

# TNTP CORE TEACHING RUBRIC

## A TOOL FOR CONDUCTING COMMON CORE-ALIGNED CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

Thank you for your interest in the TNTP Core Teaching Rubric! TNTP Core describes excellent instruction aligned to the Common Core and provides a common language to articulate what it looks like in practice. Even in schools and districts not adopting Common Core standards, this short but comprehensive tool trains the user to focus on the essential components of instruction that can be identified in a classroom observation. By rating only four performance areas, TNTP Core allows observers and teachers to [focus on feedback and development](#). It is not a comprehensive evaluation system, but should be one of [multiple measures of performance](#). Schools are encouraged to pilot this rubric and customize the language to fit local context. Consider the following guidance:

- To maintain focus, we don't recommend adding more than one additional performance area.
- The current selection of teacher actions and skills was developed based on TNTP's experience training and developing teachers. Be flexible in adding and adjusting the Core Teacher Skills and encourage observers and teachers to create their own additions in the field. After observers and teachers agree on a Core Teacher Skill to focus on, they should then discuss and agree on the specific and bite-sized action that the teacher will take within the next week.
- We reserve the Skillful rating for teachers demonstrating truly exceptional practice. A teacher rated Skillful is meeting all performance expectations. Skillful descriptors are based on teachers who have won our national Fishman Prize for Superlative Classroom Practice.

Even the best rubric will fail to help teachers develop if it is not implemented with care. Thoughtful introduction and deliberate training with ongoing practice will ensure that all stakeholders share an understanding of the rubric's meaning and use. Principals, coaches and teachers should also be well trained on the rubric and its use and have opportunities to practice observing instruction together to ensure consistent, accurate ratings. Take what you learn from a pilot to inform ongoing training and norming. And please tell us what you learn at [info@tntp.org](mailto:info@tntp.org).

The TNTP Core Teaching Rubric is used to describe and assess teacher performance across four performance areas:

- **Culture of Learning:** Are all students engaged in the work of the lesson from start to finish?
- **Essential Content:** Are all students engaged in content aligned to the appropriate standards for their subject and grade?
- **Academic Ownership:** Are all students responsible for doing the thinking in this classroom?
- **Demonstration of Learning:** Do all students demonstrate that they are learning?

Each performance area has three components:

1. **Essential Question:** The core question to answer about the particular performance area. In an effective teacher's classroom, the answer to each Essential Question is "yes."
2. **Descriptor Language:** Descriptions of each performance area are used to differentiate five levels of performance: Skillful, Proficient, Developing, Minimally Effective and Ineffective. The TNTP Core Teaching Rubric uses descriptors that focus primarily on student actions and responses.
3. **Core Teacher Skills:** A non-exhaustive list of the teacher skills and behaviors that contribute to the student outcomes in each performance area. After observing and rating a lesson, we recommend that you select or identify one or two Core Teacher Skills to prioritize for the next development cycle.

When observers use the TNTP Core Teaching Rubric, they select the rating where the combination of descriptors most closely describes the observed performance, using a preponderance of evidence for each performance area. Observers do not rate the teacher on Core Teacher Skills; those are included only for coaching and development purposes. The Core Teacher Skills can help an observer narrow in on development areas based on ratings in performance areas and guide conversations about specific strategies teachers can use to develop and grow.

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## CULTURE OF LEARNING

Are all students engaged in the work of the lesson from start to finish?

1. INEFFECTIVE	2. MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE	3. DEVELOPING	4. PROFICIENT	5. SKILLFUL
<p>Very few or no students complete instructional tasks when directed, volunteer responses and/or ask appropriate questions.</p> <p>Very few or no students follow behavioral expectations and/or directions.</p> <p>Students do not execute transitions, routines and procedures in an orderly manner.</p> <p>Students are left without work to do for a significant portion of the class period.</p>	<p>Some students complete instructional tasks when directed, volunteer responses and/or ask appropriate questions.</p> <p>Some students follow behavioral expectations and/or directions.</p> <p>Students execute transitions, routines and procedures in an orderly and efficient manner only some of the time and/or require substantial direction from the teacher.</p> <p>Students are idle while waiting for the teacher or left with nothing to do for one or two minutes at a time.</p>	<p>Most students complete instructional tasks when directed, volunteer responses and/or ask appropriate questions.</p> <p>Most students follow behavioral expectations and/or directions.</p> <p>Students execute transitions, routines and procedures in an orderly and efficient manner most of the time, though they may require some direction from the teacher.</p> <p>Students are idle for short periods of time (less than one minute at a time) while waiting for the teacher to provide directions, when finishing assigned work early, or during transitions.</p>	<p>All or almost all students complete instructional tasks when directed, volunteer responses and/or ask appropriate questions.</p> <p>All or almost all students follow behavioral expectations and/or directions.</p> <p>Students execute transitions, routines and procedures in an orderly and efficient manner with minimal direction or narration from the teacher.</p> <p>Class has a quick pace and students are engaged in the work of the lesson from start to finish. Students who finish assigned work early engage in meaningful learning without interrupting other students' learning.</p>	<p><i>All descriptors for Level 4 are met, and at least one of the following types of evidence is demonstrated:</i></p> <p>Students can articulate the purpose of and assume responsibility for routines and procedures and execute them in an orderly, efficient and self-directed manner, requiring no direction or narration from the teacher.</p> <p>Students demonstrate a sense of ownership of behavioral expectations by holding each other accountable for meeting them.</p>

### Core Teacher Skills

#### Maintaining High Behavior Expectations

- Creating a culture of positive interdependence through shared goals and experiences of collective success
- Providing specific, concrete, sequential, and observable directions for behavior and academics.
- Redirecting students who lose focus immediately and in a way that does not slow or disrupt lesson momentum.
- Issuing logical and appropriate consequences as needed without hesitation, such that consequences are successful in changing student behavior.
- Using voice and presence to maintain engagement and convey caring for students.
- Investing time in knowing individual students and in forming relationships to best support their learning.
- Developing an active interest in students' well-being and demonstrating that interest through his/her engagement with students.

#### Maximizing Instructional Time

- Using efficient techniques for starting and ending lessons.
- Using efficient routines and procedures.
- Responding to student requests without interrupting instruction.
- Planning for and providing work for students to "say yes to" and using strategies to maintain a quick pace throughout the lesson.



## ESSENTIAL CONTENT

Are all students engaged in content aligned to the appropriate standards for their subject and grade?

1. INEFFECTIVE	2. MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE	3. DEVELOPING	4. PROFICIENT	5. SKILLFUL
<p>The lesson does not focus on content that advances students toward grade-level standards or expectations and/or IEP goals.</p> <p>Most of the activities students engage in are not aligned to the stated or implied learning goal(s) or to each other.</p> <p>Instructional materials students use (e.g., texts, questions, problems, exercises and assessments) are not appropriately demanding for the grade/course and time in the school-year based on guidance in the standards and/or students' IEP goals (e.g., Lexile level and complexity of text).</p>	<p>The lesson partially focuses on content that advances students toward grade-level standards or expectations and/or IEP goals.</p> <p>Only some activities students engage in are aligned to the stated or implied learning goal(s).</p> <p>Some instructional materials students use (e.g., texts, questions, problems, exercises and assessments) are not appropriately demanding for the grade/course and time in the school-year based on guidance in the standards and/or students' IEP goals (e.g., Lexile level and complexity of text).</p>	<p>The lesson focuses on content that advances students toward grade-level standards or expectations and/or IEP goals.</p> <p>Most activities students engage in are aligned to the stated or implied learning goal(s), are well-sequenced, and move students toward mastery of the grade-level standard(s) and/or IEP goal(s).</p> <p>Most instructional materials students use (e.g., texts, questions, problems, exercises and assessments) are appropriately demanding for the grade/course and time in the school-year based on guidance in the standards and/or students' IEP goals (e.g., Lexile level and complexity of text).</p>	<p>The lesson focuses on content that advances students toward grade-level standards or expectations and/or IEP goals.</p> <p>All activities students engage in are aligned to the stated or implied learning goal(s), are well-sequenced, and build on each other to move students toward mastery of the grade-level standard(s) and/or IEP goals.</p> <p>All instructional materials students use (e.g., texts, questions, problems, exercises and assessments) are high-quality and appropriately demanding for the grade/course and time in the school-year based on guidance in the standards and/or students' IEP goals (e.g., Lexile level and complexity of text).</p>	<p><i>All descriptors for Level 4 are met, and the following evidence is demonstrated:</i></p> <p>Students make connections between what they are learning and other content across disciplines, their historical context (local, state, and national), and/or their current lives.</p> <p>Students independently connect lesson content to real-world situations.</p>

### Core Teacher Skills

#### Planning and Delivering Lessons Effectively

- Allocating instructional time to address the most important content for the grade or course.
- Developing and clearly communicating a well-framed, standards-aligned and appropriately rigorous objective to describe the goal(s) of the lesson.
- Delivering lesson content clearly, accurately, and with coherence. No inaccurate information is conveyed.
- Developing and/or using appropriately demanding instructional materials, such as texts, questions, problems, exercises and assessments.
- Developing a vision for student success and standards-aligned, big goal(s) that are ambitious, measurable and appropriate for all students.
- Developing and/or using a long-term, sequential plan that leads to mastery of the most important content for the grade or course.
- Developing and/or using daily lesson activities that are well sequenced and move students toward mastery of grade-level standards.
- Developing and providing the necessary scaffolds and supports as needed to ensure all students are able to attain learning goals.
- Considering students' language development, literacy levels, and/or IEP goals and other specific learning needs in developing learning goals and preparing lessons (where applicable).
- Anticipating common student misunderstandings given the content and ensuring strategies are in place to overcome those misunderstandings.

Note to observers: When assessing the content of the lesson, your goal is to first examine what students are being asked to do during the lesson and with what materials. Then, compare this to the expectation of the relevant Common Core or state standard for that particular subject/grade to assess whether or not the students are working with appropriately rigorous content.



## ACADEMIC OWNERSHIP

Are all students responsible for doing the thinking in this classroom?

1. INEFFECTIVE	2. MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE	3. DEVELOPING	4. PROFICIENT	5. SKILLFUL
<p>Students complete very little of the cognitive work during the lesson, such as reading, writing, discussion, analysis, computation, or problem solving. The teacher completes all or almost all of the cognitive work.</p> <p>Very few or no students provide meaningful oral or written evidence to support their thinking.</p> <p>Very few or no students are using knowledge and evidence to form, articulate, and defend their answers and opinions.</p> <p>Students respond negatively to their peers' thinking, ideas, or answers.</p> <p>No students or very few students try hard to complete challenging academic work or answer questions.</p>	<p>Students complete some of the cognitive work during the lesson, such as reading, writing, discussion, analysis, computation, or problem solving, but the teacher or a very small number of students complete most of the cognitive work.</p> <p>Some students provide meaningful oral or written evidence to support their thinking.</p> <p>Some students are using knowledge and evidence to form, articulate, and defend their answers and opinions.</p> <p>Students do not respond to their peers' thinking, ideas, or answers, or do not provide feedback.</p> <p>Some students try hard to complete challenging academic work and answer questions.</p>	<p>Most students complete an appropriately challenging amount of the cognitive work during the lesson, such as reading, writing, discussion, analysis, computation, or problem solving, given the focus of the lesson. The teacher completes some of the cognitive work (i.e., expands on student responses) that students could own.</p> <p>Most students provide meaningful oral or written evidence to support their thinking.</p> <p>Most students are using knowledge and evidence to form, articulate, and defend their answers and opinions.</p> <p>Students respond to their peers' thinking, ideas or answers and provide feedback to their classmates.</p> <p>Most students try hard to complete academic work and answer questions, even if the work is challenging.</p>	<p>All or almost all students complete an appropriately challenging amount of the cognitive work during the lesson, such as reading, writing, discussion, analysis, computation, or problem solving, given the focus of the lesson. The teacher rarely finishes any of the cognitive work that students could own.</p> <p>All or almost all students provide meaningful oral or written evidence to support their thinking.</p> <p>All or almost all students are using knowledge and evidence to form, articulate, and defend their answers and opinions.</p> <p>Students respond to and build on their peers' thinking, ideas or answers.</p> <p>Students routinely provide constructive feedback to their classmates and respond productively when a peer answers a question incorrectly or when they do not agree with the response.</p> <p>All or almost all students consistently try hard to complete academic work and answer questions, even if the work is challenging.</p>	<p><i>All descriptors for Level 4 are met, and at least one of the following types of evidence is demonstrated:</i></p> <p>Students synthesize diverse perspectives or points of view during the lesson.</p> <p>Students independently show enthusiasm and interest in taking on advanced or more challenging content.</p>

### Core Teacher Skills

#### Maintaining High Academic Expectations

- Promoting the persistence of students to get correct, defended responses.
- Using an appropriate tone (warm, kind, direct) when responding to student answers.
- Requiring that students use complete sentences, correct grammar and academic language.

#### Building Thinking Skills

- Structuring and delivering lesson activities so that students do an appropriate amount of the thinking required by the lesson.
- Posing questions or providing lesson activities that require students to cite evidence to support their thinking.
- Providing opportunities for students to respond to and build on their peers' ideas.
- Providing support necessary for students to complete instructional tasks requiring higher-order thinking skills.



Providing individualized instruction so that all students can access content and participate in the class

## DEMONSTRATION OF LEARNING Do all students demonstrate that they are learning?

1. INEFFECTIVE	2. MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE	3. DEVELOPING	4. PROFICIENT	5. SKILLFUL
<p>Questions, tasks or assessments do not yield data that allow the teacher to assess students' progress toward learning goals.</p> <p>Students have very few or no opportunities to express learning through academic writing and/or explanations using academic language.</p> <p>Very few or no students demonstrate how well they understand lesson content and their progress toward learning goals.</p> <p>Student responses, work and interactions demonstrate that most students are not on track to achieve stated or implied learning goals.</p>	<p>Questions, tasks or assessments yield data that only partially allow the teacher to assess students' progress toward learning goals.</p> <p>Students have few opportunities to express learning through academic writing and/or explanations using academic language.</p> <p>Some students demonstrate how well they understand lesson content and their progress toward learning goals through their work and/or responses.</p> <p>Student responses, work and interactions demonstrate that some students are on track to achieve stated or implied learning goals.</p>	<p>Questions, tasks or assessments yield data that allow the teacher to assess students' progress toward learning goals.</p> <p>Students have some opportunities to express learning through academic writing and/or explanations using academic language.</p> <p>Most students demonstrate how well they understand lesson content and their progress toward learning goals through their work and/or responses.</p> <p>Student responses, work and interactions demonstrate that most students are on track to achieve stated or implied learning goals.</p>	<p>Questions, tasks or assessments yield data that allow the teacher to assess students' progress toward learning goals and help pinpoint where understanding breaks down.</p> <p>Students have extensive opportunities to express learning through academic writing and/or explanations using academic language.</p> <p>All students demonstrate how well they understand lesson content and their progress toward learning goals through their work and/or responses.</p> <p>Student responses, work and interactions demonstrate that all or almost all students are on track to achieve stated or implied grade-level and/or IEP aligned learning goals.</p>	<p><i>All descriptors for Level 4 are met, and at least one of the following types of evidence is demonstrated:</i></p> <p>Students self-assess whether they have achieved the lesson objective and provide feedback to the teacher.</p> <p>Students demonstrate that they make connections between what they are learning and how it advances their personal and professional goals.</p> <p>Students monitor their own progress, identify their own errors and seek additional opportunities for practice.</p>

### Core Teacher Skills

#### Leading Instruction

- Conveying or providing accurate content and all content necessary for students to achieve the learning goal(s).
- Using explanations of content that are clear, coherent and support student understanding of content.
- Differentiating instruction as needed in response to student learning needs, including enrichment and extra support.
- Providing choices for how students engage in content.

#### Checking for Understanding of Content

- Accurately checking for whether students understand the key content needed to master the lesson at key moments in the lesson (e.g., during direct instruction, before independent practice, at a transition and with an exit ticket at the end of a lesson).
- Developing and/or using informal and formal assessments that yield useable data on students' progress toward grade-level standards.

#### Responding to Student Misunderstanding

- Providing feedback that affirms correctly understood content and student progress toward the lesson objective and clarifies misunderstood content.
- Recognizing the root of student errors and re-teaching or re-framing content to address the underlying cause of student misunderstanding.

Note to observers: Your goal is to examine what students produce throughout the lesson and to assess the extent to which all students receive the opportunity to demonstrate their learning and the extent to which all students make progress towards learning goals. This includes students' oral responses and written work and should reflect most students, not just a sampling.



# TNTP Core Classroom Walk-Through Tool

The TNTP Core Walk-Through Tool is a companion to the full TNTP Core Teaching Rubric and is aligned to the same vital performance areas. This tool can be used alone to guide peer-to-peer feedback, personal reflection and non-evaluative coaching. Observers who have experience with the TNTP Core Teaching Rubric may also use the Walk-Through Tool as a note-taking and feedback resource for all classroom observations.

When you visit a classroom, ask yourself the four Essential Questions and record your notes and/or evidence in the box below. A solid “yes” to an Essential Question merits a “4” rating.

**1. Are all students engaged in the work of the lesson from start to finish?** RATING: \_\_\_\_

**2. Are all students engaged in content aligned to the appropriate standards for their subject and grade?** RATING: \_\_\_\_

What did you see students doing, reading and working with? What work do the grade-level standards call for?

**3. Are all students responsible for doing the thinking in this classroom?** RATING: \_\_\_\_

**4. Do all students demonstrate that they are learning?** RATING: \_\_\_\_

## Follow-up Questions

What’s keeping you from answering ‘yes’ to all four Essential Questions above?

Which specific skill or technique will you and the teacher practice and develop over the next cycle?

