

# OHS CLASS™ Reviewer Field Guide FY 2014



**HEAD START**



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## 1. Introduction

The Pre-K Classroom Assessment Scoring System™ (CLASS™) is an observation tool used to analyze and assess the effectiveness of interactions between children and teachers in preschool classes. Data from CLASS™ observations can be used for a variety of purposes, including professional development, program improvement, policy-making, and monitoring. The Office of Head Start (the OHS) began using the CLASS™ tool in Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 to collect information about the experiences of children in Head Start programs for monitoring purposes. OHS uses a research-based, standardized methodology for using the CLASS™ tool to measure grantee performance and identify whether children served by Head Start programs receive high-quality services. This methodology is described in detail in this CLASS™ Reviewer Field Guide.

The FY2014 CLASS™ *Field Guide* is organized into several sections:

1. **Introduction**
2. **CLASS Observations**
3. **CLASS Reviewer Reliability**
4. **Onsite Activities**
5. **The CLASS™ Sample and Scheduling**

Use of the CLASS™ software is covered in a separate CLASS™ Software Guide.



## 2. CLASS™ Observations

### 2.1 CLASS™ Observation Cycles

*In each class selected for observation, CLASS™ Reviewers conduct two 30-minute observation cycles.* Consistent with the CLASS™ user manual, each observation cycle should include a 20-minute observation followed immediately by 10 minutes of scoring. If an observation cycle is cut short, CLASS™ Reviewers should score the observation if the observation cycle has lasted ten (10) minutes or more. If the observation lasted less than 10 minutes, it should not be scored and does not count. Once a Reviewer begins an observation cycle, he or she should never pause and continue later. Scoring must occur immediately after the 20-minute observation cycle.

*The two observation cycles within each class must be consecutive.* The CLASS™ Reviewer must complete both observation cycles for a given class before moving to observe another class. The two observation cycles within the class should occur on the same day and should be back to back, with a break only for an unobservable activity. For example, if a CLASS™ Reviewer conducts one observation cycle in class A, and the children in that class then go down for nap, the Reviewer may not observe in another class while waiting for nap time to end. Instead, the Reviewer must wait until the children wake up and then complete the second observation cycle. Only after the second observation cycle has been conducted in class A may the Reviewer observe another class.

Reviewers should always check to make sure it is feasible to conduct two consecutive observation cycles in a class prior to beginning the first observation cycle. If a Reviewer has conducted one observation cycle in a class but unexpectedly cannot complete a second observation cycle, he or she should indicate in the software that the second observation could not be completed and enter a justification describing why. If it is possible for the Reviewer to return to that class on another day to complete two consecutive observation cycles, he or she should do so. If time does not permit the Reviewer to return to the class, it is reasonable to have one or two classes in a sample in which only one observation cycle is observed.

### 2.2 When to Conduct a CLASS™ Observation Cycle

Reviewers must observe only at appropriate times to ensure that the CLASS™ tool is used in a valid and consistent way across all grantees.

#### *Observable Activities*

Observations **CAN** and **SHOULD** be conducted during any of the following:

- ▶ **Teacher-initiated activities.**
- ▶ **Child-initiated activities.**



- ▶ **Large- and small-group times.**
- ▶ **The morning or the afternoon** (afternoon may include time after naps).
- ▶ **Meals/snacks.** Mealtimes are acceptable observation times, regardless of location (classroom, cafeteria, or elsewhere). If a meal occurs in a cafeteria where other classes which are not being observed are present, CLASS™ Reviewers **should** observe. Reviewers should position themselves close enough to the class to hear the interactions.
- ▶ **Transitions.** Observations should continue (or can begin) during and through transitions. If, during an observation cycle, the children transition from center activities to hand-washing and then to snack, Reviewers should continue to observe throughout those activities and transitions. Other examples of transitions include selecting center activities at the end of circle time and getting ready to go outside.
- ▶ **Structured gross motor activity (indoor or outdoor).** Gross motor activity that is part of the instructional day should be observed. Examples may include a nature walk or organized activities/games played outside or in a gym area.
- ▶ **Outdoors or indoors.** If the activities are conducted outdoors and are similar to activities that would be observed indoors, the time is observable. For example, in warm climates, the class may be conducted in an outdoor “classroom,” or meals may be eaten outside.

Observations are **NOT** to be conducted during any of the following:

- ▶ **Naptime**
- ▶ **Times when less than 50% of the enrolled children are present in the class.** If less than 50% of the enrolled children are present in the class, the class cannot be observed. The percent of children present is based purely on the number of children enrolled and present; it does not take into account the child’s funding source (e.g., Head Start, Pre-K, etc.). The OHS needs to monitor the quality of classes in which Head Start funded children are enrolled, regardless of which children are present at any given time.
- ▶ **Arrival or departure times.** Reviewers should use their best judgment to determine when arrival time has ended or departure time has begun. If fewer than 50% of the children have arrived or more than 50% of the children have left for the day, the class is not observable.
- ▶ **Unstructured gross-motor activity (indoor or outdoor).** If the class is engaged in gross-motor activity with no structured activities, the Reviewer should not conduct an observation.
- ▶ **Special events.** If events are taking place that do not reflect a typical day, an observation should not be conducted. Examples include fire drills, Grandparent’s Day lunch, and other special events.
- ▶ **Times the class is being led by an individual other than the regular primary teaching staff.** Support staff or volunteers may be present in the classroom as additional staff, but the class is not observable when the class is being led by such individuals. Examples might include the Nutrition Coordinator leading a lesson on healthy foods, visiting firefighters talking to the children about safety, or other non-regular classroom staff leading an activity.



- ▶ **When the CLASS™ Reviewer is not fluent in the primary language(s) of instruction.** Reviewers must be able to understand the interactions between teachers and children and therefore cannot observe if they do not fully understand the primary language spoken in the class during any given observation cycle.

## *Presence of Teaching Staff/Substitutes*

CLASS™ observations should be conducted when the lead teacher is present and engaging with the class. The following are clarifications to this rule:

- ▶ **New Teacher.** A new teacher who will be the permanent teacher in a class may be observed after being in the class for ten (10) or more consecutive school days. A new teacher who has been in the class fewer than ten (10) school days should not be observed.
- ▶ **Substitutes for Lead Teacher.** A substitute lead teacher who has been in the class fewer than ten (10) school days may not be observed. When the lead teacher is on extended leave and the *same* substitute has been in the class for ten (10) or more consecutive school days, the class may be observed.
- ▶ **Substitutes for Assistant Teacher.** A substitute assistant teacher may be observed – as the focus of the observation or simply as a part of the class - regardless of whether or not he or she has been in the class for ten days or more.
- ▶ **Assistant Taking Lead Teacher Role.** If the regular assistant teacher is acting as the substitute lead teacher due to the lead teacher’s absence or involvement elsewhere in the classroom, an observation *can* be conducted.
- ▶ **Floater as Lead Teacher.** If a school-wide “floater” is acting as the substitute lead teacher, the observation *cannot* be conducted.

## 2.3 Reviewer Presence in the Classroom

It is important that Reviewers minimize the effect of their presence in the classroom and do not interfere with either the activities or dynamics of the classroom. Observation cycles may be conducted from more than one vantage point depending on classroom activity. The Reviewer should find a place to observe where all or most of the activities can be seen and where teacher-child and child-child interactions can be heard.

When entering the classroom, the Reviewer should acknowledge the teacher and quickly introduce him- or herself if it will not disrupt the flow of activities (for example, a simple nod, wave or a “hello” smile may be sufficient). While observing, Reviewers should remain neutral, avoiding any non-verbal cues such as smiles or looks of concern that teachers may perceive as feedback on their performance.



Reviewers will take notes for reference during scoring. Reviewers sometimes take notes on paper and sometimes take notes using laptops. . When using laptops, Reviewers should ensure that the computer does not interfere with classroom activities or with the observation. Reviewers should ensure the laptop is sufficiently charged before entering the classroom so that they do not need an outlet, or should plug in discreetly without disturbing children or posing a safety hazard.

## 2.4 Interacting With Grantee Staff, Children, and Teachers in the Classroom

Reviewers should avoid any interactions with teachers and children while they are observing. If children approach the CLASS™ Reviewer to inquire about his or her presence, the Reviewer should be honest and direct, saying something like, “I am here to see your class,” while avoiding extended conversations that would interfere with the children’s ability to engage in activities and the Reviewer’s ability to observe.

Reviewers may respond to Grantee staff and teachers’ questions about the process (e.g., the length of the observation), but CLASS™ Reviewers may not provide any information about scores or observations. If CLASS™ Reviewers are asked about the scores, they must respectfully decline to answer.

CLASS™ Reviewers are not responsible for explaining the CLASS™ tool or the rationale of the CLASS™ methodology to Grantees or staff. Grantees should be aware that the OHS is required to use the CLASS™ tool for monitoring all Grantees that provide Head Start center-based preschool services. CLASS™ Reviewers may refer questions to the RTL or the Head Start Director. The RTL may refer Grantees to the Information Memorandum from 2008 for more information:

[http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/IMs/2008/resour\\_ime\\_011\\_0081908.html](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/IMs/2008/resour_ime_011_0081908.html)



## 3. CLASS™ Reviewer Reliability

OHS maintains a reliability system to ensure all CLASS™ Reviewers are implementing the tool and the methodology correctly.

In FY 2014, each CLASS™ Reviewer must pass two tests of reliability. The first is the recertification process administered by Teachstone. All CLASS™ Reviewers must recertify annually.

Dual coding, which is the second reliability test, is the process OHS maintains to ensure Reviewers are coding accurately. During dual coding, each CLASS Reviewer will code alongside a qualified CLASS Dual Coder to ensure that the CLASS Reviewer is reliable.

All CLASS Reviewers receive training and support both from Teachstone and from the OHSMS contract team throughout the year.



## 4. Onsite Activities – Executing a CLASS Review

### 4.1 Monday (or CLASS™ Reviewers’ First Day On-Site)

The Review Team Leader (RTL) will provide the Sample List and observation schedule to the Grantee first thing Monday and should help the CLASS™ Reviewer identify the Grantee’s CLASS™ point person. The RTL and the Grantee’s Program Director will conduct an introductory meeting with the full Review Team and some members of the Grantee’s staff Monday morning. The CLASS™ Reviewer should attend that meeting only through introductions, and should then meet separately with the Grantee’s CLASS™ point person to review the observation schedule and check for any unanticipated conflicts (e.g., a sick teacher or a closed center) before leaving to begin observations.<sup>1</sup> The meeting between the Grantee’s Point Person and the CLASS™ Reviewer might also include the RTL, depending on the circumstances and the timing. The table below highlights points the CLASS™ Reviewer (and the RTL, if included) must cover during the meeting with the Grantee’s CLASS™ point person. The CLASS™ Reviewer should strive to begin observations Monday morning to ensure the full sample is observed by the end of the week.

The following table provides an outline for a typical meeting between the CLASS™ Reviewer and the Grantee’s point person (and the RTL, if attending).

#### Meeting with the Grantee’s CLASS™ Point Person

Topic	Details
<b>Overview of the CLASS™ process</b>	Reviewers should discuss the CLASS™ methodology and explain that CLASS™ Reviewers must follow this methodology to get the most accurate representation of the quality of the classrooms.
<b>Confirm center locations</b>	Reviewers should confirm the address of each center in the sample and identify any transportation challenges, such as parking/traffic.  If the program is part of a school district, the Grantee may need to notify elementary schools of the Reviewer’s impending visit.

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<sup>1</sup> **For AI/AN Reviews, the CLASS™ Reviewer must stay for the entire introductory meeting.** In these instances, the RTL will begin the Monitoring Review by meeting with Grantee staff to learn about the Tribe. Review Teams will use this time to learn from the Tribe and collect information about how the Tribe conducts meals, the language spoken, communication practices between children and adults, norms related to eye contact, body language, how stories are told, etc.



Topic	Details
<b>Request basic class information</b>	For each class in the sample, Reviewers should request: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Lead teacher's name</li><li>▶ Total number of children currently enrolled (regardless of funding)</li><li>▶ Language of instruction and other languages spoken in the class</li><li>▶ Printed copies of all class schedules</li><li>▶ Information about any substitute teachers</li></ul>
<b>Assess viability of CLASS™ observations in each class</b>	Reviewers should ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Is the lead teacher present, with no planned time away during the review week? (If there is a substitute or new teacher, the Reviewer should ask how long he or she has been working in the class.)</li><li>▶ Are any special events planned that might prevent observations?</li><li>▶ Are there any challenges related to the class schedule (e.g., late start every Friday)?</li><li>▶ When do naps and unstructured gross-motor play occur?</li></ul>
<b>Review the planned schedule</b>	Reviewers should ask the Grantee (and delegates, as appropriate) to review the observation schedule to confirm it is feasible given distances, etc., and to identify any problems or anticipated challenges.
<b>Finalize transportation</b>	The RTL will work with the Grantee to determine whether transportation will be provided or whether CLASS™ Reviewers are expected to drive to each site.

CLASS™ Reviewers should check in with the Grantee's point person each morning to identify any new information that may impact the schedule of observations. For example, if a teacher called in sick or a center is closed due to inclement weather, the Reviewer should find this out *before* arriving at that location. The RTL may be a participant in these discussions.

## 4.2 Communicating with the RTL

CLASS™ Reviewers must check in daily with the RTL (and other CLASS™ Reviewers, when applicable) to report any schedule changes, sampling issues encountered, and anything of note



that they observed in the classroom (e.g., health and safety issues or issues with the teacher's implementation of the curriculum). Reviewers should not actively look for these types of issues. However, if such issues are noted while they are in a classroom, they should be reported to the RTL.

## 5. The CLASS™ Sample and Scheduling

### 5.1 How classes are selected for observation

The OHS has implemented a random sampling procedure to ensure that an adequate representative sample of classes is observed and forms the basis of the CLASS™ score. The sample of classes to be observed by the CLASS™ Reviewer will be pre-populated in the software seven (7) days prior to the review. This list is not to be shared with the Grantee until the team arrives on site.

The sample size, or number of classes, to be observed is a statistically driven calculation based on the Grantee's total number of eligible classes; it is not a percentage. Samples range in size. At smaller Grantees—Grantees with up to 11 eligible classes—CLASS™ Reviewers can expect to observe all of the Grantee's eligible classes. For large Grantees, the sample size may be as large as 74 classes. **When creating the schedule, RTLs should strictly adhere to the sample—both in terms of the number of classes identified and the precise classes selected to be observed.**

The list of classes in the sample (the Sample List) will identify the exact classes that must be observed, background information about the classes (e.g., schedule, type of program), and the center in which each classroom is located.<sup>2,3,4</sup> The sample is based on Head Start Enterprise System (HSES) data. Inaccurate HSES data increases costs and requires additional resources to adjust the sample.

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<sup>2</sup> CLASS™ observations should be conducted in Head Start center-based classes serving preschool children. These classes can either be part of a center-based or a combination program option. Observations should never be made using the Pre-K CLASS™ tool in Family Child Care or home-based settings, including socializations.

<sup>3</sup> When the sample includes a double-session, the CLASS™ Reviewer should make sure he or she goes to the correct session by looking at the program variation for the class on the Sample List. It is possible for both the morning and afternoon sessions of a double-session class to be included in the sample. In this case, both should be observed.

<sup>4</sup> When the sample includes combination-option classes, CLASS™ Reviewers should observe during the center-based segment. The class schedule on the Sample List should indicate the days on which the center-based segment is held; however, the CLASS™ Reviewer should confirm this with the Grantee during the scheduling process.



## 5.2 Scheduling observations from the Sample List

**Reviewers must do everything possible to visit all classes in the Sample List and preserve the original sample.** The RTL will create an initial schedule for the CLASS™ Reviewer's observations. As the CLASS™ Reviewer meets with the Grantee and learns more about the locations of the selected classes and other circumstances that may impact the observations, the CLASS™ Reviewer can and should make adjustments to the schedule to maximize the likelihood of observing all classes in the sample. Helpful tips to consider when reviewing the observation schedule include:

- ▶ Scheduling hard to-reach classes early in the week
- ▶ Scheduling classes that meet only two or three times early in the week
- ▶ Clustering observations at one center
- ▶ Using the children's nap time to eat lunch or get to the next location

The RTL and CLASS™ Reviewer should not schedule overlapping CLASS™ and Child Development and Education (CDE) or Child Health and Safety (CHS) observations. If a CLASS™ Reviewer arrives at a class at the same time as the CDE or CHS Reviewers, the CLASS™ Reviewer has priority to observe. CLASS™ Reviewers should never conduct CLASS™ observations while other Reviewers are in the classroom.

## 5.3 When to Rearrange the Schedule or Select Replacement Classes

During the course of a Monitoring Review, CLASS™ Reviewers are likely to encounter situations in which they must make quick decisions around whether to observe a class or re-arrange the observation schedule. CLASS™ Reviewers should be prepared to make their best judgment about whether to continue observations or change plans. **Under no circumstances should a Grantee alter the planned class schedule to accommodate a CLASS™ observation.** CLASS™ Reviewers should keep the following guiding principles in mind when making these decisions:

6. **Preserve the original classes sampled.** It is better to observe classes listed in the original Sample List than to select replacement classes, even if this sometimes means observing only one cycle in a class listed in the original Sample List.
7. **Preserve the original sample size.** It is better to observe a replacement class than to skip a class altogether and not achieve the original sample size.
8. **Breadth over depth.** It is better to observe in more classes across the different centers and delegates than to observe more observation cycles within the same class.



## *Determining Whether a Class Can Be Observed*

To determine if a class can be observed, CLASS™ Reviewers should go through the following questions:

**Question #1:** Can two consecutive cycles be observed in the class today?

**Question #2:** Can two consecutive cycles be observed in the class on a different day?

If the answer to these questions is 'No,' the Reviewer should ask:

**Question #3:** Can one cycle be observed in the class today or on a different day?

If the answer to question #3 is also 'No,' the reviewer should replace the class.

## *When a Class Must Be Replaced*

If a situation arises in which a CLASS™ Reviewer cannot observe a class and must select a replacement, he or she should use the software to do so and should never simply pick a replacement class based on convenience. Additionally, they must communicate immediately with the RTL via phone call or text message, giving the RTL the opportunity to help re-arrange the schedule in a way that minimizes scheduling conflicts or overlapping observations with the other Reviewers. If the RTL and the CLASS™ Reviewers are not able to communicate as soon as the need for rescheduling arises, CLASS™ Reviewers must use their best judgment to proceed efficiently with a re-arranged observation schedule.

Reviewers are able to select a replacement in the software without connecting to the Internet. If two CLASS™ Reviewers select replacements without synching, it is possible for more than one Reviewer to be presented with the same replacement class in the software. If this occurs, one of the CLASS™ Reviewers should observe the class selected as a replacement and the other Reviewer(s) should select a replacement for that class.

## *When a Class Must Be Skipped*

At the end of the review, when CLASS™ Reviewers close out, if any classes on the Sample List were not observed, the CLASS™ Reviewers should open each unfinished observation cycle and mark that they cannot observe the class, provide a justification, and indicate that they do not want a replacement class. The RTLs will also need to comment as to why any sampled classes were not observed when closing out the review. This can be done on the RTL Checklist page.



## Appendix: Glossary

**Class:** A unique group of children and a teacher

**Classroom:** The physical space used by a class

**Cycle or Observation Cycle:** One 20-minute observation plus the 10-minute scoring period

**Class Eligible for Sample:** Center-based or combination-option preschool classes in Head Start programs

**CLASS™ Reviewer:** An individual who is a CLASS™-certified observer and has been assigned to conduct the CLASS™ portion of a Head Start Monitoring Review by OHS's contractor: Danya International, Inc.

**CLASS™ Pre-K Observation Manual:** Official CLASS™ manual published by Brookes Publishing

**Double Session:** A center-based option with a double-session variation employs a single teacher to work with one group of children in the morning and a different group in the afternoon

**New Teacher:** A teacher who has been in the class for fewer than 10 consecutive school days and should therefore NOT be observed

**Observation:** Two complete observation cycles conducted in a single classroom (a 20-minute observation followed by 10 minutes of scoring, completed twice)

**Preserving the Sample:** There are two ways in which it is important to preserve, keep, or maintain the sample: (1) Observations are conducted in all of the classes specified in the Sample List; and (2) the quantity or number of CLASS™ observation cycles conducted is equal to the original sample, but replacements were used to achieve the exact quantity defined by the original sample

**Primary Teaching Staff:** The teachers assigned to a group of children

**Replacing a Class:** When a class selected for the sample cannot be observed, but another class can be observed in its place, this is considered replacing the class

**Sample:** The list of classes to be observed at a Grantee generated by the software and based on a statistical sampling algorithm

**Scoring:** The process of scoring each dimension of the CLASS™ instrument. Scoring must occur in the 10 minutes immediately following a 20-minute period of observation

**Skipping a Class:** When a class selected for the sample cannot be observed, and no other class can be observed in its place due to logistics or timing, the class is skipped