

The Early Childhood Instructional Support Toolkit & CLASS™

Instructional support is one of the specific types of intentional adult-child interaction that is measured with the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS™), an observational instrument developed at the University of Virginia. CLASS™ is used in an increasing number of preschool settings to assess emotional climate, classroom organization, and instructional support. The Federal Office of Head Start and the Oregon Prekindergarten Program use the CLASS™ when monitoring Oregon Head Start Prekindergarten (OHS PreK) programs.

The CLASS™ tool identifies three areas or dimensions of instructional support:

- Concept Development – “instructional discussions and activities” that focus on children’s “higher-order thinking skills” and “understanding rather than on rote instruction”;
- Quality of Feedback – “feedback that expands learning and understanding and encourages continued participation”;
- Language Modeling – “the quality and amount of the teacher’s use of language-stimulation and language-facilitation techniques.”

Within each area of instructional support, CLASS™ describes specific observable teaching strategies. Examples of teaching strategies associated with each area are listed below.

Concept Development	Quality of Feedback	Language Modeling
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Asking why/how questions• Engaging children in problem solving• Encouraging prediction and experimentation• Brainstorming• Connecting Concepts• Integrating previous knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scaffolding (providing hints and assistance)• Feedback loops (back-and-forth exchanges)• Prompting thought processes (asking children to explain thinking)• Providing information (expanding, clarifying)• Encouraging & affirming	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facilitating frequent conversations• Repeating, extending, and/or elaborating on children’s responses• Mapping own/children’s actions with language• Using advanced language (variety of words; connecting to familiar words/ideas)

(Note: Information about CLASS™ was drawn from Pianta, Robert C., Karen M. La Paro, and Bridget K. Hamre. *Classroom Assessment Scoring System Manual PreK*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes, 2008. For more information about CLASS™, please see the Teachstone website (<http://www.teachstone.org/>) and/or theBrookes Publishing website (<http://www.brookespublishing.com/>).

As measured by the CLASS™, adult-child interactions in early childhood classrooms are strongest in the areas of emotional climate and classroom organization. The most challenging area for early childhood staff is instructional support.

Research using the CLASS™ found that “children experience academic advantages in classrooms that score even slightly higher in the low to mid range of the CLASS™ Instructional Support domain.” (CLASS™ Implementation Guide, retrieved from <http://www.teachstone.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/CLASSImplementationGuide.pdf>).

One of the purposes of this toolkit is to strengthen instructional support in Oregon’s early care and education settings so that children have the support, knowledge and experience they need to succeed in school.