

DRS TIP SHEET

Writing about CLASS in your Recompetition Proposal



The driving force behind the Head Start redesignation system is to assure that Head Start funds are used to provide high-quality programs to disadvantaged children. In fact, the DRS grant instructions mention aspects of quality that must be described in your grant application in more than 35 different places. It is also integrated into the grant scoring criteria in almost every section of the narrative. One way to address aspects of quality is by discussing your use of the CLASS and its relationship to how your program will sustain high quality teacher – child interactions.

This Tip Sheet provides an overview of the grant scoring criteria related to the CLASS and offers suggestions that can be used in developing your written response.

SECTION 1, SCORING CRITERION 1.7

In this section, grantees need to describe how their program would be affected if the applicant is awarded the grant. This is a good place to discuss the inclusion of efforts to improve your scores on the CLASS as part of your program's quality improvement goals.

SECTION 2, SCORING CRITERION 2.7

This section specifically asks grantees to describe their plan for observing teacher practice, including teacher-child interactions. When responding to this criteria you will need to include information about who in your program will be charged with assuring the full implementation and monitoring of the CLASS. Also, be sure to save room in your appendix for your CLASS observation plan and other documents that can be used as evidence you are able to effectively implement the CLASS in your program with fidelity. Make sure to include:

- A description of which staff are certified CLASS observers;
- When during the year observations will be conducted;
- The number of times staff are observed during the program year and a description of the process;
- How CLASS data is analyzed, for example, do you disaggregate data by classroom and also use it on a program-wide basis to inform decisions about program improvements and training priorities? and;
- A description of how CLASS data is used in making professional development decisions, in improving staff skills and knowledge, and in improving program quality. For example, include how you will provide feedback to teachers following an observation, and how that feedback leads into the professional development planning. This strategy grounds professional development work in teachers' actual practice and builds buy-in, which will lead to sustainability of improvements.

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SECTION 3, SCORING CRITERION 3.1

This criterion is where the grantee demonstrates that “based on past experience” the program has the ability to implement a high-quality Head Start program. The criteria also solicits “evidence” from the use of teacher-child interaction rating systems.

To address this criterion it is vital that you provide your CLASS scores for at least the last two years. Also, make a comparison between the scores for your program and the national average CLASS scores for HS programs and highlight areas in which you exceed the national average.

If you were placed into recompetition due to CLASS scores that fell below the minimum thresholds established by the Office of Head Start, or because your program is identified within the 10% of grantees reviewed that received the lowest CLASS scores, this is where you would address what led to this designation. You also need to note how you have improved your scores and systems since entry into recompetition. When responding to this question you may want to include:

- A graphic representation of improvements achieved in CLASS scores in the past 2 years;
- A discussion of the circumstances that led to diminished scores and how you have resolved those issues;
- A description of your plan for improving CLASS scores, also include your plan in the appendix;
- A discussion of ways in which teachers are prepared for a CLASS observation, even before professional development and training beings. For example, providing baseline information to teachers on the CLASS before their classroom is observed.
- The training and mentoring systems in place that will assure your scores continue to improve; and,
- Resources you have accessed in your efforts to increase the quality of teacher-child interactions.

SECTION 4, SCORING CRITERION 4.8

Section 4 is heavily focused on describing staffing qualifications, professional development, and program systems for ensuring that staff are able to implement the HS program and all HS Program Performance Standards.

The last criterion listed in this section provides another opportunity to discuss how you leverage the CLASS to improve program quality in a manner that leads to more significant child outcomes. Ways in which your system for implementing the CLASS can be integrated into your response include:

- Describe how the CLASS is used in professional development plans;
- Describe how the CLASS is used to set job performance goals;
- Describe how your certified CLASS observers coach and mentor other staff towards improvement;
- Describe any training that is provided throughout the year to help staff understand the CLASS dimensions, its use, and purpose;
- Describe ways in which you have achieved success in improving the skills and abilities of staff in regard to teacher-child interactions;
- Describe resources that are used and reference the inclusion of any CLASS training or resources that will be purchased using your Training and Technical Assistance Funds;
- Use cross-referencing and point the reader to sections of your grant in which you have already discussed the use of CLASS in your program. *Note - Make sure to review your grant after the editing process has been completed to ensure the page numbers referenced are accurate.*
- Include the ways observers receive support to maintain accuracy in coding and avoid any “drift” between certification and recertification, such as individual calibration; the use of double coding is also an option.