

# Classroom Observations for Quality Programming

~Early Childhood & Early Learning~

Chicago Public Schools  
Office of Early Childhood Education  
Assessment and Accountability Unit



# Why is Classroom Quality Important?

- Classroom quality alignment to children's later academic achievement and social competence (Curby et al., 2009)
- Language and literacy curriculum for preschoolers enhances children's learning skills (Justice, McGinty, Cabell, Kilday, Knighton & Huffman, 2010)
- Teachers use of language predicts children's expressive language outcomes, especially for at-risk preschoolers (Justice, Mashburn, Pence, & Wiggins, 2008)
- Book reading with preschoolers benefits their expressive vocabulary skills. (Hargrave & Senechal, 2000)
- Interactive writing is an appropriate activity for preschool children, and teachers can use interactive writing to teach many components of literacy. (Howell, 2009)

# What Can Be Learned From Classroom Observations

- The quality and climate of the classroom/program.
- The presence of indicators that are predictive of positive child outcomes.
- Strategies that support intentional instruction, and meaningful interactions.
- Fidelity of curriculum implementation and integration of informal and formal child assessment data.

# Why Focus on Early Literacy Development?

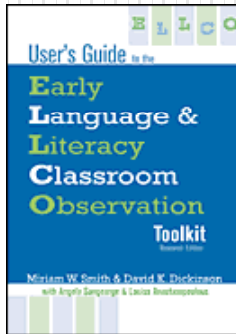
- Differences in the quantity and quality of children's early interactions with specific print-related and oral language experiences predict early school success. (Copeland & Edwards, 1990; Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Gunn, Simmons, & Kameenui, 1995, Hart & Risley, 1995; Heath, 1983; Smith & Dickinson, 1994; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998)
- Students who are at risk for academic failure are more likely to learn the skills they need in a high quality preschool program. (Bashir, 1989)
- Increasing book reading and improving conversation strategies have positive effects on children's language and literacy development. (Wasik & Bond, 2006)

# CPS: Early Childhood Observation Tools for Quality

---

Early Language and Literacy  
Classroom Observation Toolkit  
**(ELLCO)**

Classroom Assessment  
Scoring System  
**(CLASS)**



# Early Language & Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) (Smith, Brady & Anastasopoulos, 2008)

- Measures classroom environments and their effects on early literacy and language development
- Designed especially for preschool and early elementary environments
- Two Subscales: General Classroom Environment and Language and Literacy

# ELLCO Administration

- Classroom observations are conducted during a routine program day.
- Students and teachers are actively engaged in meaningful and intentional activities.
- The observation takes 2½ to 3 hours.
- Trained assessors who meet inter-rater reliability criteria conduct classroom observations.
- Assessors concentrate on the activities and interactions of all class members, with emphasis on the EC teacher, because the instrument is a reflection of teaching, learning, and the environment.

# ELLCO

## Structure of the Tool

---

### **General Classroom Environment Subscale**

*Section I: Classroom Structure*

*Section II: Curriculum*

### **Language and Literacy Subscale**

*Section III: The Language Environment*

*Section IV: Books and Book Reading*

*Section V: Print and Early Writing*

# **ELLCO**

## **General Classroom Environment Subscale**

---

### **Section I: Classroom Structure**

1. Organization of the classroom
2. Contents of the classroom
3. Classroom management
4. Personnel

# ELLCO

## General Classroom Environment Subscale

---

### Section II: Curriculum

1. Approaches to curriculum
2. Opportunities for child choice and initiative
3. Recognizing diversity in the classroom

# **ELLCO**

## **Language and Literacy Environment Subscale**

---

### **Section III: The Language Environment**

1. Discourse climate
2. Opportunities for extended conversations
3. Efforts to build vocabulary
4. Phonological awareness

# **ELLCO**

## **Language and Literacy Environment Subscale**

---

### **Section IV: Books and Book Reading**

1. Organization of book area
2. Characteristics of books
3. Books for learning
4. Approaches to book reading
5. Quality of book reading

# **ELLCO**

## **Language and Literacy Environment Subscale**

---

### **Section V: Print and Early Writing**

1. Early writing environment
2. Support for children's writing
3. Environment print

# ELLCO Scoring Scale

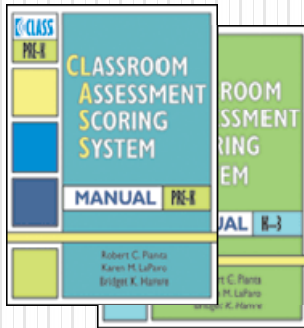
5 points (**Exemplary**) – *compelling* evidence

4 points (**Strong**) – *sufficient* evidence

3 points (**Basic**) – *some* evidence

2 points (**Inadequate**) – *limited* evidence

1 point (**Deficient**) – *minimal* evidence



# Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)

(Pianta, LaParo & Hamre, 2008)

- A system for observing and assessing the quality of interactions between teachers and students in preschool classrooms.

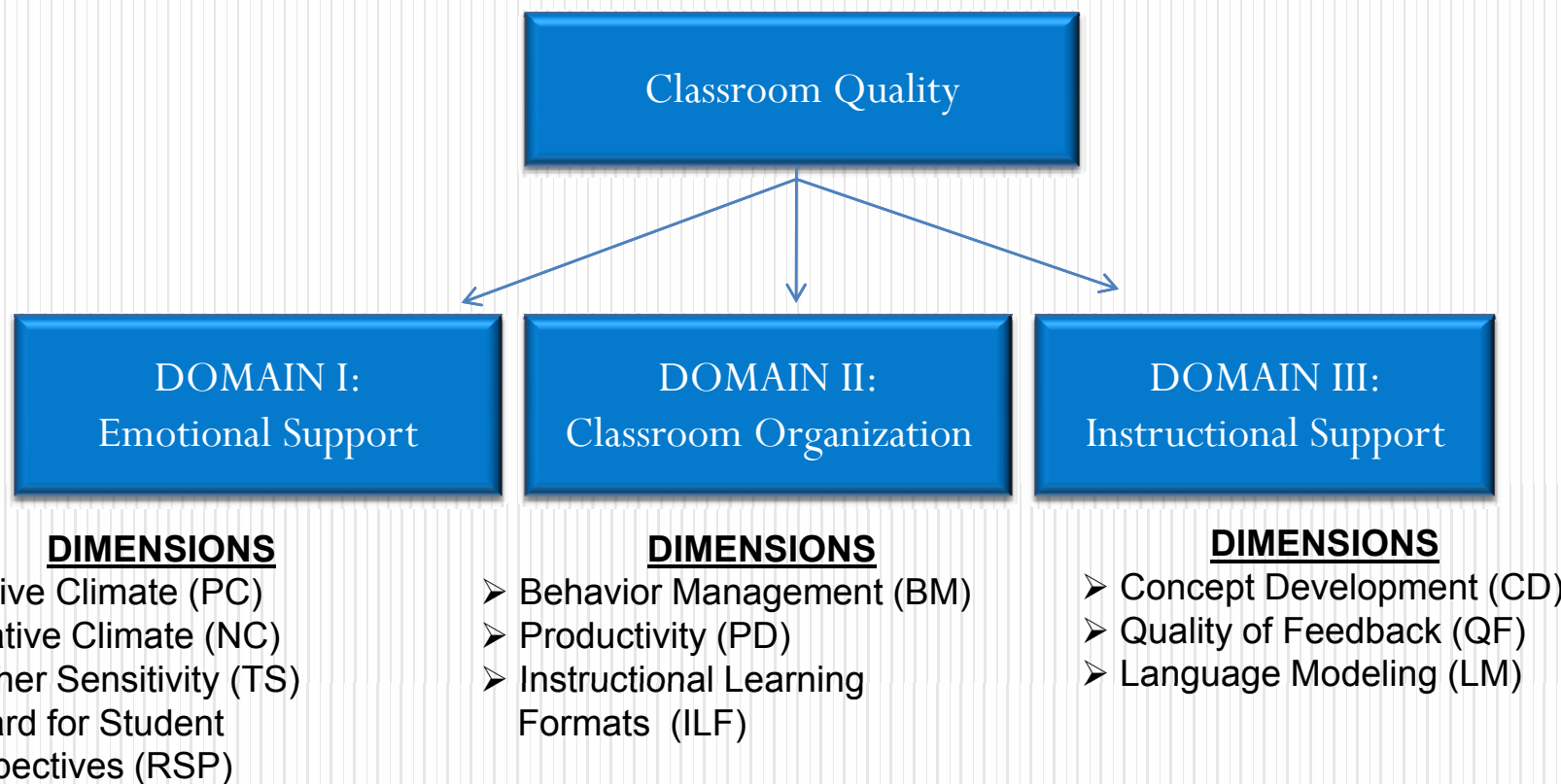
(Center for Early Education and Development [CEED], 2007)

- Examines social-emotional and instructional interactions that contribute to student's social competence and academic achievement. (CEED, 2007)

# CLASS Administration

- Classroom observations are conducted during a routine program day.
- Students and teachers are actively engaged in meaningful and intentional activities.
- Four 20-minute observation cycles are conducted with 10 minute intervals between each session.
- Trained assessors who meet inter-rater reliability criteria conduct observations.
- Assessors concentrate on the activities and interactions of all class members, with emphasis on the EC teacher, because the instrument is a reflection of the interactions between teacher and student.

# CLASS Structure Domains and Dimensions



# CLASS

## Emotional Support Domain

- **Positive Climate (PC)**  
*Relationships, positive affect, positive communication, respect*
- **Negative Climate (NC)**  
*Negative affect, punitive control, sarcasm/disrespect, severe negativity*
- **Teacher Sensitivity (TS)**  
*Awareness, responsiveness, addresses problems, student comfort*
- **Regard for Student Perspectives (RSP)**  
*Flexibility and student focus, support for autonomy and leadership, student expression, restriction of movement*

# CLASS

## Classroom Organization Domain

---

- **Behavior Management (BM)**  
*Clear behavior expectations, proactive, redirection of misbehavior, student behavior*
- **Productivity (PD)**  
*Maximizing learning time, routines, transitions, preparation*
- **Instructional Learning Formats (ILF)**  
*Effective facilitation, variety of modalities and materials, student interest, clarity of learning objectives*

# CLASS

## Instructional Support Domain

- **Concept Development (CD)**  
*Analysis and reasoning, creating, integration, connections to the real world*
- **Quality of Feedback (QF)**  
*Scaffolding, feedback loops, prompting thought processes, providing information, encouragement and affirmation*
- **Language Modeling (LM)**  
*Frequent conversation, open-ended questions, repetition and extension, self- and parallel talk, advanced language*

# CLASS Scoring

**Each dimension is scored on a scale of 1-7 and averaged with all other dimensions within its Domain (*see below*).**

**Emotional Support =  $(PC + *NC + TS + RSP)/4$**

**Classroom Organization =  $(BM + PD + ILF)/3$**

**Instructional Support =  $(CD + QF + LM)/3$**

**SCORE RUBRIC:**

**HIGH RANGE (6-7)      MIDDLE RANGE (3-5)      LOW RANGE (1-2)**

*\*Note: To reverse NC, subtract average score from 8*

# **CLASS**

## **Research Evidence**

---

Higher ratings on the dimensions assessed by the CLASS predict higher performance by children on standardized assessments of academic achievement and better social adjustment in the early grades of school.

(Mashburn et al., 2008)

# References

- Bashir, A. (1989). Language Intervention and the Curriculum. *Seminars in Speech and Language*, 10 (3), 181-191.
- Center for Early Education and Development (2007). Overview of the CLASS. Retrieved October 19, 2010, from <http://www.cehd.umn.edu/ceed/projects/atc/CLASSOverview.pdf>
- Copeland, K., & Edwards, P. (1990). Towards Understanding the Roles Parents Play in Supporting Young Children's Development in Writing. *Early Child Development and Care*, 56, 11-17.
- Curby, T. W., LoCasale-Crouch, J., Konold, T. R., Pianta, R. C., Howes, C., Burchinal, M., Bryant, D., Clifford, R., Early, D., & Barbarin, O. (2009). The Relations of Observed Pre-K Classroom Quality Profiles to Children's Achievement and Social Competence. *Early Education & Development*, 20 (2), 346-372.
- Dickinson, D. K. & Tabors, P. O. (Eds.) (2001). *Beginning Literacy with Language: Young Children Learning at Home and School*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.
- Gunn, B., Simmons, D., & Kameenui, E. (1995). *Emergent Literacy: Synthesis of the research* [Tech. Rep. No. 19].
- Hargrave, A. C. & Senechal, M. (2000). A Book Reading Intervention with Preschool Children Who Have Limited Vocabularies: The Benefits of Regular Reading and Dialogic Reading. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 15 (1), 75-90.
- Hart, B., & Risley, T. (1995). *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

# References (Cont.)

- Heath, S. B. (1983). *Ways with Words: Language, Life, and Work in Communities and Classrooms*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Howell, M. S. (2009). Interactive Writing in Preschool: A Qualitative Study of a Literacy Coach, Two Preschool Teachers, and Four-year-old Children. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 69 (10), (UMI No. 3333067).
- Justice, L. M., McGinty, A. S., Cabell, S. Q., Knighton, K., & Huffman, G. (2010). Language and Literacy Curriculum Supplement for Preschoolers Who Are Academically At Risk: A Feasibility Study. *Language, Speech, Hearing Services in Schools*, 41, 161-178.
- Justice, L. M., Mashburn, A., Pence, K. L., & Wiggins, A. (2008). Experimental Evaluation of a Preschool Language Curriculum: Influence on Children's Expressive Language Skills. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, 51, 983-1001.
- Mashburn, A. J., Pianta, R. C., Hamre, B. K., Downer, J. T., Barbarin, O. A., Bryant, D., Burchinal, M., Early, D. M., & Howes, C. (2008). Measures of Classroom Quality in Prekindergarten and Children's Development of Academic, Language, and Social Skills. *Child Development*, 79 (3), 732-749.
- Smith, M., & Dickinson, D. (1994). Describing Oral Language Opportunities and Environments in Head Start and Other Preschool Classrooms. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 9 (3/4), 345-366.
- Snow, C. E., Burns, M. S., & Griffin, P. (1998). *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*. Washington DC: National Academy Press.
- Wasik, B. & Bond, M.A. (2006). The Effects of a Language and Literacy Intervention on Head Start Children and Teachers. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 98 (1), 63-74.