

10 Things to Know Before your CLASS® Observation

Do you have an upcoming CLASS observation? Here are 10 things to know!

- 1 CLASS is a way of describing what high-quality teacher-child or educator-student interactions look like, as they have the greatest impact on learning outcomes.
- 2 A CLASS observation is an opportunity for an observer to witness the interactions and behaviors that teachers exhibit naturally. We then take CLASS language and tie those behaviors in the classroom to the framework, and measure the quality of those interactions.
- 3 You may or may not know a CLASS observer is coming to your classroom. In either case, continue as you normally would.
- 4 A CLASS observer aims to remain invisible during an observation. If they seem unavailable or disconnected, it is not personal. They do not want to distract or shift the observation.
- 5 CLASS observers will move about the room to where the action is—usually where you and the majority of the children are.
- 6 Typically, a CLASS observer will observe for four 20-minute cycles, taking 10 minutes after each cycle to score.
- 7 A CLASS observer looks at the overall environment and the average experience of the children in the learning setting. If you have a co-teacher, both of you are responsible for what's happening in that classroom.
- 8 A CLASS observer is also looking at how the children interact with their teachers and with their peers. How do they respond to you, and to each other? How effective the interactions are is often gauged by the children's responses and behaviors.
- 9 Don't change anything because a CLASS observer is coming; you've worked so hard on the routines of the children in your classroom, so changing things can negatively impact your score.
- 10 CLASS observers expect children to do what children do—things are going to happen, but it is how you handle those things that a CLASS observer is paying attention to.



Check out the accompanying Teaching with CLASS Podcast episode!

Listen to our podcast for educators, Teaching with CLASS, for actionable tips you can implement in your classroom! teachstone.com/teaching



HELPING STUDENTS LEARN THE RULES

1

Don't Overload them with Rules

- Rules should be short, simple, and easy to monitor.
- The younger the kids, the fewer the rules. Too many rules are confusing for children and hard for staff to monitor.

2

Communication is Key

- Communicate the rules frequently, especially at the beginning of the year, as new children join your class, or after a long break
- Ensure everyone on the team consistently enforces the rules
- Frame rules by stating what you want children to do, not what you don't want them to do
- Be specific with the behavior you'd like to see, such as "Share your toys" and "Use your inside voice"

3

Model the Behavior You Want to See

- Reinforce the behaviors you want to see. Catch them being good and be specific in your praise
- For example, a heartfelt "I see you're cleaning up your center" will go a lot further and have more meaning than the generic "good job."
- When someone acts up, don't overreact. Children are children; they like to test the waters. When this happens, stay calm and redirect.
- Putting your fingers to your lips to signal quiet is a great strategy. Gently restating the expectations works well, as does getting in close physical proximity.
- Do what we teach children to do: step back, take a deep breath, and count to 5. When you calmly redirect, you show them how to react to stressful situations.

HOW TO SET UP INFANT & TODDLER LEARNING SPACES TO FACILITATE EXPLORATION

1

Change It Up

- Add new things to your room, and rotate toys
- Change the theme often to encourage interest and exploration
- Experiencing new toys and activities helps children to be more engaged

2

Be Excited about Toys and Materials Yourself

- Show the children new and fun things
- Your excitement helps them to feel excited.

3

Make Each Area Serve a Purpose

- Organize different spaces to designate a clear purpose
 - Have an art table next to your art materials
- Keep materials clean, organized, and in good working condition

4

Make Your Space Warm and Inviting

- Add a cozy, private space where children can go to decompress
- Display children's work and photos to make the space feel like theirs
- Add elements from the children's different cultures to your room
- Use items from nature, such as fish and plants

5

Follow Children's Leads

- Follow their lead regarding toys and materials
- Mirror the behavior of the children to show you are interested in their play and ideas
- Observe the children to learn their interests so you can introduce things they might like. Use your space to facilitate the child's exploration and learning.
 - If they are interested in toys with shapes on them, grab other toys with shapes and introduce those.

5 SCAFFOLDING STRATEGIES

for Improving Quality of Feedback

Scenario: A child is playing with blocks and is frustrated that the tower keeps falling down.

1

Ask Prompting Questions

“What do you think would happen if we didn’t build the tower quite so tall?”

2

Give a Range of Possible Answers

“Do you think we need bigger blocks at the bottom or should we make two smaller towers?”

3

Make Suggestions

“Your block tower keeps falling down. Do you want to try putting all the bigger blocks at the bottom?”

4

Use a Demonstration

As the teacher, make your own block tower to demonstrate how the blocks work best.

5

Provide Physical Support

The teacher can help support the blocks at the bottom or catch the block tower so the child can stabilize it.

LUNCHTIME CONVERSATIONS

Here are some prompts you can use at lunchtime to encourage conversation in your classroom.

- What does this food remind you of?
- Where do you think this food came from?
- What will you eat for lunch?
- Tell me about a meal you had with your family.
- Tell me about what you saw...on the playground. On a walk. Yesterday when mom/dad picked you up.
- Tell me something you learned from a friend today.
- What is something you did today that was helpful?
- What is your favorite area to play in today?
- Why do you think babies only drink milk?
- What did you have for supper last night? How do you make that?
- Who prepares the food at your house?
- Where do you shop for your food?
- What challenges did you conquer today?
- What amazing thing did you discover?
- What do you think you will do this weekend?
- What did you do last night?
- How did you get to school?
- What do you do when you get home?
- Who did you play with? What did you guys play with? How do you play that?
- Tell me about a meal you had with your family. Where did you eat?
- Find nature items at an outdoor time, like pine cones, or flowers, or pretty rocks to bring as centerpieces to the table to initiate discussion.
- Let's pretend you are going to plan a meal for the president. What would you serve? What foods do you think the president likes? Where would you have the meal?

CLASSROOM TRANSITIONS

1

Children Know What is Expected

- Practice call-and-response, model the behavior, and have the children practice freezing and focusing their attention, as they would during a transition.
- Give a warning before the transition time. This allows children to start wrapping up and know that a transition is coming. Incorporate Regard for Student Perspectives by inviting a child to circulate with a 2- or 5-minute warning sign.
- Use a picture card schedule so children know what comes next.
- Use positive reinforcement and encouragement when you see attention and teamwork during cleanup.

2

Use Cues to Signal the Transition

- Use visual cues posted near transition locations to provide visual prompts for the next transition or schedule change such as photos of a coat, hat, and boots to prompt a child to get ready to go outside.
- Music, songs, a bell, or other predictable noises help signal the start of a transition.
- Set a timer to show how much time is left before the transition.
- One of the children can give the signal (for instance ring a triangle), then guide the others to strike a pose to help children stop what they are doing and begin cleanup.

3

Provide an Opportunity for Learning

- If a transition might take longer, (for example waiting to switch classrooms, or walking to the cafeteria), use the time as a learning opportunity by incorporating patterns, naming colors, letters of the alphabet, etc. into how students line up or move.
- Remember that many important skills can be built during cleanup and transitions including sorting, classifying, teamwork, and problem-solving.

Ideas collected from discussion in the CLASS Learning Community.

MORNING GREETING

Research shows that when teachers started class by welcoming students at the door, academic engagement increased by 20 percentage points and disruptive behavior decreased by nine. Here are some tips to help you make the most of morning greeting,

1

Be Prepared

Have things ready for the day so you can greet students without distraction. Set up high-interest materials on tables or centers.

2

Establish Arrival Routines

Routines establish trust and a feeling of safety. A special handshake, morning job, poem, or drawing activity can set the tone for the day.

3

Pause and Connect

Take a few moments to allow students to decompress, shift gears, and connect. A big smile can communicate the warmth and respect they need for a fresh start.

STRATEGIES TO ENGAGE CHILDREN IN CONVERSATIONS

1

Step 1: Engage

- Get down on the child's physical level (by kneeling, for example).
- Listen to what the child says or pay attention to what they are doing or pointing at.
- Observe the child's facial or body expressions.

2

Step 2: Encourage Conversations

- Comment on or describe what the child is doing and wait for a response.
 - "You like the trains. You are working hard to build a large train track."
- Ask questions about what the child is doing or plans to do.
 - "What are your plans for those blocks?"

3

Step 3: Extend Language and Learning

- Repeat what the child says, then add a little bit more or a new vocabulary word.
 - Label or describe:
 - **Child:** I like it.
 - **Teacher:** You like juicy peaches.
 - Provide more information:
 - **Child:** (pointing outside) Dark!
 - **Teacher:** The sky is dark. It looks like it may rain soon.
- Help make connections between what is happening in the classroom and in their homes or communities.
 - "What does this remind you of?"
 - "You like playing with stuffed animals; do you have any animals at home?"

INCREASING SELF- & PARALLEL TALK

What is it?

Self-Talk

When the teacher narrates their own actions. In addition to being actionable, self-talk needs to occur simultaneously with the action.

Parallel Talk

When the teacher provides language for children's actions. It resembles sportscasting.

Why is it important?

Self-talk and parallel talk expose children to meaningful language. By hearing various uses and forms of language, children develop new language skills.

Incorporating it into your classroom

1. Start Small

Choose one time of day to practice. Meal time can be a great option. In self-talk, narrate what you're doing: "I'm opening the bag of crackers and placing four on each plate." Students are exposed to words like "placing" and can match the word "four" to the number of crackers they see on their plate.

Try saying, "I am..." as you move about.

With parallel talk, provide language for the children's actions, such as, "Look at you! You're putting your ham on your crackers like a sandwich!"

Try saying, "I see you're..." as you interact.

3. Keep it Conversational

Use these strategies in a back-and-forth, conversational way, being careful not to bombard children with details.

Frequently pause so that children may join in, either verbally or nonverbally.

2. Build Relationships

Engage quiet or nonverbal children by joining them in play and describing both of your actions, focusing on the child's interests, without expecting verbal responses from the child.

"You're playing with trains. You're working hard to build a large train track." The child will be exposed to personalized language in a relaxed setting, and your relationship will be strengthened by sharing an enjoyable activity together.

BEHAVIOR GUIDANCE STRATEGIES

PROACTIVE

1

Provide Clear and Simple Expectations

Use simple and specific language so that children understand exactly what you expect. For example, instead of saying, “Don’t throw the blocks,” say, “We build with blocks.”

2

Be Proactive and Plan Ahead

Anticipate times when disruptive behavior is more likely to occur and plan accordingly. Have activities and experiences ready and available. Children who can move from one activity to another are more likely to remain engaged. Try a song, book, or game to play when there is a delay or children have to wait.

SUPPORTING POSITIVE BEHAVIOR

3

Patiently Redirect

Provide a gentle reminder, a soft touch, or a predetermined signal that stops or prevents challenging behaviors from escalating. For example, when a child starts to climb on the table, pat the seat of his chair to remind him to sit.

4

Provide a Strategy

Help children know what they are feeling and what to do when they become frustrated, angry, or upset. Acknowledge and validate how they feel and provide a strategy. “It is hard to wait. I think it is hard to wait sometimes too.” or “You are really frustrated. Would you like to stomp your feet? How about a hug?” You can also say what is not okay. “You look like you are really mad. It is okay to be mad. It is not okay to hit. I will not let you hit. Let’s go over here together and you can be mad.”

5

Understand Children’s Development

By better understanding how a child’s behavior may be related to her stage of development, you can respond in positive ways. For example, it might not be appropriate to expect a young child to understand how to share a toy.