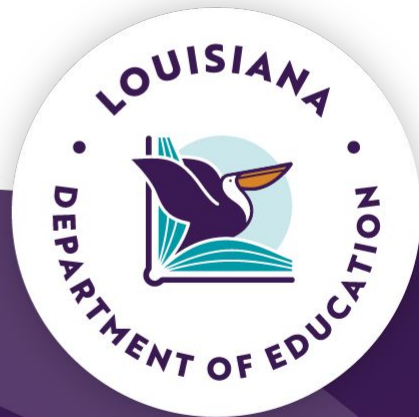


Preparing for CLASS® Observations for Classrooms with Young Children with Disabilities

Young Children with Disabilities Community of Practice
October 28



Agenda

- I. Session Overview
- II. Think it Through
- III. Defining Young Children with Disabilities and CLASS®
- IV. How Does CLASS® Measure Interactions of Young Children with Disabilities?
- V. Recommendations when Preparing for CLASS® Observations
- VI. Closing



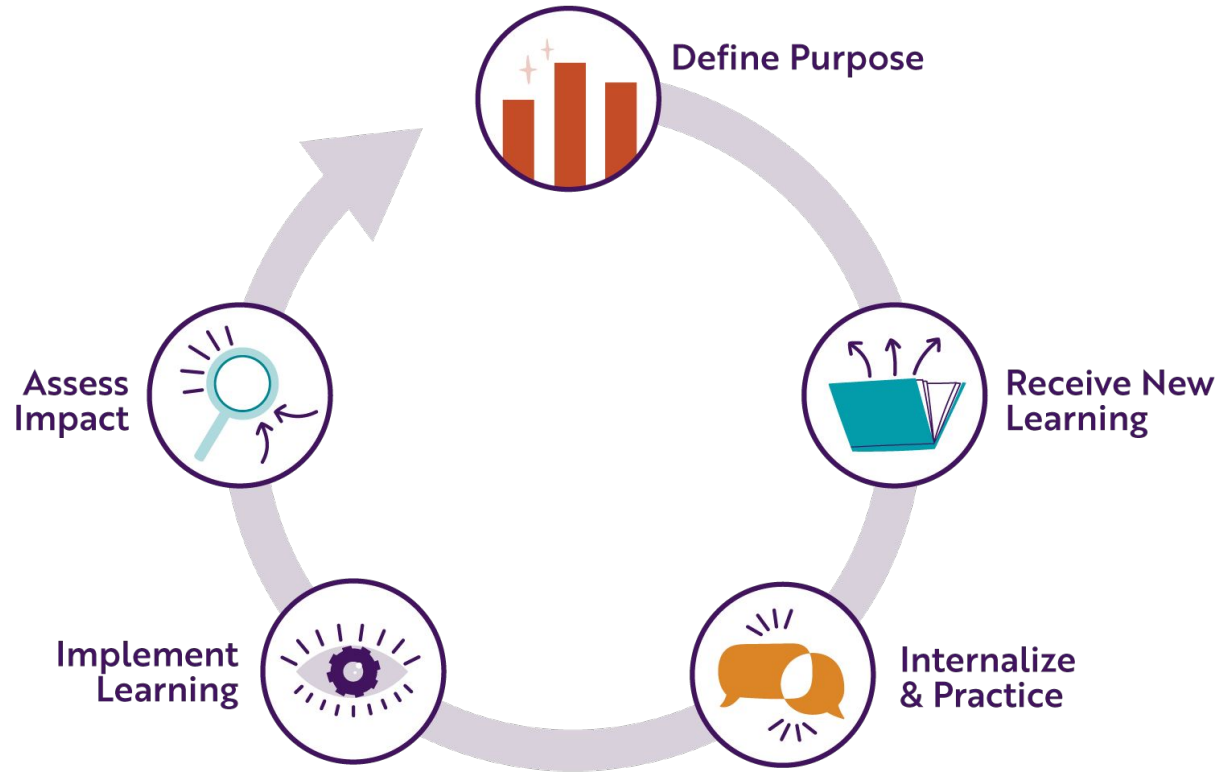


Session Overview

Louisiana's Education Priorities

- ✓ **Early childhood** leading to kindergarten readiness
- ✓ **Literacy** instruction aligned to the Science of Reading
- ✓ **Math** instruction from foundational to advanced skills
- ✓ Opportunities ensuring a **meaningful high school experience**
- ✓ An effective **teacher for every student**
- ✓ Expand **educational choice** for students and families

Professional Learning Cycle



Objectives

During this session, participants will:

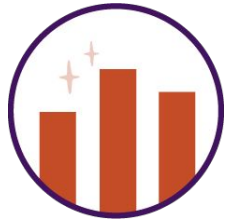
- Explore the Teachstone CLASS® tool guidance on classrooms with young children with disabilities
- Review Teachstone recommendations and CLASS® considerations when preparing for observations in classrooms serving young children with disabilities





Icebreaker

Think



How does having young children with disabilities impact the way that educators prepare for CLASS® observations?





Defining Young Children with Disabilities and CLASS®

Young Children with Disabilities



Teachstone has many valuable [resources](#) about the CLASS® tool and how it can be used in settings that serve young children with disabilities.

Teachstone defines children with disabilities as:

- Children who have recognizable and unrecognizable disabilities
- Children who have delays in one or more developmental domains that require individualized services or accommodations

Note: These children may or may not have diagnosed disabilities.

CLASS®



CLASS® dimensions describe interactions that support the learning and development of children who have different backgrounds, experiences, abilities, and needs.

CLASS® is not:

- The use of specific instructional strategies
- The implementation of a specific model or approach





How Does CLASS® Measure Interactions of Young Children with Disabilities?

Regard for Child Perspectives

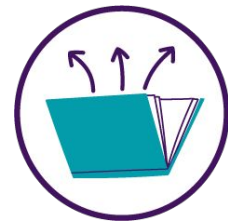


The indicator definition of the Regard for Child Perspectives dimension in the Toddler and Pre-K CLASS® tools can support young children with disabilities by:

- Providing activities that reflect **individual** child interests
- Encouraging interactions through **verbal and nonverbal** communication
- Allowing children the **opportunity to move and interact** within the classroom

Share out: Why are these aspects important for educators to understand when preparing to be observed and meet the needs of all children in settings where there are children with disabilities?

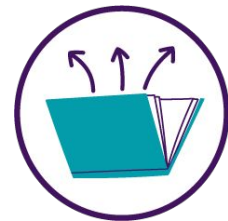
Reflecting Individual Child Interests



Through the CLASS® lens, educators who score higher in Regard for Child Perspectives consistently:

- Offer children choices in completing tasks
 - For example: If a child has an aversion to paint, the teacher provides other ways to successfully complete the painting activity.
- Create opportunities for children to express their ideas and independence
 - For example: Children are encouraged to take risks, and educators allow children to complete activities in ways that make sense to the children.
- Encourage peer learning
 - For example: The teacher pairs young children with disabilities with peers who may have strengths in areas that can assist young children with disabilities be successful.

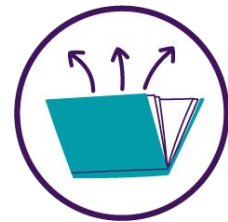
Observing Autonomy, Leadership, and Child Expression



The CLASS® tool can be used by site leaders and coaches to assess appropriate classroom adaptations and modifications. Educators should demonstrate the following behaviors for observers:

- Adapt or modify materials so that children can engage with them appropriately. Educators can make materials larger, brighter, or easier to grasp, stabilizing them with tape or velcro, and rotating materials to match current interests and skill levels.
- Adapt or modify activities so that children can contribute meaningfully.
 - Example: Children who are nonverbal or have limited expressive language can be seen using their preferred communication method (e.g., ASL, communication device, picture symbols).

Supporting Language Modeling

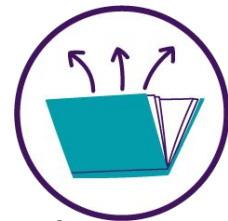


The aspects of Language Modeling that are particularly relevant when observing in a setting that is serving children with disabilities include the following:

- Promoting and expanding verbal and nonverbal communication of the children in their classrooms
- Using nonverbal cues as needed
- Providing individualized language support



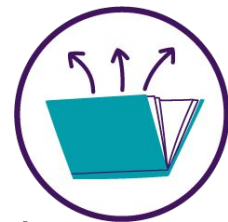
Supporting Nonverbal Communication



Supporting nonverbal communication, which is relevant to the Instructional Support and Emotional Support domains, focus on how teachers and children interact and can be facilitated through techniques such as the following:

- Using adaptive tools or equipment
 - For example, using picture support can allow a child who is nonverbal a way to communicate their wants and needs.
- Providing additional wait time for children to respond
 - This allows children who need more time to process information the opportunity to communicate what they understand, so that they can participate in the activities.

Individualized Prompts



- Behavioral markers called “individualized prompts” demonstrate ways that educators provide supports to children based on their abilities.
 - Examples may include:
 - Educators may use more closed-ended questioning with a child with disabilities that has just recently begun to communicate using a mix of verbal and nonverbal communication methods.
 - Educators may use a few words from a picture-exchange system to help the child understand and practice new verbal language.
- Teachers should focus on facilitating language development rather than the complexity of language that is used.



Recommendations when Preparing for CLASS® Observations

CLASS[®] Observations



Teachstone provides [recommendations](#) for CLASS[®] observations for settings that serve young children with disabilities. Teachstone encourages observers and educators to review this information prior to observations in these classrooms.

These recommendations include the following:

- characteristics of settings serving young children with disabilities
- steps to take prior to observations

Educators should review these recommendations to inform their practices and ensure that they are in alignment with classroom expectations when teaching children with disabilities.

Characteristics of Settings Serving Young Children with Disabilities (YCWD)



Most children with disabilities are typically served in settings alongside their nondisabled peers. When a child's needs cannot be met in this setting, they may be placed in a smaller specialized setting.

Both regular and special settings that serve young children with disabilities should include the following characteristics:

- Individualized support to develop a variety of skills across developmental domains
- Smaller adult-child ratios
- Differing communication styles, including verbal and nonverbal communication
- Adaptive equipment that allows children to participate in activities
- Specialized teaching strategies, including prompting, scaffolding, or breaking up learning opportunities into smaller tasks

Characteristics of Settings Serving YCWD



Individualized Support

Individualized adaptations should be made to daily routines and activities, and intentional, specialized instruction should occur to help children develop a variety of skills across developmental domains.

Teachers can make adaptations to their routines and activities to allow the child to learn and grow. Examples include the following:

- Allowing a child to enter with an item of comfort, such as a lovie or toy
- Feeding a child at a different time, due to medical or sensory needs
- Allowing a child to sit in a chair instead of on the floor, with the group
- Providing music for transitions between routines

These adaptations help the teacher to better support the individual needs of the child.

Characteristics of Settings Serving YCWD



Smaller Adult-Child Ratios

Smaller adult-child ratios may be required to support young children with disabilities.

- Some children may require additional support from an adult to help them be successful throughout their day. Additional support may be provided by a co-teacher, paraprofessional, or specialized service provider.
- Specialized services could include the following:
 - Speech-language pathologist to target and support communication by providing therapy for language and articulation
 - Physical therapy to target and support movement, strength, balance, and coordination to achieve greater independence
 - Occupational therapy to help children develop fine and gross motor skills, sensory processing, and self-care skills
 - Behavioral support to improve interpersonal skills

Characteristics of Settings Serving YCWD



Differing Communication Styles

Communication styles include verbal and nonverbal communication.

- Alternative communication may include using gestures, signs, picture systems, tablets, and recorded speech devices to communicate with adults and peers.
 - It is important that educators understand how individual children with disabilities communicate and encourage the use of communication that fit the needs of the child.
 - Encourage the use of assistive technology and ensure that devices are charged and available at all times and within reach of children who are learning to use them.
 - **Important:** Remember that this is the voice of these young children! Young children will need to learn when to use their voice/devices just as any other child would in the classroom.

Characteristics of Settings Serving YCWD



Adaptive Equipment

Adaptive equipment allows children to participate in activities alongside their peers.

- Adaptive equipment could include the following:
 - Special seating, such as wobble seats or tomato seats, that are deeper for children who cannot sit in a regular chair safely due to physical limitations
 - Specialized feeding utensils that attach to a child's hand, when the child does not have the ability to grasp a regular utensil
 - Examples of adaptive materials include the following:
 - Chunky or round crayons or markers
 - Adaptive scissors
 - Thicker paper, such as cardstock

Characteristics of Settings Serving YCWD



Specialized Teaching Strategies

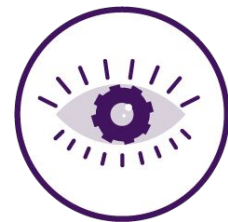
Specialized teaching strategies are helpful when educators are working with young children with disabilities. These strategies include prompting, scaffolding, or breaking up learning opportunities into smaller tasks.

- Prompting is a teaching approach that includes verbal cues or gestures, modeling, physical or hand-over-hand assistance, or visual pictures to help a child complete an activity.
 - This strategy should be used as a “least-to-most” approach. This means that educators will help the child learn new skills by experiencing success and gradually fading the prompting to reduce the level of support that is needed.
- Scaffolding is a teaching strategy that provides support to a child by bridging their current abilities to new learning goals.
- Breaking up tasks is a strategy that will help build independence, confidence, and skill mastery by reducing the load into smaller more manageable steps.



Recommendations for Early Learning Settings Serving Children with Disabilities

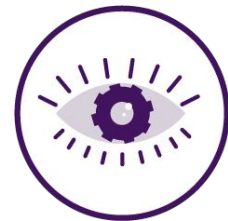
Before the Observation



Provide Information about the Setting:

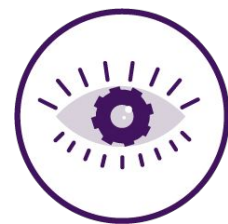
- Number and Ages of Children
- Number of Children with Disabilities and Developmental Ages/Characteristics to provide context
 - **Important:** Observers should not know which children have disabilities or details pertaining to IEPs since this is confidential information.
- Information about the way children communicate, such as signs, pictures, pointing, or assistive technology
- Information about what children are learning, such as communication skills, self-help skills, choice-making, developmental skills (academic or physical)
- Other adults that will be present during observation and their roles

Upon Arrival



- Expect the observer to become familiar with the adults who are present in the classroom. This will help them to understand the interactions of these adults during the observation.
- Expect the observer to take some time to watch the classroom before beginning the formal observation to become familiar with the classroom and children. This will provide time for the children to become familiar with the observer.
- Do not provide information about the special education status of any child.

During the Observation



General Considerations

- Utilize the child's typical mode of communication. The observer will be tasked with determining whether interactions are effective between the adults and children.
- Methods of instruction used with children with disabilities may be more directive than observers typically see. Utilize the methods that are appropriate for individual children.
 - For example: An adult may use a hand-over-hand approach to help children complete a task. This would be considered scaffolding.
- Attend to routines, including transitions from one activity to another. Educators may use explicit learning objectives to ensure that children focus on specific tasks.

During the Observation

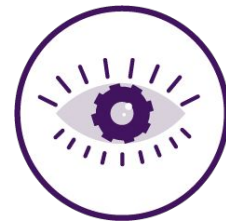
Scaffolding and Individualized Support

Do not be afraid to provide the appropriate supports during your observation.

- Young children with disabilities may require additional wait time to respond or they may use a combination of pictures or other methods of communication.
- Educators should support children to meet behavioral expectations.
 - How do you monitor child behavior and model positive behavior?
 - How do you help children regulate by providing appropriate support?



During the Observation



Verbal/Nonverbal Communication

- Educators may need to verbalize for a child.
 - For example: A child points to the bathroom card, and the educator confirms the child's communication by saying, "You need to go to the bathroom. Let's go!"
- Nonverbal responses to questions through facial expressions, gestures, signs, pictures, or pointing **are** responses. Educators should look for these cues and provide more information to build on the child's understanding.



Closing

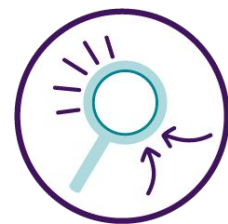
Important Considerations



Important Reminders

- The descriptions in the CLASS[®] manuals provide examples of what interactions may look like for every dimension and indicator. However, the examples do not include all of the ways that interactions may happen.
- Focus on the intention of the dimension and indicators and reflect on whether or not the interactions meet the intent of the dimensions and indicators.

Next Steps



For Educators:

- Familiarize yourself with the CLASS® [resources](#) from Teachstone regarding observations in [settings](#) serving young children with disabilities.

For Educators and Observers:

- Familiarize yourself with [Recommendations for CLASS® Observers](#) and other Teachstone resources regarding observing in classrooms who serve children with disabilities.