words to convey meaning, tone, and develop voice
- 2) uses content vocabulary to access and interpret literary and non-literary texts

C-Student connects ideas across content areas. The student:

- 1) uses and seeks to expand appropriate literacy skills and concepts (e.g. reading, writing, speaking, listening, observing)
- 2) applies and connects literacy skills across content areas and in everyday life

D- Student uses ideas in realistic problem solving situations. The student:

- 1) creates and interprets media in his/her life beyond schools

2) becomes a critical and reflective consumer of visual communication because media literacy has become an integral part of being literate in contemporary society