VIDEO NOTES: *Kindergarten ELA Lesson on Letters of the Alphabet*

Video Links: Kindergarten ELA Lesson on Letters of the Alphabet
Common Core State Standard: see "What Could This Teacher Do To Improve" section
Compass Components and Ratings: Setting Instructional Outcomes (1c), *Ineffective*
Questioning and Using Discussion Techniques (3b), *Ineffective*
Engaging Students in Learning (3c), *Effective Emerging*
Lesson Objective: Sing a song, read a story, and create craft related to the letter and sound of "S."

Compass Component 1c: Setting Instructional Outcomes (Rating: *Ineffective*)	
Indicators	**Evidence**
Outcomes lack rigor.	• While learning letters and sounds is foundational for kindergarten, and the teacher connects the idea of learning letters to many different contexts, the outcome is not challenging enough for the Kindergarten grade level. • The students are not challenged to work beyond identifying the letter name and sound and volunteering a word that starts with the sound (5:09), despite the majority of students demonstrating their ability to complete these tasks at the start of the lesson.
Outcomes are not clear or are stated as activities.	• The lesson objective ("sing a song, read a story, arts and crafts" 0:34) is stated as an activity versus something students will understand by the end of the lesson. This will ultimately result in lower levels of student mastery and a decreased emphasis on standard-aligned skills. • The teacher explains that it is important to write the letter "s", find the letter "s," and do a craft that correlates to the letter "s" so *"it gets ingrained in their heads."* (1:02) Similarly, the activities in the lesson (singing a song (1:35), reading a story (2:27), and creating a scarecrow (3:59) to represent the letter of the week) are focused on simply identifying and remembering the letter "s," but do not enhance students understanding of the larger importance of the letter in words, language, etc.
Outcomes are not suitable for many students in the class.	• Most students answer the teacher's recall questions easily, demonstrating that the outcome is not rigorous for most students in the class. There is no apparent modification or differentiation of learning activities for more or less advanced students.

Compass Component 3b: Questioning and Using Discussion Techniques (Rating: *Ineffective*)	
Indicators	**Evidence**
Questions are rapid-fire, and convergent, with a single correct answer.	• The class recites many simple answers back to the teacher. For instance, the teacher asks: *"Who knows what we are going to make today, who remembers?" Students: "Scarecrows." Teacher: "What kind of scarecrows? Scary ones?" Students: "No, silly scarecrows."* (3:50)
Questions do not invite student thinking.	• The teacher does not provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their thinking. For example, *Teacher: "Where would you find scarecrows...around the animals or plants?" Student: "Near the plants."* The teacher does not push the student to offer more, or explain why scarecrows might be near the plants (3:30). This line of questioning does not help students make progress towards mastering the objective, nor does it promote rigorous learning outcomes. • The only opportunity students have to apply the learning is to share words that begin with "s" at the end of the lesson (5:09).
All discussion is between teacher and students; students are not invited to speak directly to one another.	• The teacher asks most of the questions and expects the whole class to deliver the same answer. For example, *"What's another word for hay?"* (2:48) All the students call out the answer. • Students do not have the opportunity to work or speak together in pairs or small groups.
Compass Component 3c: Engaging Students in Learning (Rating: *Effective Emerging*)	
Indicators	**Evidence**
Student engagement with the content is largely passive, learning primarily facts or procedures.	• The teacher attempts to engage students in the lesson through questioning and activities, though students are expected to listen to the teacher, respond chorally, or occasionally respond individually. Teacher has students stand to identify "s" words (0:48) and point to the song. • Students are asked to present their scarecrow at the end, but the presentation isn't connected to outcomes that involve higher order thinking (5:09).
Students have no choice in how they complete tasks.	• The teacher leads the class in reviewing the letter and sound of the week. She also leads the song (1:35) and the story activities (2:27). This creates a teacher-centered activity in which the teacher is doing the majority of the cognitive work. • The teacher directs the students in each step of the scarecrow craft (4:28), leaving very little room for students to choose how to create a symbol to represent the letter "s." This shifts the emphasis of the task away from learning the letter "s" and towards following directions and practicing the fine motor skills of gluing.
The materials and resources are partially aligned to the lesson objectives, only some of them demanding student thinking.	• Although the song is helpful for auditory learners, the story book and scarecrow do not require students to use thinking skills.
Learning tasks require only recall or have a single correct response or method. *(Ineffective*	• While the teacher attempts to engage students in the lesson, their intellectual engagement mostly involves recall. For example, the teacher asks, "*Which picture starts with "s"?* (0:49) or students

indicator)	simply following teacher directions -- *arms go "on the sides."* (4:34).

WHAT COULD THIS TEACHER DO TO IMPROVE?

What did the teacher do in this lesson?	*Effective Proficient* Indicators	What could the teacher do to move to *Effective Proficient*? (example actions)	How could this lesson be improved for students to meet Common Core standards?
Students are not held to high standards for the grade level. The rigor of the class was too low.	Outcomes represent high expectations and rigor. (Outcomes – 1c)	The text read aloud by the teacher should have been at least the second grade level, and students should have been asked questions about the meaning of the text in addition to identifying words that began with "s".	While learning letter-sound correspondence in kindergarten is an important part of learning to read (RF.K.3a), whole-class instruction should focus primarily on making meaning and building knowledge through texts read aloud (RL.K.1-10, RF.K.1-4, SL.K.2, and L.K.4-6) and expressing that understanding through writing and speaking (W.K.1-3, 5-8, SL.K.1, 3-6, and L.K.1-2, 5-6). Support for the reading foundations might happen in isolation at times as a whole class and can happen incidentally in whole-class environments as the opportunities present themselves in read-aloud texts. A majority of instruction for reading foundations (RF.K.1-4) will happen in small-group environments and through literacy stations.
The creation of the "silly scarecrow" required students to follow straight forward directions.	Lesson tasks have multiple correct responses or approaches and/or demand higher-order thinking. (Engagement – 3c)	Alter the arts and crafts activity to spend more time having students complete a shared writing activity in which they write about a scarecrow (or another object that began with "s") using words that begin with "s". This allows students to complete more of the cognitive work and practice writing skills.	
Students have no choice in how they create the scarecrow.	Students have some choice in how they complete learning tasks. (Engagement – 3c)	The teacher could have provided students with a choice of objects to create during craft time, based on the letter "s," then share their choices with the class. This would increase intellectual engagement in the activity and reinforce content as students listen to and share with their classmates.	

What did the teacher do in this lesson?	*Effective Emerging* Indicators	What could the teacher do to move to *Effective Emerging*? (example actions)	How could this lesson be improved for students to meet Common Core standards?
The learning outcome focuses on having fun through activities that allow students to practice finding, saying, and reading the letter "s."	Some outcomes reflect important learning in the discipline. (Outcomes – 1c)	To increase the rigor of the learning outcomes, shift the focus of the lesson from basic activities centered on drilling of the letter "s" to applying the knowledge through reading and writing "s" words together or in small groups.	Centering the learning outcomes and activities on word analysis and decoding skills would better align with CCSS.RF.K.3 and CCSS.RF.K.3a. Blends (scarecrow and snake) should not be used to teach beginning sounds.

			Instead, shorter words without blends should be used in the beginning to teach kindergarteners decoding and segmenting skills that would better prepare the students to meet CCSS.RF.K.3 and CCSS.RF.K.3a.
The storybook text is low level and results in discussion that isn't rigorous enough for the grade level.	Teacher frames some questions designed to promote student thinking, but only a few students are involved. (Questioning – 3b)	Choose a more rigorous text and pre-planned questions that involved higher order thinking.	
Students answer questions only in response to the teacher, and do not discuss with each other.	The teacher invites students to respond directly to one another's ideas, but few students respond. (Questioning – 3b)	Make the lesson more student-centered by giving them the opportunity to discuss, interact, and ask each other questions.	