CLASS® Video Observation Guidelines

The CLASS has been validated for use in coding videotapes of classrooms (Mashburn, Hamre, Downer, & Pianta, 2007). Chapter 2 of the CLASS Manual includes recommendations for obtaining high-quality video footage (see Appendix, below). This document provides guidance for conducting a CLASS video coding project.

Video Observation Protocol

A clear protocol will help ensure fidelity to the CLASS tool and consistency in methodology. As you design your protocol, consider the purpose of your observations and the difference between live and video observations. Teachstone is able to support the development of this protocol if your organization does not already have this in place.

Video Quality Considerations

- Ensure the video length meets the need for the number of cycles required & instructions are available for what to do if the video is not long enough (ex: If the video is not long enough to produce four cycles, you may need to code only one or two cycles.)
- Determine these criteria are met for codable videos
    - Video is viewable on a basic level (no buffering/loading issues, sound and picture are working, etc.)
    - Coder is able to see and hear the interactions taking place
    - Teachers and some students are visible for the majority of the time; consider capturing footage from a side view to see facial expressions
    - Video is long enough (10 minute minimum for 20-minute cycles and 8 minute minimum for 15-minute cycles)
- Video quality checks are highly recommended to assure audio and visual quality before sending them out to be coded
    - Recommend spot checking at least 10% of your videos prior to start of the project, to ensure audio and visual quality
        - Teachstone can work with you to identify a video or subset of videos to use as a sample for quality comparison
    - On average, projects have 5-10% uncodable video; it is important to prepare your observers for this and set expectations of what to do with non-codable video

Video Capture Considerations

- For early childhood classrooms, given the nature of classroom set-ups, we recommend that a neutral individual, e.g. administrator, film the classroom to ensure capture of footage during transitions and movement throughout the classroom
- Make sure that the capture device will not go into 'sleep' mode and is fully charged and/or charging while recording
- Lock your camera orientation
- Recommend utilizing 'Do Not Disturb' mode if applicable to minimize video interruptions
- Be aware of the placement of the capture device as it pertains to surrounding sounds. For example, positioning the device near sinks or heating/air conditioning units may compromise the quality of the audio

- At this time Teachstone does not have specific hardware reccomendations for capturing video and audio, however we do recommend the following for capturing audio:
    - 2 lavalier microphones (1 worn by the lead teacher and 1 worn by the assistant teacher)
    - An additional microphone connected to the device capturing video

Observer Quality Considerations

- Ensure all observers have an active CLASS certification at the age level for which they will be observing
- Have observers calibrate at the start of the project and periodically throughout the project to ensure maintained reliability; Teachstone recommends a minimum of monthly calibrations
- For a subset (~10% is standard) of the collected footage, double code, or have two people independently code, the same video to check inter rater reliability.
- Track observers' coding tendencies to identify patterns in coding and ensure absence of bias

Data Collection Considerations for Video Coding

- Obtain and train on a single method for sharing video & naming conventions of video to ensure consistency in how those will be associated with each observation (ex. online video sharing platform, SD cards, USB drives, etc.)
- Obtain and train on a single method for capturing and submitting observation data; Teachstone recommends using myTeachstone Measurement Suite to ensure highest fidelity of data collected
- Prior to the start of the project, determine the reporting outcome expected for each observation
- Consider mandated reporter training for all observers and protocol to support what to do in a mandated reporting situation captured on video

Video Security Concerns

- Ensure that only necessary individuals have access to video for observing
- Consider a solution that avoids video being stored on the capture devices where possible
- Keep all footage protected behind a username and password
- Ensure Observers have access to a private space for viewing and coding videos and/or that the video is labeled using teacher ID rather than names to ensure anonymity

Best Practices for Coding

- Use headphones to improve audio quality
- Only code what you can see; do not factor interactions happening off-screen into your scoring
- Limit the number of cycles coded in one sitting to prevent coder fatigue; Teachstone recommends breaking after 4 cycles and limiting daily coding to 6-8 cycles
- Ensure that coders have access to high speed internet and flash player enabled web browser to view content without interruption

Appendix

Excerpt of Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Manual, Pre-K
Chapter 2: Videotaped Observation Procedure, pp. 14-15

The CLASS has been validated for use in coding videotapes of classrooms (Mashburn, Hamre, Downer, & Pianta, 2007). Videotaping may be completed by teachers or by outsiders. The general procedures described previously for live coding also apply to coding videotape. Here, the biggest concern is the degree to which the videotape adequately captures the visual and auditory information present in classroom interactions. The following are recommendations for obtaining high-quality videotape:

- During whole- and small-group time, it is a good idea to use digital video cameras that adequately capture sound without having to have a microphone on the teacher. In some cases, however, such as group work or center time, the teacher may be difficult to hear over the hum of the classroom. Experiment with a few options before collecting a lot of videotape. Most computers come with software that allows for easy importation of digital video.
- Make sure the teacher (or person doing the taping) tells the students what is happening prior to the first videotaping. The students should be told why they are being videotaped and allowed to share any concerns they may have about the process. Although students sometimes act up for the camera initially, most quickly forget that it is there.
- Start the video prior to the beginning of a lesson and run the videotape during the transition from one activity to another. Often, these non-lesson times provide interesting moments to watch and discuss.
- Use tripods and place the camera in such a way that the teacher and most of the students can be seen clearly. Often, setting up the camera to the side so that the facial expressions of the teachers and students are visible is most helpful. Move the tripod as needed, but try not to use handheld video as the picture tends to be shaky.
- In the case of group work or centers, focus the video on the primary teacher but occasionally pan the video out to capture the experiences of other students for several minutes at a time.