

Third Party Observer Protocol

Early childhood observations using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (*CLASS*®) are designed to provide compelling evidence related to the nature of interactions between children and educators. *CLASS*® looks at interactions that research has proven promote children's social/emotional and cognitive development. Observers should conduct observations with sensitivity and professionalism, and everyone involved should be clear about their role in the observation.

Purpose of Observation

CLASS® assesses the extent to which educators effectively support children's social and cognitive development. Each *CLASS*® tool contains one or more domains, which include several dimensions. Each dimension is defined by observable indicators and behavior markers. For example, within the domain of Emotional Support, the Positive Climate dimension includes the indicators of relationships, enjoyment, positive communication, and respect. Each of those indicators contain observable behavior markers, such as emotional connection, smiling, verbal or physical affection, warm voice, etc.

Pre-K-3rd *CLASS*®: The *Pre-K-3rd CLASS*® 2nd Edition tool is organized to assess three broad domains of interactions among educators and children. This observation tool is designed for classrooms with children in preschool through third grade.

Domain 1: Emotional Support

Positive Climate, Negative Climate, Educator Sensitivity, Regard for Child Perspectives

Domain 2: Classroom Organization

Behavior Management, Productivity, Instructional Learning Formats

Domain 3: Instructional Support

Concept Development, Quality of Feedback, Language Modeling

Infant-Toddler *CLASS*®: The *CLASS*® 2nd Edition *Infant-Toddler* tool is organized to assess two broad domains of interactions among educators and children and is designed for classrooms with children between birth and age three.

Domain 1: Emotional and Behavioral Support

Positive Climate, Negative Climate, Educator Sensitivity, Regard for Child Perspectives, Behavior Guidance

Domain 2: Engaged Support for Learning

Facilitated Exploration, Language Modeling

Observation Scheduling and Classroom Selection

1. Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) provides a list of early childhood sites participating in the Louisiana Early Childhood Care and Education Network. The University of Louisiana at

Lafayette's CLASS team randomly selects 50% of the total number of classrooms; ensuring at least one infant, toddler, and pre-K classroom is selected at each site (when applicable).

2. Monthly, the UL Lafayette CLASS administration schedules observations for each third-party observer in their assigned regions.
3. The UL Lafayette CLASS administration contacts each site by phone and/or email prior to the month they will be observed to verify site level information:
 - Site contact person
 - Physical address
 - Phone number
 - Email Address
 - Optimal Learning Time
 - Total number of classrooms by age type (pre-K, toddler, or infant) and educator information
4. The UL Lafayette CLASS administration emails electronic letters to the site principals and/or directors and carbon copies the Community Network Lead Agency (CNLA) contacts, notifying them of the month window in which the observation(s) will occur.
 - The letter states, "If you have scheduled events during this time that preclude our observations (e.g., scheduled field trips, picture day, health screenings, holidays, educator absences, professional development days), please contact the UL Lafayette CLASS administration by email classactull@gmail.com no later than 1 week before the scheduled timeframe of the observation."

Observer Protocol Steps

1. Each observation will take place at an assigned **date** and **time**. Prior to the observation, the site/school being assessed will be provided with written notice and telephone/email contact by the UL Lafayette CLASS administration as noted above.
2. Prior to the scheduled observation:
 - Observers review their schedule for potential conflicts and notify the UL Lafayette CLASS administration prior to the scheduled observation to change their assigned educator and/or site location.
 - Before entering the site/school, the observer should know the age type (infant vs. toddler vs. pre-K) they are assigned to observe and the educator's name. Observers should refer to their schedule and observation ticket for the observation details. Observation details should be documented on UL Lafayette CLASS observation checklist.
3. Upon arrival at the site/school:
 - The observer must report to the administration office and:
 - Introduce himself/herself to office staff and administrator (if available),
 - Present identification and sign-in on appropriate site documentation,
 - Present a *Child Care Criminal Background Check (CCCBC)* determination letter,

- Receive a current classroom roster to verify classroom information with administrator/director or designee (i.e., classroom locations by age, ensure 50% of enrolled children are in attendance),
 - Verify the correct spelling of the educator's name,
 - Receive an updated daily schedule for the classroom being observed,
 - Ask the educator or administrator if there are any special considerations of which the observer should be made aware and
 - Request access to a quiet space for four, 10-minute scoring cycles (pre-K only).
- If a second observer/double coder is present for the observation, he/she must follow the same procedures above. The lead observer will select the classroom according to his/her schedule and the double coder will accompany the observer to that classroom. Double coding/shadow scoring will only take place when it is possible to meet the safety protocols outlined by the site as well as local, state, and national guidance.
4. Classroom selection:
- A classroom must have the regularly assigned lead educator present during the observation.
 - The lead educator must have been working in that role for at least 10 school days.
Exceptions: Lead substitute educators are eligible for a CLASS® observation if they have been in the classroom for at least 10 consecutive school days.
 - UL Lafayette CLASS administration will provide educator names for each observation along with a monthly calendar.
 - If the educator provided is no longer employed by the site or the educator is in a classroom with a different age type, the observer should contact the UL Lafayette CLASS administration for assistance.
 - If observers are unsure whether a classroom has been observed by another third-party observer, they should contact the UL Lafayette CLASS administration before they begin observing.
5. Upon entering the classroom, the observer will introduce himself/herself and request a daily schedule (if they have not received one from the office). Based on the daily schedule, the observer will plan for the approximate two-hour observation/scoring. The educator should notify the observer of any schedule deviations, or special considerations, which may affect the observation. The observer may be accompanied by a second observer to double code/shadow score simultaneously. The primary purpose of double coding/shadowing scoring is to ensure inter-rater reliability, which has no reflection of the quality of the site being observed or alters the score.
6. Observers will not interact with educators beyond requesting a daily schedule, details for completing the observation checklist and classroom roster (if administration did not provide upon arrival) and will do their best to refrain from and minimize any communications, distractions, or intrusions into the classroom.
7. The observation will consist of **four 20-minute observation cycles**, each followed by **10-minute scoring cycles** (average 120 minutes total time) for all observations.
8. In pre-K classes, when possible, the observer will leave the classroom to complete each 10-minute scoring cycle. When a quiet space is not available at the site the observer may sit outdoors to complete scoring. This is not an opportunity to collect additional observational data for pre-K

observations. To minimize distractions in infant and toddler classrooms, UL Lafayette CLASS observers follow Teachstone's® recommendation that observers remain in the classroom when scoring. If observers remain in the classroom, they will turn their back on the class and quietly complete the scoring. If children approach an observer, he/she will kindly redirect the child into classroom activities.

9. Based upon site reported optimal learning times, the **CLASS**® observation typically starts at the beginning of the school day and continues throughout the morning for approximately 2 hours. The total time the observer is present at the site is dependent upon the daily schedule and extracurricular activities. The following activities, pull-outs, and specials **will not** be observed:
- Physical Education, Music, Computer, Library, Art,
 - Cafeteria-based meals,
 - Toileting in pre-K classrooms where the whole classroom visits the toilet together,
 - Outdoor recess **is not** included in pre-K observations but is included in infant and toddler observations (as per Teachstone® guidelines). Observers may seek clarification on outdoor activities with multiple classes outdoors at the same time, ensuring they can follow their lead educator and the children in that classroom.
10. Observers **will not**:
- Ask educators to change schedules, move rooms, wake up children or rearrange children or groups
 - Engage in back-and-forth conversations with children or educators
 - Conduct observations during the 10-minute break time between cycles
 - Conduct more than four cycles of observations
 - Use their phone during the observation (time must be kept via a clock, watch, or stopwatch)
 - Share feedback immediately following an observation

At the conclusion of the observation, the observer will confirm with the educator that the observation is complete. ***There will not be an exit interview after the observation, however, general feedback of the two highest and lowest dimensions for all third-party observations is entered into the Early Childhood Observation System (ECOS).***

11. Solutions to expected problems on the day of the observation:
- Educator is not available/Classroom not available/Unable to complete the observation
 - If it is practical (close enough/time available) and the classroom is likely to become available for observation, the observer should wait until the observation can begin.
 - If the site/school has multiple classrooms with children of the same age as the originally assigned classroom, the observer should contact the UL Lafayette CLASS administration for reassignment. **Observers will attempt to observe at an alternate location if the site observation will begin within a 30-minute window of the original optimal learning time.**

- New educator
 - New lead educator (employed or with group of children less than 10 school days) – see method above.
- Fifty percent of enrolled children are not present on day of the observation
 - Fifty percent of children must be present. See method above.
- The observer SHALL NOT exchange infant for toddler rooms, toddler rooms for pre-K classrooms (or the reverse).
- Children approach observer(s)
 - Observers will not ignore children's bids for attention or greeting; they will simply state their purpose of being in the classroom (to do their work) and kindly redirect the children to their activities.
- The site/school may have mixed classes with infants and toddlers or toddlers and preschoolers
 - Contact the UL Lafayette CLASS administration to determine which age type the classroom is classified as in ECOS.
 - For infant and toddler classrooms and mixed infant-toddler classrooms, the Infant-Toddler *CLASS*® tool will be used.
 - For mixed toddler and pre-K classrooms, the Infant-Toddler *CLASS*® tool will be used if the majority of the children are 35 months and younger and the pre-K *CLASS*® tool will be used if the majority of the children are preschool age (3 years and up).

Note: A September 30 cut-off date determines the initial classroom configuration each academic year.

12. If an observer enters a classroom and determines that he/she is related to or associated with someone in the room, he/she must **IMMEDIATELY** notify the UL Lafayette CLASS administration and remove him-herself from the room. Additionally, if there is any question as to whether a perceived or potential conflict of interest exists the observer will contact the UL Lafayette CLASS administration and allow them to make the final determination.
13. In the event an observation is unable to be completed due to non-compliance by a site, the UL Lafayette CLASS administration will notify the LDOE immediately. In the unusual circumstances of any suspected abuse or neglect observed at the time of the observation the observer must report the observed behaviors to the Department of Children and Family Services as mandated by law.

Additional Protocol Information

1. All observers must have proficient computer skills (i.e. typing, computer access, scanning documents, etc.) to be able to complete electronic forms.
2. Observers are **not allowed** to perform more than one observation per day and cannot directly contact sites/schools to reschedule an observation.

3. At all times observers should be professional in demeanor and attire and never let personal preferences influence scoring.
4. Notes must be detailed and must provide concrete examples of observations from the classroom. Summary statements for each dimension should address each indicator noting the presence/absence of behaviors. UL Lafayette CLASS administration will conduct random data checks on 5% of the total number of observations completed. Feedback will be provided on the quality, completeness, and accuracy of observation data and corresponding evidence. If the information is not well-supported and is questioned by the LDOE then the observer may be required to provide additional information or re-writing. If there are significant delays between cycles, observers should note the reasons. If there are any interactions that go beyond the ones stipulated here, the observer should document those interactions at the time of the observation.
5. Observers should contact the UL Lafayette CLASS administration via email (classactull@gmail.com) **by 3:00 pm the SAME day** the observation is completed in two emails: one with the date and classroom code and second email with the educator's name, age group, and observer ID and shadow ID (include for shadow scoring observations). *Note: If an observation is conducted on a Friday, please email by 12:00 pm that same day.*
6. For all shadow scoring observations both the lead observer and the shadow observer must enter their observation data into the UL Lafayette CLASS web-designated system **by 3 pm the SAME day** of conducting the observation. For audit observations, UL Lafayette CLASS observers may be required to send additional observation details (notes, summary statements, booklet) to the shadow observer within **3 days** of the observation for review.

NOTE: If an observer does not achieve 80% inter-rater reliability, the observer will cease observing classrooms and will work with UL Lafayette CLASS administration to increase reliability to 80% or higher by coding additional observation videos and participate in a second shadow observation before conducting observations alone. If an observer is deemed unreliable over two consecutive shadow scoring observations, they will be relieved of their duties. UL Lafayette CLASS staff will track observers' scoring trends to ensure observer drift is not occurring throughout the observation year.
7. New UL Lafayette CLASS observers will participate in at least one practice observation (per age type) with a veteran observer prior to conducting observations alone. The observers will follow the same procedures for shadow scoring observations (see number 6).
8. The *CLASS*[®] scoring form must be entered into ECOS with the accompanying feedback two highest and two lowest scores for each dimension for all third-party observations within **2 days** of the completed observation.

9. The observation scoring booklet and related notes must be postmarked within **7 days** of the completed observations. Observation materials may be turned in earlier, but any materials turned in later will result in corrective action. All materials should be mailed to the following address:

Attn: Kara Farmer-Primeaux, 200 East Devalcourt, Lafayette, LA 70506.

10. UL Lafayette CLASS administration will answer all questions from observers within **48 hours** of submission. Direct questions should be emailed to **classactull@gmail.com**.
11. Questions to observers from UL Lafayette CLASS administration related to *CLASS*® scoring **MUST** be answered in a timely manner within **2 days** of receiving the inquiry.
12. At **no time** should an observer discuss classroom observations or *CLASS*® scores with another observer. All information is confidential and should only be discussed with UL Lafayette CLASS administration.
13. Yearly *CLASS*® recertification is the duty of the observer. Proof of current certification must be provided to UL Lafayette CLASS administration and updated as needed. A *CCCBC* is also the duty of the observer. A copy of the background check must be received by the UL Lafayette CLASS administration (via e-mail) prior to the observer's first scheduled observation. The observer should have a copy of the *CCCBC* determination letter with them for each observation and present it to the director.

QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

Questions regarding classroom observation procedures or interpretation can be directed to:

CLASS Main Email Account classactull@gmail.com

Kara Farmer-Primeaux, Project Director	kara.farmer@louisiana.edu	337-482-1569
Brandi Harrison, Project Coordinator	brandi.harrison@louisiana.edu	337-482-1558
Alyssa Villermin, CLASS Analyst	alyssa.villermin1@louisiana.edu	337-482-1961