ADVANCING EFFECTIVE INTERACTIONS & INSTRUCTION

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Providing Observation-Based Feedback to Early Educators Through Efficient, Cost-Effective Reports

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INTRODUCTION

Classroom observations followed by feedback serve as an impactful method for improving teacher-child interactions. However, the creation of individualized reports at-scale can be costly and time-consuming, so questions remain about the most efficient way to provide useful observation-based feedback. This brief reports on promising early returns on the use of quick, automated observation reports that teachers find just as useful as longer, more time-intensive feedback.

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In collaboration with the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) and Teachstone®, the Advancing Effective Interactions and Instruction (AEII) team at the University of Virginia oversees independent CLASS® observations for early childhood programs across the Commonwealth. During the 2019-2020 school year, AEII created two versions of classroom-level reports to provide teachers with individualized information about their classroom interactions observed by independent CLASS® observers. Each report provided the same domain-, dimension-, and cycle-level scores, along with information specific to each teacher's observation that was presented differently across the two versions of the report. In Version 1, observers listed specific examples of what they saw to reflect each CLASS® dimension during the observation (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1

Report Version 1 Excerpt: Observation Area of Strength (Teacher Sensitivity)

Observation Areas of Strength and Areas with Room for Growth

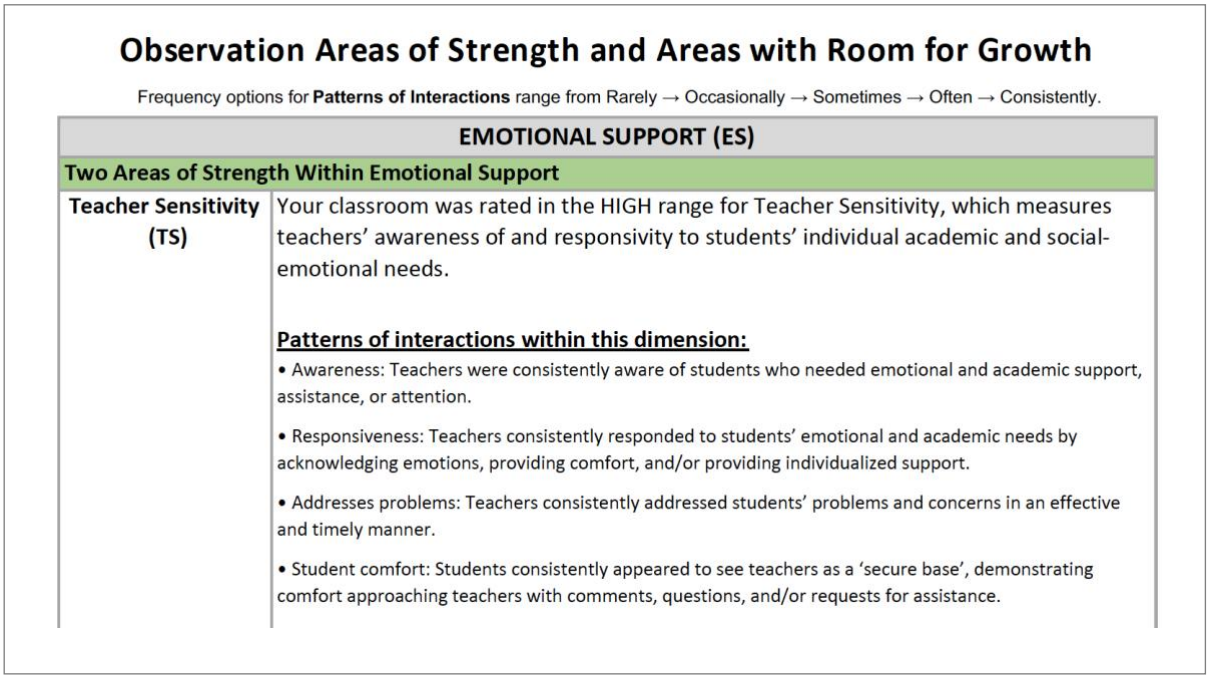
EMOTIONAL SUPPORT (ES)	
Two Areas of Strength Within Emotional Support	
Teacher Sensitivity (TS)	Your classroom was rated in the HIGH range for Teacher Sensitivity, which measures teachers' awareness of and responsivity to students' individual academic and social-emotional needs. **Example from the observation:** • The teacher demonstrated awareness when she noticed a student not participating in the songs and dance, walked closer to him, and took his hands to engage him. The teacher consistently responded to students' needs, such as allowing students to eat breakfast in the classroom who arrived late and were hungry. She gave individualized help with writing and responded to nearly all student comments.

Although these examples provided extensive detail from the observation, they took a significant amount of time to produce. Version 2 reports provided narrative information at the indicator level for each CLASS® dimension (see Figure 2 on the next page). However, these sentences were drafted in a standard way and then *automatically* generated based on the pattern of observations scores, requiring much less time to produce. In addition, Version 2 reports included examples of activities observed during the observation (e.g., "Playing green and red apple letter game") to remind teachers of the observation day.

Thus, in both cases, the reports provided individualized feedback based on the teacher's observation data, but in different ways that also differed in terms of production time.

Figure 2

Report Example 2 Excerpt: Observation Area of Strength (Teacher Sensitivity)



Observation Areas of Strength and Areas with Room for Growth

Frequency options for **Patterns of Interactions** range from Rarely → Occasionally → Sometimes → Often → Consistently.

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT (ES)	
Two Areas of Strength Within Emotional Support	
Teacher Sensitivity (TS)	Your classroom was rated in the HIGH range for Teacher Sensitivity, which measures teachers' awareness of and responsivity to students' individual academic and social-emotional needs. **Patterns of interactions within this dimension:** • Awareness: Teachers were consistently aware of students who needed emotional and academic support, assistance, or attention. • Responsiveness: Teachers consistently responded to students' emotional and academic needs by acknowledging emotions, providing comfort, and/or providing individualized support. • Addresses problems: Teachers consistently addressed students' problems and concerns in an effective and timely manner. • Student comfort: Students consistently appeared to see teachers as a 'secure base', demonstrating comfort approaching teachers with comments, questions, and/or requests for assistance.

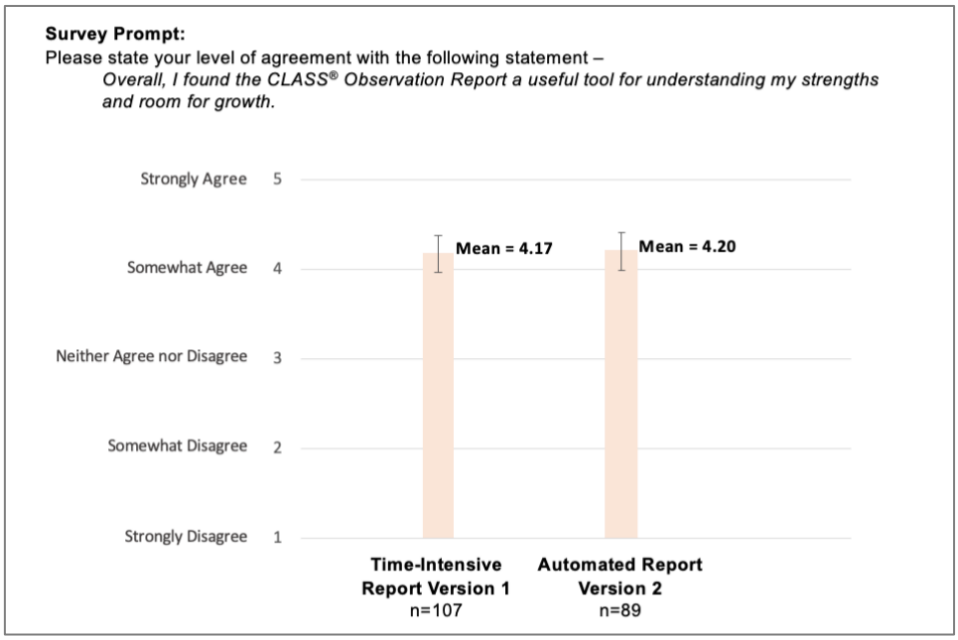
In order to compare how well these two types of individualized reports were received by teachers and division leaders, AEII randomly assigned report versions to school divisions receiving independent CLASS® observations. This randomization resulted in 393 classrooms in 46 divisions receiving Version 1 and 331 classrooms in 34 divisions receiving Version 2.

Findings

After receiving their reports, teachers completed a survey about the report usefulness. 196 teachers completed surveys, 107 of whom received Version 1 reports and 89 of whom received Version 2. As shown in Figure 3, responses indicated that there was no significant difference in reported usefulness between report Versions 1 and 2. In other words, teachers found report Versions 1 and 2 equally useful, regardless of whether their specific information section was individually written or automated. Division leaders also completed surveys following completion of feedback meetings with their teachers in which they reviewed the reports. Again, no significant differences in their perception of report usefulness emerged (28 division leaders reporting on Version 1, and 29 leaders reporting on Version 2).

Figure 3

Survey Responses: Survey Responses on Report Usefulness



These findings are important as Versions 1 and 2 took significantly different amounts of time to create and distribute. Version 1 took approximately 25-30 minutes to make per report (not including the time it took observers to write the specific examples for each dimension), whereas Version 2 took approximately 5 minutes to make per report. Version 1 took more time before being distributed to division leaders, leading to less timely feedback to teachers. When considering this at-scale, the time to produce reports matters. For example, it would take 42 hours to create 500 Version 2 reports, whereas it would take 208 hours to create as many Version 1 reports. **Thus, the more automated Version 2 reports saved significant time and personnel resources while also providing a similarly helpful resource to leaders and teachers about their practice.**

Maximizing Effectiveness

Of course, the reports themselves are only a piece of the puzzle; observational feedback in a report is most impactful when paired with timely, responsive feedback. Feedback meetings are an opportune time to create action plans for evaluating areas for growth and determining steps toward improving those areas. In addition, AEII created a guidance document to explain how the automated sentences are individualized per report, as well as how the indicator-level information can be used to identify areas of need for professional development. Therefore, the guidance document and a timely and effective feedback meeting are important follow-up strategies to provide teachers the support they need to grow their practice. Thus, the resource-saving reports, along with a guidance document and a supportive feedback session, are a scalable solution and expand the potential to reach more teachers to improve the quality of early childhood experiences.

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