

## CASE STUDY

# Louisiana

Louisiana's groundbreaking use of CLASS as the sole indicator of program quality for early childhood settings across the state has built a culture of focused improvement for educators, administrators, and parents.



# OVERVIEW

## Client



## Program Type



## Products Used

myTeachstone, CLASS® Group Coaching (MMCI), 1:1 Video Coaching (MTP)

## Contract Start Date

2008 - 2017

## THE CHALLENGE

In Louisiana, more than 40% of children start kindergarten without the readiness skills and behaviors that correlate with lifelong success. In an interview, Melanie Bronfin, former Executive Director of the Louisiana Policy Institute for Children, told New Media, "We are dealing with a state that is ranked between 45th and 50th on almost every indicator involving children. We are dealing with a huge level of poverty and multiple systems that are broken."

Louisiana, like most states, had a statewide QRIS in place that rated programs on environmental inputs such as staff-to-child ratios, classroom activities, and program structure. While these environmental factors are important, they were often beyond a classroom educator's control. And scoring well on these measures didn't necessarily translate into better outcomes for children. As the state struggled with poor kindergarten readiness, they set their sights on an interactions-based model to benefit children through the evaluation and professional development of educators.

"The focus and the specificity of the CLASS has led to **the biggest transformation in Louisiana.** It measures the things that matter most in a consistent and reliable way, provides really specific feedback to teachers, and measures progress to decimal points."

### Jenna Conway

*Former Louisiana Superintendent of Early Childhood*

# FOCUS

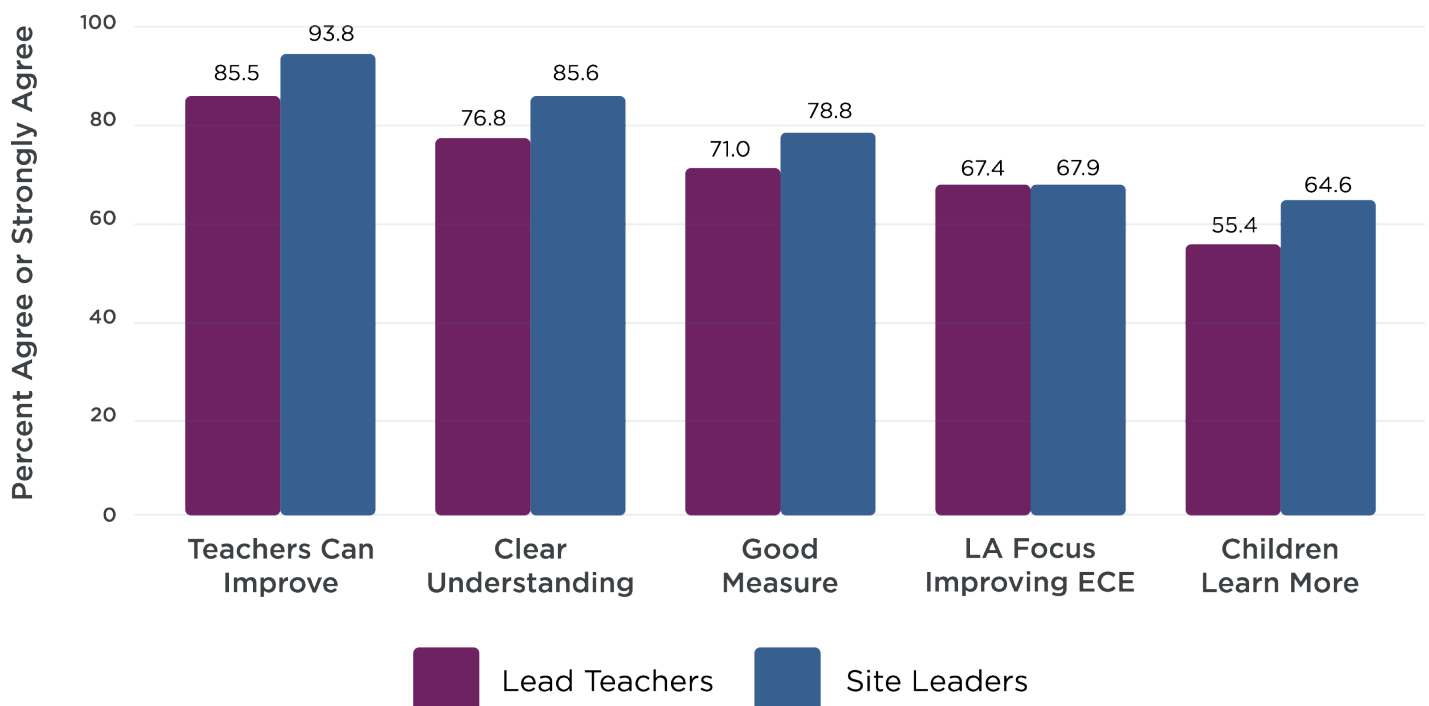
In 2012, Louisiana passed sweeping legislation designed to improve outcomes for its youngest children. The law called for the creation of a network of 65 local early childhood organizations. The state piloted the program in two phases (2013–2014 and 2014–2015) prior to full implementation in the fall of 2015.

In 2015, the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE), having been granted authority over all state-funded infant, toddler, and pre-K programs, took a unique approach. The LDOE rolled out a mandatory QRIS that utilized a single, unified metric: the Classroom Assessment Scoring System® (CLASS®). This dedicated focus on the interactions between educators and children was based on the research backing the CLASS tool and its positive impact on student outcomes, as well as years of piloting CLASS and gathering statewide data.

Using a common assessment tool allowed the LDOE to put a local focus on ratings, establishing lead agencies in each Louisiana Early Childhood Community Network. The lead agencies would coordinate local CLASS observations for publicly funded sites, facilitate the coordinated enrollment process, conduct community meetings, and distribute communication from the department. By empowering programs to own assessment and improvement of their results, LDOE fostered buy-in at the local level.

The investment in CLASS has strong support across the state. In a recent study by the University of Virginia and the University of California, Los Angeles, researchers examined buy-in across two Louisiana parishes. Educators and local leaders expressed very high levels of buy-in to CLASS—strongly endorsing it as a good measure and one that can support systemic improvement in ways that directly impact children’s learning and development.

## Beliefs About CLASS as a Quality Measure: Lead Teachers and Site Leaders



# MEASURE

Within each Louisiana classroom, as educators became well versed in the CLASS domains, they appreciated the streamlined accountability system. “Teachers love the tool because it specifically evaluates what they have control over and it is in their hands as to the effectiveness of their interactions with students,” said Cindy Rushing, Early Childhood Coordinator for Rapides Parish School District.

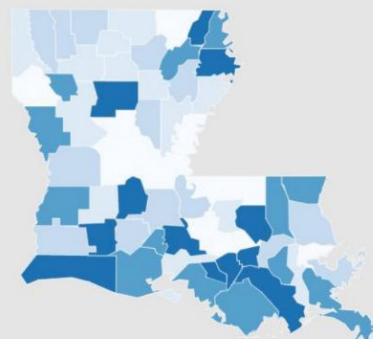
There are now over 1,200 reliable CLASS observers across the state, with each eligible classroom receiving a minimum of two CLASS observations per year. These twice-yearly ratings provide actionable feedback for educators and programs. To ensure the accuracy of those observations, at least half of the classrooms at each site are observed by a third party, and scores are compared with those by local observers. If local observers are consistently inaccurate, they are not able to continue CLASS rating.

LDOE has worked to ensure that parents and the larger community have easy access to the information they need to help select high-quality ECE programs. Parents can use the Louisiana School and Center Finder to easily search for programs that meet their needs in terms of location and hours. They can also access information about CLASS scores, teacher certification, curriculum, and educator-child ratios—other key factors in quality.

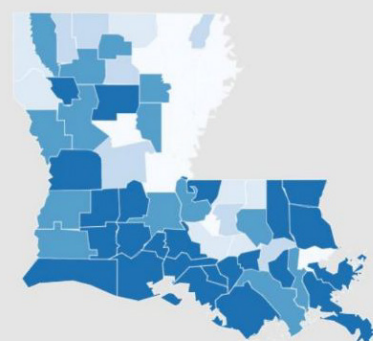


## Network-level average CLASS scores, 2015-16 to 2018-19\*

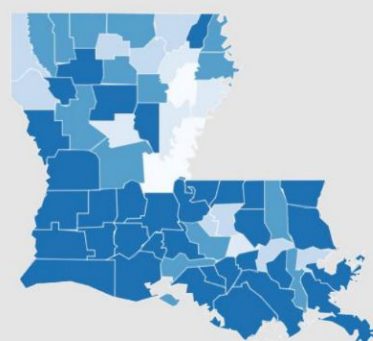
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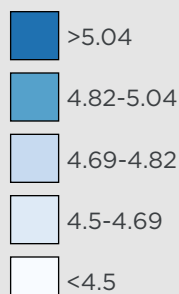
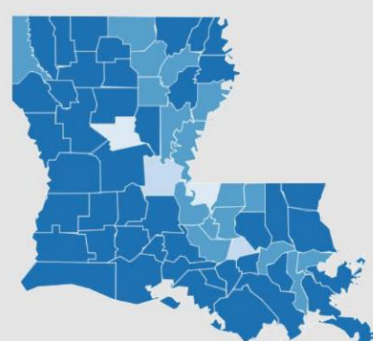
2016-17



2017-18



2018-19



\*From SEELA Report I\_State Quality Improvement Report.pdf

# IMPROVE

CLASS scores for early childhood educators across the state have systematically improved over the last three years, with much of that improvement occurring in Head Start and childcare settings, which often lagged in quality when compared with public pre-K programs. Growth has been truly statewide, not constrained to any particular area. It has occurred particularly in the CLASS domain of Instructional Support, where scores initially lagged far behind Emotional Support and Classroom Organization domain scores. That data provided the insight administrators needed to provide targeted professional development in line with the needs of their educators.

Although each locality designed their own improvement system, most relied heavily on the evidence-based improvement models for CLASS, especially CLASS Group Coaching (formerly MMCI). CLASS Group Coaching trains an in-house coach to deliver face-to-face programming to educators, immersing them in CLASS to develop their awareness and enact change in their classrooms.

Rushing identified that the most dramatic impacts of a CLASS-focused QRIS have been in the classrooms themselves. Especially with focused work in the CLASS domain of Instructional Support, “teachers are responsive to students and build cognitive reasoning through deep conversations in which students are challenged to explain their thinking,” she said. “The classroom is a place in which both educators and students are actively engaged in learning.”

Across the state, Louisiana has seen an increase in the percentage of sites that engaged children in the types of interactions that are associated with kindergarten readiness.

“The most effective professional development we have engaged in is CLASS Group Coaching (MMCI). The district has certified coaches for Infant and Toddler, Pre-K, and K-3 MMCI. Over the past five years, we have trained teachers, teaching assistants, and instructional leaders with MMCI. **This one model has hugely impacted the quality of classrooms across all programs.**”

## Cindy Rushing

*Early Childhood Coordinator for  
Rapides Parish School District*

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

**Use CLASS scores not only as an accountability tool but also as a formative tool.** CLASS scores are helpful in identifying areas for improvement in teacher practice and to inform professional development needs.

**Use a pilot phase to help gather initial data.** Then build systems and the capacity needed to move to scale most effectively and efficiently.

**Make sure to share CLASS data in ways that are most actionable.** Work to ensure that parents have access to the information they need to provide their children with the highest quality early childhood experiences.

**Institute a local approach to ratings.** It is important for localities to own their ratings and their improvements rather than feel they are being judged by external authorities.

**There should be a system in place to ensure reliability of local scores.** Louisiana used a third party to conduct observations twice a year.

# KEY TAKEAWAYS CONTINUED...

**Provide personalized recommendations for myTeachstone content** while simultaneously encouraging facilities to search for and engage with content independently.

**Set and communicate clear goals for the use of myTeachstone.** 81 percent of FCCHPs agreed that this was essential to their success with the platform.

**Be sure to engage with and scaffold for second-language speakers.** While Spanish-speaking facilities reported greater gains from using myTeachstone, they were slightly less satisfied than English speaking educators.

**Multi-year access to the platform** can increase engagement and further gains in quality and understanding.

**Address the language needs and learning styles of your providers**—bilingual, visual and auditory learners.

**Provide and support the technology and knowledge resources** that providers need to effectively engage with the tools.

**Be aware of the activity in your account.** Monitoring the system to identify any breakdowns in understanding or interaction from the providers, then addressing those needs.

**Celebrate your successes.** Acknowledging growth and celebrating success builds provider engagement.



## TEACHSTONE OVERVIEW

At Teachstone, we help educators around the world leverage the proven power of interactions with the power of CLASS®. It starts with learning from the best: the committed, innovative educators who build positive relationships in classrooms daily. We pair these practitioners with researchers to rigorously study the meaningful interactions that spark success and continually iterate as we learn more. We then partner with childcare programs and schools, empowering all educators to understand the interactions that matter most. From actionable feedback and training to user-friendly content and tech, Teachstone offers everything needed to apply and advance the simple art of intentional interactions.

Every single student has the potential to achieve when supported by a educator who knows how to effectively connect with them. To stoke their curiosity. To make them feel safe and valued. To inspire their best. **Connect with Teachstone today** and unlock the outcomes you need by investing in the relationships that drive them.

**CONTACT US FOR MORE INFORMATION**