

LEADERS' *Cagniappe*



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Sherrel Pointer
**DIRECTOR,
TREASURES FROM HEAVEN**

Every day is a day of learning for children and teachers at Treasures from Heaven, a center rated Excellent two years running by the Louisiana Department of Education. As CLASS™ results for the 2018-2019 year are being finalized, some directors may be thinking about what to do with the feedback they have received from observers in their centers. **But for director Sherrel Pointer, CLASS™ is a tool her teachers use year-round, and feedback is a way of life.** With Infant CLASS™ being rolled out for a statewide practice year in 2019-2020, she looks forward to extending the conversation with her teachers of the youngest children in her program.

Here are Sherrel's beliefs when it comes to observation and feedback:

The quality of teacher-child interactions hinges on a strong staff who wants to grow. Sherrel asks targeted questions about child engagement during the interview, on the rare occasion that she has a teacher vacancy. She also finds out if they have experience getting feedback so she understands how to support them. Once hired, on day one, Sherrel is observing their child interactions and providing feedback, laying the groundwork for ongoing training about the CLASS™ dimensions.

**TEACHER
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Teacher training should start with creating positive climates. "Most teachers are already nurturers. I point out those practices and the language we use and discuss the CLASS™ indicators. They may not know that hugging kids helps create a positive climate—this is stuff they are already doing but didn't know the name. Their success with this helps for when they get to the next parts of the tool, when we ramp up."

Sherrel conducts at least six unannounced observations of each of her teachers a year. She uses CLASS™ scores to identify behavior markers and scaffolds the tool so that it isn't overwhelming, allowing teachers to grow, just as they support children one step at a time. **Teachers need scaffolded learning too.**

By starting with the parts of the CLASS™ tool that come more easily for her teachers, Sherrel trains her teachers on effective interactions. She spirals the learning of the CLASS™ tool, one dimension at a time, reinforcing previous conversations on quality engagement.

Fostering a culture of growing and learning with teachers leads to student learning.

"If it's important enough for teachers to build relationships with kids, I have to do that with them—it's a parallel process—If I expect them to be positive with children, I am positive with them. If I expect them to scaffold learning with kids, I scaffold learning with them. I always start with 'How else can we do it to do it better?' Asking their perspective on how to improve." Sherrel is so enthusiastic about quality teaching that her network, East Baton Rouge Parish Schools, brought her on as a part-time instructional coach for ten centers that have requested support.

High-quality learning starts from birth.

In her own program, she is excited to extend these conversations with more teachers when her infant teachers are observed using Infant CLASS™ for the 2019-2020 practice year. She signed up for the Infant CLASS™ training and pilot as soon as both were available. Before Picard arrived at her center to conduct an Infant CLASS™ observation during the 2018-2019 Pilot year, Sherrel had already started conducting practice Infant CLASS™ observations and providing coaching and feedback. During the first third party observation of Sherrel's infant classroom, Ms. Joyce scored a 6.56! Sherrel couldn't be prouder of her staff of learners.

But this is not where they started. Before coaching, Sherrel's veteran infant teacher of 14 years was passionate about curriculum, but didn't know how to incorporate language in her interactions. New knowledge of the CLASS™ indicators helped her to infuse language mapping into her daily routines, like during diaper changing and feeding, for example, and this has changed relationships in her center. "The teacher has remarked that she didn't know what respect for infants looked like. It's been a learning process for her. I now see those shifts in everyday interactions. The children and teachers all benefit."

