Nicole Angeles
(408) 406-5574
n.angeles25@yahoo.com

Introduction

Classroom environment is important for many reasons. Children need to feel safe in order to learn and grow. The overall setting in a classroom is connected to students' engagement and interest. Not only does the environment the child in that specific classroom, but it also effects the learning in future classrooms as well. The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) is a universal tool that rates the quality of the classroom in grades preschool to third-grade. The CLASS is based on interaction between students and teachers. How teachers use materials in the classroom is also incorporated within the scoring system. There are three domains: emotional support, classroom organization and instructional support. Within each domain, there are three or four dimensions. Climates, sensitivity, and regard for student perspectives are scored to rate emotional support. Behavior management, productivity and instructional learning formats are scored to rate classroom organization. Concept development, feedback and language modeling are score to rate instructional support (Pianta et al. 2008).

Methods

On November 5, 2014 the Associated Students Child Development Laboratory (ASCDL) Tulip room was observed for three cycles from 2:00 P.M. to 3:15 P.M. Two more cycles were observed on November 7, 2014 from 10:20 A.M. to 11:05 A.M. Each cycle called for twenty minutes of observation and ten minutes to score. In this assessment the observers were able to complete scoring in about five minutes after each observation. On average, there were 6.4 children and 3.2 teachers during the cycles. Children were observed participating in free play, snack and small groups. A group of children were observed outside, and then they went inside while another group of children ran outside. Children were observed eating snack, working on a puzzle, running outside and dressing up in dramatic play clothes.

Results

	Observer 1	Observer 2
Emotional Support	**6.2**	**5.95**
Positive Climate	6.6	6
Negative Climate	1	1.6
Teacher Sensitivity	5.8	6
Regard for Student Perspective	5.4	5.4
Classroom Organization	**4.5**	**5.07**
Behavior Management	4.8	6
Productivity	4.4	5.2
Instructional Learning Formats	4.4	4
Instructional Support	**3.7**	**5**
Concept Development	2	3.4
Quality of Feedback	3.6	5.4
Language Modeling	5.6	6.2

Table 1 Observer 1(N.A.) Observer 2 (S.K.)

Table 1 above states each observer's results for The CLASS. The three domains are in bold. Within each domain there are three or four dimensions; in the table, these scores can be found beneath the bolded domain. During a cycle, the ten dimensions are scored on a scale from 1-7. Once all of the cycles are complete, an average is computed for each dimension. The dimension scores are then used to find the average for each domain. An example of this is calculating the mean of behavior management, productivity and instructional learning formats to rate classroom organization. The most disagreement in scores can be seen in four dimensions: productivity, instructional learning, concept development and quality of feedback.

Discussion

There are many dimensions in this tool and they are all scored on the same basic scale. The low score is a one or two. A middle score is a three, four or five. A high score is a six or seven. Positive climate scored high because teachers and children were observed smiling, high fiving and having eye contact with each other. Negative climate scored low due to the lack of

yelling, harsh tones, punishment or humiliation. Teacher sensitivity and regard for student perspectives scored in the middle due to teachers sometimes, but not always, being aware of children's need for more assistance and encouraging children to talk and share ideas. The average of these four dimensions was high for the emotional support domain. Therefore, in the classroom children feel connected, respected and acknowledged.

Behavior management, productivity and instructional learning formats all scored in the middle. Teachers were sometimes, but not always, anticipating problems, giving clear instructions and actively facilitating activities. Though activities were set up for the children and some directions were stated, classroom organization received a middle score. When a classroom is better regulated, children are better at regulating themselves. If a classroom is sometimes regulated, then children will sometimes self-regulate.

Concept development scored low because teachers rarely used long-answer questions with the children, rarely encouraged planning and rarely connects activities to previous ones. Quality of feedback scored in the middle due to teachers sometimes asking more questions and giving hints or assistance. Language modelling scored in the middle because teachers would sometimes repeat children's words and use advanced language with the children. The average of these three dimensions resulted in a low score for the instructional support domain. The way teachers implement the activities and learning is ultimately the way children are going to gain anything from the curriculum.

Productivity, instructional learning, concept development and quality of feedback scores had the greatest difference between observers. Most of the differences came from bias, misconception and overall setting. One bias an observer had had was that she works in a preschool classroom very similar to the one observed. Even though one should be objective

when using the tool, it is difficult not to compare what is done in her classroom to the one being observed. Misconception occurred when observers did not fully understand the meaning of a dimension. An example would be when one observer thought a positive teacher response feel under positive climate and the other observer thought it fell under quality of feedback. The overall setting in the classroom requires more than one teacher and there is more than one child. Observers cannot watch everything at once; therefore, different teachers could have been observed and rated.

After reflecting on this assignment, I've learned that bias is not an easy thing to ignore. Even though this is a universal tool that has clear definitions of each dimension, bias can still influence how an observer will score the classroom environment. However, the CLASS uses a consistent rating scale that is easy to learn and remember. Assessing the interactions between teachers and students instead of presence of materials is an advantage for the CLASS as well. Children can have many, high-quality materials, but if a teacher is not there to help engage and scaffold, then they will not learn nearly as much than if a teacher was present. Overall, the CLASS was built on research and theory, and it should continue to be utilized in the preschool to third grade classrooms.

References

Pianta, R.C., La Para, K. M., & Hamre, B. K. (2008). *Classroom Assessment Scoring System: Manual - PreK.* Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.