

How to Conduct an Informal Internal Assessment using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®)

Program Observation Instrument (POI) at-a-glance

- CLASS is a suite of instruments appropriate for use in center-based program settings:
 - Infant CLASS for observing infant classrooms in a child care center (birth – 12 months)
 - Toddler CLASS for observing toddler classrooms in a child care center (12 – 36 months)
 - Pre-K CLASS for observing preschool and Pre-K classrooms in a child care setting (36 months – Kindergarten)
 - K-3 CLASS for observing out of school time programs

Assessment at-a-glance

- Appropriate for center-based use.
- Complete a minimum of four observation cycles, each followed by up to a 10-minute period to review and reflect on observations notes.
 - 15-minute observation cycles for Infant and K-3
 - 20-minute observation cycles for Toddler and Pre-K
- Create four copies of the Informal Observation Form, one for each observation cycle.
- Select a different focus area (domain, dimension, indicator, or behavior marker) for each cycle.
- Use the age-appropriate Dimensions Guide to guide your observation.
- Observe and take notes during each cycle using a copy of the Informal Observation Form for each observation cycle.
- Pre-K CLASS and K-3 CLASS observers should not observe during indoor and outdoor gross motor free play time; structured gross motor activities can be observed.
- Consider each observation cycle a clean slate.
- Once all four observation cycles are completed, use the age-appropriate CLASS Internal Self-Reflection Tool to reflect on data from the four observation cycles.
- Create Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Goals based on the information collected on both the Informal Observation Forms and the CLASS Internal Self-Reflection Tools.

Required materials

- CLASS Informal Observation Form
- Dimensions Guide(s)
- Infant CLASS Internal Self-Reflection Tool
- Toddler CLASS Internal Self-Reflection Tool
- Pre-K CLASS Internal Self-Reflection Tool
- K-3 CLASS Internal Self-Reflection Tool

Supplemental resources and materials

- [Let's Talk Quality](#): Program Quality Assessment in PA Blog
- Infant CLASS Manual
- Toddler CLASS Manual
- Pre-K CLASS Manual
- K-3 CLASS Manual

Purchase or access the POI required and supplemental materials

- Dimensions Guide(s) – will receive a copy when attending age specific CLASS Professional Development (PD) offered by the PQA Team
- [Infant CLASS Internal Self-Reflection Tool](#)
- [Toddler CLASS Internal Self-Reflection Tool](#)
- [Pre-K CLASS Internal Self-Reflection Tool](#)
- [K-3 CLASS Internal Self-Reflection Tool](#)

Conducting Internal Assessment (IA) with the CLASS

1. Learn about the CLASS instrument or instruments you will use

- The more you learn about the quality practices described in the CLASS, the more accurate and useful your IA will be.
- Determine which CLASS instrument or instruments to use. What age groups are enrolled?
 - Your Quality Coach can support your selection process and connect you to a Program Quality Assessor for a detailed conversation about the options.
- It is recommended the teaching team from each classroom being assessed and the IA team become familiar with the expectations of the CLASS instrument or instruments being used and the relevant supplemental materials.
- Consider registering for CLASS PD.
- Review the Dimensions Guides from cover to cover.
- Contact a Program Quality Assessor.

2. Prepare to conduct the Internal Assessment

- If time has elapsed since your initial review of the CLASS instrument, re-familiarize yourself with the organization of the instrument and its quality expectations.
- Gather all materials you will need to conduct the observation including the age-appropriate Dimensions Guide(s). Use the CLASS Informal Observation Form to capture your notes, a blank document in your laptop, or handwrite your notes. Keep in mind that you'll be standing, sitting on the floor, moving around the classroom, and might go outside.
- Set aside at least two hours of time for the observation.
 - It may be helpful to let the children know that you will be visiting their classroom for a special project. You are going to watch them play and do their work and you will not be able to play with them while you are doing your work.
 - Review the classroom schedule, for Pre-K and School Age, you will not be observing indoor and outdoor gross motor free play.

3. Schedule the Internal Assessment

- The CLASS observation takes place while children are present.
- The CLASS instruments focus on the effectiveness of classroom interactions among teachers and children.
- Schedule CLASS observations when most enrolled children are present, and the children are in their assigned classroom/space.

4. Conduct the Internal Assessment

- Your role is to be an objective observer of the typical program day. Through your CLASS Assessor lens, you are looking at the effectiveness of teacher-child interactions during routines and activities.
 - Watch and record the who, what, and how of everything that is occurring in the classroom
 - Pay particular attention to the teachers' interactions and behaviors
- Use the age-appropriate Dimensions Guide to support note taking during the observation. When reflecting on the observation only consider what was observed, do not consider planned changes or what might have been done in the past.

5. Determine the Areas of Strength and Areas for Growth

- A completed CLASS observation will include the completion of the CLASS Informal Observation Form.
- Observation notes will likely include effective interactions as well as missed opportunities.
- Take the strengths-based approach when discussing observation notes, reflective questions, and next steps.
- Use the age-appropriate Dimensions Guide and Self-Reflection Tool to reflect on what was observed using the reflective questions help to encourage self-awareness and practice specific behaviors.

6. Review your findings

- Review your assessment findings with your IA team. Be sure to reach out to your Quality Coach and Program Quality Assessor with any questions. Together celebrate the observed strengths and identify how they can inform your improvement planning.
- Discuss areas where your team feels growth could occur and decide which areas are a priority. Be sure to create opportunities for everyone to contribute ideas and ensure everyone knows the next steps toward improvement.

7. Next steps

- Define your goals for growth and include them in your Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Plan.
- When planning your CQI goals, start small and make sure the planned change can be measured.
- Plan the timeline for your next IA cycle. Reassessing is a key piece of the CQI process and allows you to see if the action steps in your CQI plan are supporting your goals.
- Be patient. Growth takes time and some things might be outside of your program's ability to improve. Share your CQI plan with all staff members on your program's IA team and share your plan for ongoing communication with the IA team. Your CQI plan is a working document, not a final publication. It should be flexible, changeable, and evolving.
- Remember, you can continue to consult with your Program Quality Assessor even after your IA is completed. The Assessor has a wealth of knowledge of the scale and implementation practices to support your program in their CQI journey.