

The K-3 Literacy Walkthrough

What to look for during ten minutes of foundational skills instruction, and what to ask the teacher afterward.

How to use it

Visit during the foundational skills block. Mark what you see, not what you expect. One visit is a snapshot. Patterns across classrooms tell you where support will pay off most. Share it with teachers before you use it, so it reads as support and not as an evaluation.

Look-for	Seen	Partly	Not yet
Phonemic awareness			
Students blend, segment and change sounds out loud in short, brisk daily practice (K-1).	☐	☐	☐
The teacher says sounds cleanly, without an added "uh" (/m/, not "muh").	☐	☐	☐
Sound work connects to letters as soon as students are ready.	☐	☐	☐
Phonics and word reading			
Today's pattern is clear to an observer and fits a scope and sequence.	☐	☐	☐
New patterns are taught explicitly: the teacher models, students practice together, then on their own.	☐	☐	☐
Beginning readers practice the pattern in decodable words, sentences and text.	☐	☐	☐
When a student misreads, the prompt points to the letters ("Check the vowel. What sound does it make?").	☐	☐	☐
Irregular words are mapped: students sound out the regular parts and learn the tricky part by heart.	☐	☐	☐
Spelling and handwriting			
Students spell by segmenting sounds and writing them from dictation, not by copying.	☐	☐	☐
Spelling practice matches the pattern being taught in reading.	☐	☐	☐
Letter formation is taught and corrected, not left to chance.	☐	☐	☐
Fluency			
Students reread connected text with feedback (partner, choral, echo or timed reading).	☐	☐	☐

Look-for	Seen	Partly	Not yet
Fluency practice uses text students can decode accurately.	☐	☐	☐

Language, vocabulary and knowledge

Read-alouds use rich, grade-level or harder text, with talk and new words taught on purpose.	☐	☐	☐
Texts build knowledge on one topic across days instead of jumping between unrelated passages.	☐	☐	☐

Small groups and intervention

The teacher can name the skill each group is working on and the data that put students there.	☐	☐	☐
Group instruction targets that skill directly.	☐	☐	☐
Students working independently are practicing something they have been taught.	☐	☐	☐

Classroom environment

A sound wall or articulation chart is posted, and students refer to it.	☐	☐	☐
Beginning readers have decodable books, and libraries include knowledge-rich texts sorted by topic.	☐	☐	☐

Worth a conversation

- Students are told to "look at the picture" or "think what would make sense" to figure out a word.
- Leveled books are the only text for students who are still learning to decode.
- High-frequency words are memorized as whole shapes, with no attention to letters and sounds.
- Phonics happens only in a center or as a five-minute add-on.
- Every struggling reader gets the same intervention, whatever the data says.

After the visit: four questions

1. What skill were students practicing, and how will you know they got it?
2. Which students need more practice with it, and when will they get it?
3. What is working that other teachers should see?
4. What would help you most next week?

Notes

Look for evidence, not perfection. Celebrate one thing every visit.