

# K-3 CLASS<sup>®</sup> Coding Tips

How to use this resource: This tip sheet doesn't cover everything you need to remember when coding with the K-3 CLASS. Instead, it focuses specifically on the most common points of confusion and things observers often forget when coding. While this is a great tool to use to prepare for reliability testing, refer to your K-3 CLASS Manual for comprehensive coding information.



## The K-3 CLASS Framework



## Domain-Level Tips

- + The interactions considered in Emotional Support and Classroom Organization domains set the stage for effective Instructional Support domain interactions. If teachers don't support students' social-emotional needs and provide an organized setting, it is unlikely that teachers will have time to engage in much Instructional Support or that students will be poised to learn from any Instructional Support interactions that do happen.
- + The Classroom Organization domain is ultimately about managing time and children's attention in the classroom. The less time teachers spend managing behavior and time because students aren't engaged, the more time will be available for learning each day.
- + Instructional Support is not about the content of the curriculum or the learning activities provided. Instead, it focuses on how teachers use these things to support students' cognitive and language development.

## Dimension-Level Tips

### Positive Climate

**Definition:** Reflects the emotional connection between the teacher and students and among students and the warmth, respect, and enjoyment communicated by verbal and nonverbal interactions.

#### THINGS TO REMEMBER

- + Remember to pay attention to the level of warmth and enjoyment in the interactions among students when scoring this dimension, not just teacher-student interactions.
- + You don't need to see all of the behavioral markers for high range. These are just examples of what the indicators might look like in a classroom. For instance, if you hear lots of positive comments and expectations, you can decide that positive communication is in the high range, even if there isn't any physical affection during your coding cycle. While this is true for all the dimensions, observers are especially likely to over-rely on the behavioral markers when scoring Positive Climate.
- + Respect is something that varies considerably cross-culturally. Depending on the context in which you are collecting CLASS data, some of the behavioral markers listed in the CLASS manual may not reflect respectful behavior. In these cases, before going into the classroom learn what types of behaviors would indicate that respectful interactions are occurring in the context where you'll be collecting data. Look for those behaviors when you go into the classroom.



### Negative Climate

**Definition:** Reflects the overall level of expressed negativity in the classroom; the frequency, quality, and intensity of teacher and peer negativity are key to this scale.

#### THINGS TO REMEMBER

- + This dimension is scored opposite of the other dimensions. A low score is desirable.
- + Negative Climate is not opposite of Positive Climate or the lack of the types of interactions that are scored there. Instead it looks at how much negativity is present in the classroom.
- + The physical control indicator in punitive control refers to manipulating a student's body to control their behavior. For example, if a teacher picks up a student and moves them to make them stop engaging in misbehavior, that would be counted here.
- + If there are any instances of severe negativity, Negative Climate is automatically scored in the high range.

## Teacher Sensitivity

**Definition:** Encompasses the teacher's awareness of and responsiveness to students' academic and emotional needs; high levels of sensitivity facilitate students' ability to actively explore and learn because the teacher consistently provides comfort, reassurance, and encouragement.

### THINGS TO REMEMBER

- + Teacher Sensitivity is not an assessment of how nice a teacher is. The "sensitivity" referenced in the dimension name is about the level of teachers' awareness of and responsiveness to students' emotional and academic needs.
- + The manual often uses words like "problems", "difficulties", and "concerns" when talking about what teachers need to respond to. It's important to remember that a student's problem could be something like needing more glue to continue an art project. The focus here isn't just on big problems that students get upset about. At the high range, we want to see teachers noticing and responding to nearly all the needs in their classroom.
- + Even when a teacher addresses a problem, it doesn't mean they have effectively resolved it. Observers should look to the students involved to see if they appear helped in order to determine whether a problem has been resolved.

## Regard for Student Perspectives

**Definition:** Captures the degree to which the teacher's interactions with students and classroom activities place an emphasis on students' interests, motivations, and points of view and encourage student responsibility and autonomy.

### THINGS TO REMEMBER

- + Teachers can score in the high range for flexibility and student focus while having a plan for the day, as long as they integrate student's ideas and choices into their plan. For example, if a teacher is leading a lesson about sedimentary rocks and a student raises his hand to tell the teacher about some rocks he found when hiking with his family over the weekend, the teacher can acknowledge the student's story and make an effort to integrate it into the lesson rather than dismissing his comments for being only tangentially related.
- + The student expression indicator looks at the extent to which teachers encourage students to share their ideas and how they see the world. Questions that don't encourage students to share their own ideas or perspectives like, "What number comes after 62?" aren't strong evidence here.
- + Teachers can score in the high range for restriction of movement and set and enforce expectations for students' movement and placement, as long as these are developmentally-appropriate and teachers don't enforce them too rigidly.

## Behavior Management

**Definition:** Encompasses the teacher's ability to provide clear behavioral expectations and use effective methods to prevent and redirect misbehavior.

### THINGS TO REMEMBER

- + In classrooms with high range Behavior Management, teachers spend minimal time talking about or redirecting behavior because students understand what to do. If a teacher is spending a lot of time reinforcing expectations and redirecting behavior, this indicates that students do not understand expectations.

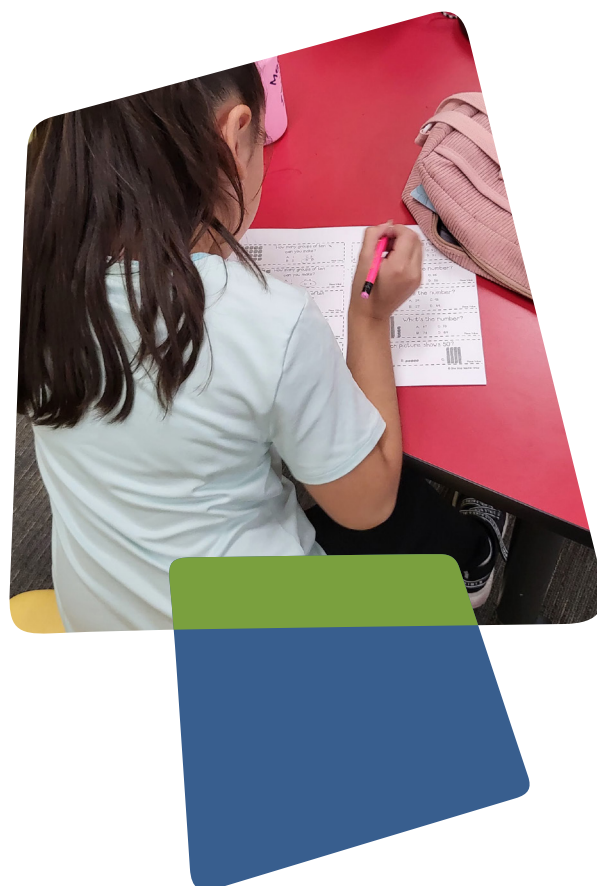
- + Behavior Management focuses on active misbehavior. The strategies teachers use to keep children engaged in desired activities are instead captured in Instructional Learning Formats.
- + If you see few to no behavioral problems in the classrooms, it is safe to assume effective strategies are in place. The classroom can score in the high range even if you don't see teachers provide many explicit behavioral expectations. Behavior Management is a dimension where it can be tempting to overweight single incidents or the one student's experience. When collecting CLASS data, it's important to make sure your scores reflect the average experience of the average student over the full duration of the cycle.
- + Behavior Management is a dimension where it can be tempting to overweight single incidents or the one child's experience. When collecting CLASS data, it's important to make sure your scores reflect the average experience of the average child over the full duration of the cycle.

## Productivity

**Definition:** Considers how well the teacher manages instructional time and routines and provides activities for students so that they have the opportunity to be involved in learning activities.

### THINGS TO REMEMBER

- + Productivity doesn't look at the quality of activities or at students' engagement level. It is just looking at whether students are consistently provided with activities to do.
- + The transitions indicator is unique, because you don't always score it. If the same activity continues for the entire cycle, then you only code the other three indicators of Productivity. However, transitions within an activity and transitions between activities are codeable. If the cycle is solely at snacktime, but students wash their hands and set the table, eat, and clean up during that time, you would still score transitions by looking at the transitions from handwashing to the table and from eating to clean up. You would only skip it if, for instance, students were eating at the table for the whole cycle.
- + Be careful when assessing pacing, there is a lot of variation in how much time students need to complete activities. Only consider this when pacing is slow enough that most students spend time waiting.



## Instructional Learning Formats

**Definition:** Focuses on the ways in which the teacher maximizes students' interest, engagement, and ability to learn from lessons and activities

### THINGS TO REMEMBER

- + At the high range for this dimension, a teacher's facilitation gets students to focus and actively participate. If a teacher, for instance, has provided a hands-ons activity and asks questions, but students aren't engaging, their facilitation isn't considered effective.
- + Teachers cannot be everywhere at once. For high range, it isn't necessary to, for instance, see a teacher facilitate students' involvement in every small group during a given cycle, as long as they are making an effort to move around the room and help students get the most out of activities.

- + The clarity of learning objectives indicator can be challenging to score. While advanced organizers, summaries, and reorientation statements are strategies teachers can use to make learning objectives clear to students, it's not necessary to see these for mid or high range. Teachers can also help students know how to focus by consistently targeting their questioning throughout an activity. Ultimately, coders should look to the students to determine whether learning objectives are clear. Do they know what they should focus on? Do you see evidence that they could tell you what they were learning or why they were doing an activity?

## Concept Development

**Definition:** Measures the teacher's use of instructional discussions and activities to promote students' higher-order thinking skills and cognition and the teacher's focus on understanding rather than on rote instruction.

### THINGS TO REMEMBER

- + Although the word "concept" is in the dimension title, this dimension is not about how teachers teach specific concepts (weather, addition, spelling). Instead it looks at what teachers do to encourage students' understanding and use of higher-order thinking skills.
- + Although "why and/or how questions" is a behavioral marker for analysis and reasoning, not all questions that start with "how" or "why" fit here, only ones that encourage students to engage in higher-order thinking. For example, "Why do you want to go to the library now?" would not be evidence for this indicator. Similarly, there are questions and prompts that don't start with "why" and "how" that can also fit here, because they encourage students to think deeply ("What color do you think will come next in the pattern?" "Tell me what's happening in the story you wrote").
- + Creating considers whether students are engaged in open-ended tasks that encourage their creativity and activities like brainstorming and planning that allow them to generate their own ideas. Observers are often tempted to give credit in this dimension any time students are engaged in something artistic. However, many art activities are rote in nature, and don't require higher-order thinking.
- + Integration evidence needs to be explicit. If teachers plan three activities related to Earth Day and the class does them sequentially, but teachers don't make any explicit connections between the concepts in these activities, you haven't seen evidence of integration.
- + If a teacher asks a question like, "Have you ever helped bake a pie?" while reading a book where the characters bake pie, this teacher is relating concepts to students' lives and this question would count as evidence for this indicator. However, a few scattered examples like this would not score in the high range.

## Quality of Feedback

**Definition:** Assesses the degree to which the teacher provides feedback that expands learning and understanding and encourages continued participation.

### THINGS TO REMEMBER

- + Not all back-and-forth exchanges are feedback loops. In order to count as feedback, the exchange has to be in response to a child's comment or action and aimed at increasing participation or understanding. Back-and-forth exchanges that don't meet these criteria are considered in Language Modeling instead.
- + Remember that feedback can be provided to help students complete a task (for examples, tying their shoes independently) or to expand learning or understanding (for example, asking a student a follow-up question that encourages them to think).
- + Not all scaffolding is verbal. Physical assistance like holding a block tower steady so a student can keep building is a type of scaffolding.



- + The prompting thought processes indicator considers any questions that teachers ask in response to things that students say or do that encourage them to deepen their understanding or persist. Evidence here isn't limited to questions that encourage students to explain their thinking ("Why did you decide to create a diorama about your trip to the zoo?").
- + The type of evidence considered in encouragement and affirmation either encourages a student to persist in a task ("Keep going! I know you can sort all the manipulatives by how many sides they have") or recognizes a student's effort ("Wow! You wrote your whole name"). Positive comments like "good job!" and "nice work" that tell students they have completed an activity fit in Positive Climate instead.

## Language Modeling

**Definition:** Captures the quality and amount of the teacher's use of language-stimulation and language-facilitation techniques.

### THINGS TO REMEMBER

- + At the high range for frequent conversation, the back-and-forth exchanges between teachers and students should feel like real conversations where students are treated as valued conversational partners.
- + The open-ended questions indicator considers any questions that require students to respond using multiple words ("What did you do last weekend?", "Why are you mixing blue and green paint?"). Language Modeling doesn't consider the extent to which these questions encourage students to think. That's captured in Concept Development.
- + At the high range for repetition and extension, teachers can frequently repeat or extend students' comments. While it's great to see teacher's doing both these behaviors consistently, it's not necessary for high range at this age level.
- + Self- and parallel talk at the K-3 age level can include comments that more figurative ("I'm checking to see if you are all ready to start painting"), and comments about things that aren't happening at the exact moment the teacher says them ("I'm getting ready to take attendance"). This is different from the younger age levels where these comments must happen while the actions are happening and be about things children can visually map to language ("Sara is walking over to her cubby").
- + Self- and parallel talk evidence can also be easy to miss in the K-3 classrooms unless you listen very carefully. It often takes the form of occasional teacher comments rather than being used as a consistent strategy.
- + Remember that using multiple languages in the classroom doesn't automatically increase or decrease the Language Modeling score. Regardless of the number of languages in use, the score is based on the consistency of the evidence for each of the indicators.

