**Criteria Discussion Guide – ELA/Literacy**

**Purpose**

This criteria guide is intended for use by facilitators to guide conversations during norming or calibration sessions.

**Overall Guidance**

As reviewers work to norm and/or calibrate judgments, facilitators should be prepared to guide conversations among table and whole groups in order to surface and resolve misconceptions about the interpretation of the criteria in each dimension. After reviewers have checked dimensional criteria, recorded observations, and discussed their feedback as a group, ask tables to share reflections with the room. *Use the examples of criterion-based feedback and ratings in the slides to guide reviewers to reflect on the quality of the observations and feedback they have generated.* Compare both the degree to which observations are based on the examples found in the common unit and the degree to which the suggestions are framed in the language and spirit of the criteria. Explain that criteria may only be checked if there is clear and substantial evidence of the criterion (there are no “half-checks”). *There may be instances when reviewers find clear and substantial evidence of a criterion and there are still constructive suggestions that can be made. In such cases, reviewers may provide feedback related to criteria that have been checked.*

The goal of EQuIP is to support the education community in the development of exemplary curriculum; constructive feedback and comments are fundamental to improving the materials. Remind reviewers to consider their audience and purposes when crafting the tone and content of their comments. It is critical to read every page of a lesson or unit. When a developer receives feedback about a criterion that was missed when he/she knows it was there, feedback becomes immediately suspect.

**Guidance by Dimension**

**Dimension I: Alignment**

Note that Dimension I is non-negotiable. In order for the review to continue, a rating of 2 or 3 is required. If the review is discontinued, consider general feedback that might be given to developers/teachers regarding next steps.

The facilitator reads aloud the criteria for Dimension I and notes the distinction between the criteria for a lesson and the additional criteria for units and longer lessons.

* If reviewing a lesson, clarify that the first three criteria in Dimension I are applicable.
* If reviewing a unit, clarify that all criteria in Dimension I are applicable.

As reviewers apply the criteria in Dimension I it is helpful to ask the following questions regarding criteria 1, 2, and 3:

* + For criterion 1 – Does the teacher/developer articulate alignment to a reasonable set of standards? Do they make sense as a group? Too many? Too few? Do the assignments, tasks and activities suggest a set of standards that should be targeted for instruction? Does the developer make a distinction between targeted and supporting or related standards? Do the assignments and activities make sense given the standards listed? *Note: When reviewing a social studies or science unit, don’t lose sight of the content objectives over and above the literacy objectives. Literacy objectives need to be in service of the content objectives.*
  + For criterion 2 – Where in the lesson/unit is the instructional purpose communicated? Is the purpose for instruction coherent with the standards identified and/or the assignments and activities? Is accomplishing the purpose sustained throughout the unit? Are there multiple purposes? Do they compete with one another? When there are multiple lessons in a unit, do the purposes relate in a way that is sensible? When taken together, do the lessons accomplish the overall purpose? Will the purpose be clear to both teacher and student? Is there coherence and appropriate scope to the purpose? Does the focus of the unit deteriorate? *Note: A purpose may not be explicitly stated though there is an obvious purpose to the lesson/unit. If this is the case, reviewers should simply note it in their feedback; there is no need to mark down the lesson or unit. If the purpose of a lesson is more focused (i.e., on academic vocabulary or research), reviewers should evaluating the lesson against that context and explain that they are doing so.*
  + For criterion 3 – Does the text measure within the grade-level complexity band, both quantitatively and qualitatively? Is the text of sufficient quality and scope for the instructional purpose? Are the texts of sufficient quality? Can the selected texts sustain the work that students are being asked to do? How do the texts relate to one another? *Note: The point is to discern whether or not the texts are rich enough and worth the time for study. It is also important to know that the texts are accessible and easy to find? Importantly, don’t just mark the criterion as absent just because the quantitative measures aren’t provided. Rather, determine whether or not the texts can sustain the work that students are being asked to do and then ask the developer for the quantitative measures. In addition, if some of the texts measure below the grade level of complexity, ask the developer for the rationale for including them. Every text within a unit does not need to be at the complexity of the grade band. When considering text complexity, reviewers should take into account the associated tasks as well as the place in the sequence of instruction where students encounter it.*

**Dimension II: Key Shifts**

The facilitator reads the criteria aloud, noting the distinction between the criteria for a lesson/unit and the additional criteria for units and longer lessons.

As the team(s) review, the facilitator circulates and uses questions to support reviewers at their tables.

* What direct evidence can I cite that supports my decisions?
* For criteria not yet met, what constructive observations and suggestions for improvement can I make?
* Can I connect my observations and suggestions to specific evidence from the instructional materials (both what I see and do not see)?

As reviewers apply the criteria in Dimension II it is helpful to ask the following questions regarding criteria 1-4:

* For criterion 1 – Look for a connection between the text and the instruction. Is the text at the center of the instruction? Are activities about the information in the texts or is the text just a jumping off point for a more general conversation? *Note: The whole text does not need to be read closely especially if it is a long text such as a novel. Moreover, only some texts in a lesson or unit need to be read closely.*
* For criterion 2 – Are there a series of questions that require evidence from text ***and*** work together to facilitate rich conversations and writing? If these types of questions are present, reviewers should check the criteria. Did the question make the student go back to the text to find the answer? Do questions ask for an inference drawn from across the text? Have students been provided with enough of a background to have a rich, evidence-based discussion? *Note: Developers don’t have to include a huge number of questions; rather reviewers should look for a series of valuable questions. Also its okay to include a non-text-dependent question now and then.*
* For criterion 3 – Is there evidence that the type of writing that students are engaged in requires them to draw evidence from text and is appropriate to the context of instruction (e.g., note taking during initial readings of texts or discussions, short summaries, formal essay writing after a series of shorter

writing assignments)? Over the course of a unit, are there several short pieces of writing that build to a longer piece of writing? Does the writing relate to the instruction? *Note: Reviewers may have additional feedback they wish to share with developers, perhaps to illustrate a different approach to writing, but if the lesson/unit contains evidence that students produce writing that uses textual evidence reviewers should check this criterion.*

* For criterion 4 – Is there evidence of conscious, intentional thought about the vocabulary that should be focused on when studying a particular text? Has the developer/teacher been explicit about vocabulary when designing the lesson/unit? Is the vocabulary selected from the text under study consequential to the meaning of the text? Are there text-dependent questions that focus on vocabulary in context? *Note: There can be a variety of ways to focus on vocabulary – some can be teacher directed and others student directed.*

**Dimension III: Instruction**

The facilitator reads the criteria aloud, noting the distinction between the criteria for a lesson/unit and the additional criteria for units and longer lessons.

As reviewers apply the criteria in Dimension III it is helpful to ask the following questions regarding criteria 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10:

* For criterion 2 – Does this set of instructional materials clearly outline and support a sequence of learning? Are the student resources (e.g., handouts and assignments) clear? Could someone who is new to this lesson or unit pick it up and use it? Are the materials sensible and usable for teachers so they can be followed easily without tons of time and study?
* There is an important distinction to be made between criterion 3, which is primarily about opportunity, and criteria 5 and 6, which are primarily about equity and access.
  + Criterion 3 asks reviewers to look for evidence that all students are given opportunities to engage with the central text with scaffolding that preserves the grade level complexity of the text. Although this criterion has a close relationship to criteria 5 and 6, criterion 3 ***does not require*** evidence of scaffolds specific to special learning or language needs. Rather, criterion 3 asks for evidence that all students are expected and given opportunity to read the grade-level text.
  + Criterion 5 ***does require*** evidence that the developer/teacher has included supports that address special learning and language needs that is tied to the instruction. Think about the experience of the lesson or unit from the student perspective. *Note: Developers may include supports that will assist students with special learning and language needs but also are good for all students, and are noted as such.*
  + Criterion 6 requires that students who are ready to go further are provided extensions in learning or more advanced texts.
* For criterion 7 – Is there a nice progression in the learning? Are the skills and concepts being worked on and deepened over the course of the unit?
* For criterion 8 – Are students working toward independence? Have students had the time to build capacity toward independence?
* For criterion 10 – Lessons and units cannot do everything. Lessons/units can earn a “3” without checking this criterion or others.

**Guidance for Dimension IV: Assessment**

The facilitator reads the criteria aloud, noting the distinction between the criteria for a lesson/unit and the additional criteria for units and longer lessons.

As reviewers apply the criteria for Dimension IV it is helpful to ask the following questions regarding criteria 1 – 3:

* For criterion 1 – Are the assessments aligned to the major targeted standards and to the instructional activities? Is there a coherent assessment strategy that is related to the instruction and sustained throughout the unit? *Note: Evidence of what students can do may be produced by the assessment but it may not provide evidence of proficiency of the targeted standards. When evaluating the unit for this criterion, reviewers should consider all of the assessment across the entire unit, not only the summative assessment at the end.*
* For criterion 2 – Do students have multiple ways to show what they have learned?
* For criterion 3 – Do assessments produce descriptions of how close students have come to meeting expectations (e.g., annotated student work, descriptive rubrics/checklists)? Does the unit provide teachers with clear criteria for interpreting the evidence in student work for their development and mastery of the targeted standards?

**Guidance Regarding Ratings:**

* + If reviewers are going to stop a review at Dimension I, take time to make sure the criteria are absent.
  + There may be instances when reviewers find clear and substantial evidence of a criterion and there are still constructive suggestions that can be made. In such cases, reviewers should provide feedback related to criteria that have been checked.
  + It’s okay to give a “3” rating without having all of the criteria checked within a dimension. It’s about supporting with evidence whatever rating a reviewer is giving. If recommendations for improvement are too significant, then the rating should be less than a “3.”
  + There should be a relationship between the number of checks and the overall rating. There shouldn’t be huge misalignment, but it comes down to professional judgment. Reviewers should stand back and look at the review in its totality.