CLASS Scoring Trouble-Shooting Guide & Tips

Initially CLASS scoring can feel overwhelming. But, don’t worry! It does get easier with practice. Here are a few suggestions to help you become more fluent in CLASS scoring. The most important preparation work you can do is to read the manual.

Scoring Procedure

Observation Phase
During the observation phase of testing, simply observe and record social interactions between teachers and students. You may want to use blank paper during this phase and save your scoring sheet for the scoring phase. Don’t worry yet about categorizing the interactions within the appropriate dimension—this can be done later.

During your observation, resist the temptation to:
- Infer what the teacher is thinking or feeling, only record directly observable behaviors
- Develop an initial impression (good or bad) then look for evidence to support your initial impression
- Assign scores based on a visceral reaction you have to a teacher or students (based on your own past experiences or for reasons unexplained)
- Bring other knowledge to your observations of social interactions. Remember CLASS is as assessment of social interactions. For example, if you are a curriculum expert and a teacher uses a curriculum you especially like or dislike this should not factor into your scoring of social interactions

Instead, document directly observable social interactions. When documenting these interactions, consider three features of interactions that will help you determine scores.
- Frequency: If an interaction occurs multiple times, make note of this
- Duration: how long does an interaction or set of interactions last, in proportion to the total amount of time you are observing?
- Depth: to what extent is the social interaction you are documenting perfunctory or rote versus very powerful or genuine

Other factors to document when observing:
- Remember the CLASS aims to describe the average experience of the majority of the students in an observation. It might be important to jot down how many children you are observing and what percentages of children are engaged in the social interactions you are documenting. For example, if your notes indicate 2 children are off-task, it is important to know whether that is 2 out of 5 or 2 out of 20 when assigning scores.
- Likewise, it is important to document how many teachers or adults offering instruction are present during the observation cycle as you will later assign an average classroom score based on the proportion of time each teacher was present and interacting and number of students working with each teacher.

Scoring Phase
After the observation is complete, there is a three step process to scoring:
1) Take time to go through your manual and place each of the interactions you documented under the correct dimension and then match the interaction with the appropriate behavioral indicator. So, for the dimension Positive Climate, does the interaction fit best under Relationships, Positive Affect, Positive Communication, or Respect?

2) Consider the extent to which the social interactions you have documented are highly characteristic of the descriptions that fall into the low, middle, or high range for each behavioral indicator.

3) Lastly, consider whether most of your behavioral indicators fall in the low, middle, or high range and assign a number score that most accurately describes the average for all
behavioral indicators. For example, Language Modeling had five behavioral indicators, if the interactions you documented are highly characteristic of the low range for three indicators and highly characteristic of the middle range for two indicators, then an overall score of 2 for Language Modeling will make the most sense.

When assigning scores,

- Remember that some interactions are appropriate to score in more than one dimension. For example, you may document a transition practice that fits under Clear Behavior Expectations under Behavior Management as well as Transitions under Productivity.
- Try to avoid inflating or deflating scores in other dimension if one behavior was particularly poignant. For example, if you document Negative Affect under Negative Climate, this should not influence your score of Positive Climate.
- Resist the temptation to seek perfection. If all of the behavioral indicators within a dimension are highly characteristic of descriptions that fall in the high range, then it is appropriate to assign a score of 7. A score of 7 represents high quality interactions but does not mean perfection.
- Remember to consider the duration of an interaction when assigning scores. For example, if a teacher was interrupted or unprepared for two minutes out of a twenty minute lesson this should influence her overall score, but should not reduce it to a score in the low range unless there is other evidence the classroom is not productive.
- Remember CLASS is not a checklist. You are not merely looking for the presence or absence of social interactions. You should also consider frequency, duration, and depth. This is especially true of the Instructional Support dimensions. For example, when you document social interactions that match the behavioral indicators describing Quality of Feedback, it is important to think about how often the teacher engaged in feedback versus the total proportion of observation time. And, it is important to consider whether the feedback was perfunctory (e.g., “good job”) or did the teacher make a clear effort to expand students’ understanding.