Shannon Knapp

Introduction

Assessing the environment of a classroom is very important for teachers, parents and the students. Teachers need to know how they are doing and how well the setup of the classroom is supporting the learning of the students. Parents need to know how the classroom is run and they can use the results of the assessment to choose a school for their children to attend. Students benefit for their classroom being assessed because it helps the teachers and administrators know what is going on in the classroom environment and improve it. The assessment used to evaluate the environment in the Magnolia room was the C.L.A.S.S. The C.L.A.S.S has ten dimensions Positive Climate, Negative Climate, Teacher Sensitivity, and Regard for Student Perspective, Behavior Management, Productivity, Instructional Learning Formats, Concept Development, and Quality of Feedback, and Language modeling. All the dimensions are on a scale of one to seven, with one being low and seven being high.   
The score for negative climate is reversed in the overall scores because a low negative climate is good but the total for emotional support should be high which includes the scores for positive climate, the reversed score of negative climate, teacher sensitivity and regard for student perspective all added together and divided by four. Classroom organization is calculated by adding up behavior management, productivity, and instructional learning formats and dividing that by three. Instructional support is calculated by adding up the scores for concept development, quality of feedback and language modeling and dividing that number by there. Emotional support, classroom organization and instructional support should all be high for a classroom to be considered a high quality classroom.

Methods

The assessment of the Magnolia room took place on November fifteenth and November seventeenth. On the fifteenth observations took place between two and three fifteen in the afternoon and on the seventeenth they took place from ten twenty to five after eleven in the morning. The amount of students and adults in the classroom changed between each cycle of observation during cycle one five students and three adults were in the classroom. When cycle two started there were eight students and four adults but by cycle three there were five adults and eight students. Cycles four and five were observed on the seventeenth and each had two adults but cycle had six students and five children were in the environment during cycle five. Cycle two was observed from the grass field outside the class while the other cycles were observed from inside the observation booth. Cycles one and four were observation of the students and adults inside the classroom and all the other cycles the class was outside participating in activities in the outside portion of the classroom. All the cycles were for twenty minutes and we used the same watch each time. Most of the cycles were during free choice time because that is the structure of the classroom most of the day. The only cycle that had more structure was cycle three because they were doing a short teacher lead activity. The observations were of typical activities in the classroom.

Results

The following table compares the results of the two observers. The results are averages across the cycles.



The two observers had a large disagreement on Behavior management, Quality of feedback and concept development. The scores for the other dimensions were less than one point different or were effect by the scores of these dimensions.

Discussion

The results show a high positive climate in the classroom and a low negative climate. There is high teacher sensitivity and regard for student perspective this causes emotional support to be high. Classroom organization, productivity, and instructional learning formats are mid-range on the scale. Behavior management is high. Instructional support is mid-range and concept development is low. Quality of feedback is mid-range and language modeling is high.

Having high emotional support means the classroom is positive and the teachers meet the needs of the children. The teachers are responsive when students need help and notices when a student needs assistance even when they do not express the need. High positive climate means the teacher is almost always positive if she is not positive all the time and even when telling a student to change their behavior the teacher is positive. Having a low negative climate is important for a classroom because it means there is a lack of yelling, teasing and anger. High teacher sensitivity means the teacher is aware, responsive, addresses problems and comforts the students. High regard for student perspective means the teacher is flexible and focuses on the students’ needs, the students get a choice in the classroom, the students can express themselves and are able to more freely around the classroom. High emotional support means the teacher and the students have respect for each other and the classroom is set for the students not the teachers.

Classroom organization changes based on the scores of behavior management, productivity, and instructional learning formats. Behavior management is high which means there are clear expectations that are consistent in the classroom. It also means that when the students misbehave they are redirected and positive behavior is recognized more than negative behavior. Productivity is mid- range which means that routines are not always fallowed; transitions are a little longer than they should be and the teacher deals with many disruptions instead of teaching. Instructional learning formats are in the middle which means the teacher does not always facilitate lessons and learning, the teacher is inconsistent in the materials that are used to gain interest in activities and learning objectives are not always clear to the students.

Instructional support is in the middle which means the students are sometimes left alone to learn, and are not always given information when needed. Concept development is low which means there is rarely analysis done by the students, they do not have much time to be creative and concepts are not related to their lives. Quality of feedback is mid-range which means scaffolding is occasionally provided, there are occasional back and forth exchanges between the teacher and students, and there is only occasional encouragement. Language modeling is high in the classroom which means there is frequent conversation in the classroom, open-ended questions are asked frequently and the teacher expands on a student’s response.

The two observers had high disagreement on three dimensions behavior management, quality of feedback and concept development. Disagreements could have come about because there were many teachers and students in one part of the classroom and each observer could have been focusing on a different group of students and a teacher. The classroom was also very active which could cause each observe to hear something different. The two observers could have interpreted the same situation in different ways. Observe 1 could have seen one teachers’ reaction to misbehavior and observer 2 could have seen a different teachers’ response which could drastically change the score for behavior management. Quality of feedback scores can change for similar reasons the two observers could be listening to two different interactions between teachers and students. The two observers highly disagreed on concept development which could mean the two observers interpreted the activities in the classroom differently. One of the observers currently works at the childcare facility that was assessed but in a different classroom. The other observer worked at a lower rating facility and see dramatic differences between the two which makes them more likely to give a higher school. The two observers have some connection to the teachers in the classroom which could cause them to rate the classroom higher than it actually is. The reliability could be improved by discussing what each observer understood each dimension would include and what it did not include. This would also help each observer have a better understanding of the dimensions.

I learned a lot from doing this assessment about my view of how a classroom should be run and how a believe teachers and students should interact. I also learned it is hard to be objective when you know the teachers in the classroom. I learned everything in a classroom is not black and white there is a lot of gray area. I also learned there are a lot more dimension to a high rated classroom then if they are learning or not. I would use this assessment to judge a class my child was going to if I was allowed to. I think this test is reliable if the observers are objective and have no stake in the results. This assessment is very helpful for a school because there are many categories and the scoring is clear. This assessment is valid and feasible for a school because it does not take long and the observer does not have to go through an excess amount of training.

Reference

Pianta, R., & Paro, K. (2008). Classroom assessment scoring system (CLASS) manual. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Pub.