

TNTP CORE TEACHING RUBRIC

NORMING CLASSROOM OBSERVERS TO TNTP CORE

The TNTP Core Teaching Rubric offers a new, streamlined approach to classroom observations, paring down the bloated rubrics of the past and concentrating only on the indicators that truly matter. By shifting emphasis from teacher practice to student outcomes, it brings the same clarity and focus to classroom observations that the Common Core does to academic standards.

This new approach only works, however, when the people assessing teacher performance—observers, coaches and other instructional staff—are aligned in their expectations and prepared to use the rubric in a consistent way.

This document outlines the four key steps to training observers to do just that, building on best practices from the field and our own experiences norming TNTP instructional staff: 1) Set Goals, 2) Design Your Practice, 3) Evaluate Progress/Mastery and 4) Continue to Practice.

Regardless of the circumstances in which you use TNTP Core, following these guidelines will help observers in your school or district apply the rubric as effectively as possible.

Step 1: Set Goals

As a first step, we recommend making sure everyone is on the same page when it comes to the purpose of the observations: Will it primarily help education leaders identify opportunities for high-impact teacher development? Or will it be used as an evaluation tool in your school/district?

After you establish your goal in using the TNTP Core, you can set norming goals for your observers that support that larger aim. If, for example, you are trying to provide teachers with high-impact professional development, your norming goal for observers might be to identify the areas in which teachers have the biggest opportunity for growth.

If, however, you are using the TNTP Core for the purposes of evaluation, then your goal may be to achieve inter-rater reliability across observers. Inter-rater reliability has two components:

- **Accuracy:** Can observers assign the *correct* rating?
- **Consistency:** Can observers regularly assign the *same* rating across similar circumstances?

If the rubric is being used for formal evaluations, an effective norming curriculum ensures that observers can use the rubric to deliver consistent *and* accurate ratings. Even if an observer's ratings are reliable, they will not necessarily be accurate if the observer consistently gives ratings that are too low or too high. That's why achieving both accuracy and consistency is so crucial.

Step 2: Design Your Practice

The key to norming is lots of practice paired with authentic feedback—it takes more than just a few hours of group discussion or a close read of the rubric to successfully norm observers. At TNTP, we norm our classroom observers through extensive practice using both classroom video and in-person observations, totaling 40 to 50 hours over the course of the year. During the initial training, observers must watch, rate and discuss no fewer than seven instructional videos, engaging in iterative conversations with trained facilitators and fellow observers in training. This helps observers align expectations and achieve a shared understanding about the evidence they would expect to see in classrooms at different performance levels.



During these discussions, you should always have a master rating that provides the “right answer” and explains the rationale behind it. A master rating sets a common bar for observers and provides an example they can follow when assigning and justifying their own ratings.

After the initial training, observers *must* continue to practice over the course of the school year to avoid “drift” in evaluation ratings. This ongoing practice ensures that our observers continue to meet the same high bar, and consistently give out accurate evaluation scores.

Good norming resembles good instruction. In a successful norming session, observers actively engage in cultivating their own understanding, sharing their rationale and pushing one another to support their thinking with objective evidence. The job of the facilitator is to curate this conversation; rather than dispensing knowledge, he or she guides the collection and correct interpretation of evidence.

Below we share best practices codified over several years of norming evaluative observers at TNTP:

- **Preparation is key.** Review the ratings observers have submitted in advance and strategically plan your conversation. Do you notice a particular performance area in which a large number of observers are misaligned? Look for patterns in their rationale that can surface misunderstandings or incorrect interpretations of the rubric. This dissonance should be the meatiest part of your discussion.
- **Anticipate the devil’s advocate.** While providing a robust, logical rationale grounded in objective evidence is critical to helping observers understand and replicate the master rating, oftentimes explaining the reasons why the rating is NOT one higher or one lower can be just as powerful. Be prepared to talk about the disconfirming as well as the confirming evidence.
- **Facilitate, don’t dictate.** Norming should be a discussion, not a presentation. Listen closely to observers’ justification for their ratings, especially when they don’t align. This will help you understand the root causes of misunderstanding.
- **Look for the root cause.** Misalignment happens for two main reasons: observers are collecting insufficient or biased evidence, and/or observers are misinterpreting the performance descriptors or essential question. Listen closely to the evidence and rationale observers share to determine which issue must be addressed.
- **Keep the boat on course.** Allow your observers to actively engage in and drive the conversation, but don’t hesitate to reinforce the “right” answer. You have master ratings for a reason, so be prepared to fully explain and justify the master rationale.
- **Ensure that “right is right.”** Push observers to justify their ratings and rationale with objective evidence from the lesson. Avoid assumptions, projections or other assertions unsupported by student or teacher actions.
- **Summarize and generalize.** The goal is to ensure that observers walk away from a norming conversation with a clear understanding of how to replicate key judgments in novel situations.

Step 3: Evaluate Progress/Mastery

Before allowing observers to conduct evaluative observations, TNTP requires that all candidates meet our established norming threshold of 75 percent “within one” alignment and 50 percent “exact match” alignment, which we call the 75/50 rule. This means that when an observer generates four ratings on TNTP Core, three of those (or 75 percent) must be no more than one rating level removed from the master rating. Of those three, at least two (50 percent) must be an exact match. It’s important to understand, however, that we assess whether observers are meeting the 75/50 rule across their *average performance* throughout norming training. In other words, the standard need not be met within any individual video rating, but across all the ratings they produce during initial training.

If you plan to use TNTP Core in a more developmental context, you may choose to designate different metrics for success, such as the frequency with which an observer or coach identifies the same high-leverage performance area on which to focus teacher development. Regardless of your purpose for training staff on TNTP Core, setting a clear bar for success is critical in ensuring that the data you collect from observations is both valid and reliable.



Master Ratings and the 75/50 Rule

Ana is facilitating a norming conversation with Amy and Jeff on a grade 3 math lesson. The master ratings for the lesson video are:

Student Engagement (SE)	Essential Content (EC)	Academic Ownership (AO)	Demonstration of Learning (DL)
3	2	3	2

Jeff and Amy submitted the follow ratings:

	Student Engagement (SE)	Essential Content (EC)	Academic Ownership (AO)	Demonstration of Learning (DL)
Jeff	3	3	3	2
Amy	4	5	5	2

Jeff has matched the master rating three times (on SE, AO, and DL) and he was just one removed from the master rating on EC. Amy, however, has only matched the master rating once (on DL), is one removed (higher) on SE, and is two or more removed from the master rating on EC and AO. Their norming results:

	Within One	Exact Match
Jeff	4 of 4 (100%)	3 of 4 (75%)
Amy	2 of 4 (50%)	1 of 4 (25%)

Therefore, Jeff is normed on this particular video and Amy is not. Of course, this example focuses on an individual rating, but when assessing inter-rater reliability, we would look at their average ratings throughout initial training.

Step 4: Keep Practicing!

Norming doesn't end after initial training! At TNTP, we plan for additional practice—at least three to four “checkpoints”—over the course of the year so that observers remain normed and don't begin to systematically inflate or deflate observation scores over time. Ongoing norming may take the form of independent practice on master-rated instructional videos, live co-observations with instructional experts or group norming exercises.

Regardless of the format, ongoing practice should reinforce a common and consistent interpretation of the framework. The more opportunities observers have to use the rubric and discuss their rationale, the better the quality of their observations will be.

