



Nasha Patel
CEELO Leadership Academy
Job Embedded Project

Introduction to Job-Embedded Project: Infant CLASS

Currently, Louisiana's unified quality rating system measures the quality of interactions and instruction in every PreK and Toddler classroom in every publicly-funded school, Head Start, and child care. Infant classrooms have not yet been included.

- **June 2015:** BESE passed Bulletin 140: *Louisiana Statewide Early Childhood Network*
- **2015-2016:** Learning Year with Practice Performance Profiles generated for ~1600 sites representing ~5,500 preK and toddler classrooms
- **2016-2017:** First real year of the system; introduction of incentives and consequences; launch of Louisiana School and Center Finder
- **2017-2018:** Third year of full implementation; policy changes passed to take effect for the 2018-2019 school year, and introduction of infant CLASS timeline with full scale reached in 2020-2021
- **Current Year:** Second year of Infant CLASS Pilot; anticipated policy to BESE June 2019

Job-Embedded Project: Key Considerations

When the state's accountability system was first launched, there was not much research or information about the infant CLASS tool. Now, with more information and more programs using it, Louisiana is ready to incorporate it into the system.

- **Teachers need feedback:** Through the state's accountability system, preK and toddler teachers are receiving more feedback, coaching, and targeted professional development than ever before in Louisiana. Infant teachers and their center directors across the state asked for the same amount of information about infant classrooms.
- **Families need information:** Current performance profiles include information about toddler and preK ratings alongside the overall ratings. Families need similar data to make informed choices about infant care.
- **Quality is improving:** With three years of data, Louisiana is seeing improvement in the quality of toddler and preK classrooms statewide. Yet we cannot understand or drive similar improvement in infant classrooms without observation data.

Job-Embedded Project: Key Considerations

Infant CLASS differs greatly from toddler and PreK CLASS, and requires significant planning to incorporate equitably. Additionally, including Infant CLASS in accountability must not jeopardize infant access.

- **Interactions in infant classrooms are different:** The infant tool is half as long as the toddler tool, and measures fewer indicators of quality of interactions. Infants also take more frequent naps, are fed and cared for differently, and there are typically fewer of them in a classroom.
- **Infant and Toddler CLASS tools overlap:** The infant tool and toddler tool overlap at 15-18 months, and many centers have mixed age infant/toddler classrooms.
- **Access for infants is limited:** Several centers don't offer infant care, and the ones that do offer limited seats. Accountability must not reduce an already fragile offering of care.
- **Adding Infant CLASS impacts SRTC:** Valuable tax credits available to centers would be impacted by any changes to ratings.

Job-Embedded Project: Work Completed

- **Pre Leadership Academy:**
 - Began small infant CLASS pilot
 - Established in policy three year runway for adding infant CLASS
- **During Leadership Academy:**
 - Ran focus groups on infant CLASS with directors and administrators
 - Established project plan for Y2 and got team feedback and buy in
 - Launched Y2 infant pilot of local and third party observations
 - Established workgroup to begin considerations of scaling infant CLASS
 - Defined scope and sequence of infant CLASS data analysis and problems to solve with policy changes
 - Identified funding for teacher and administrator supports to expand infant CLASS capacity and improve infant CLASS quality
 - Began conversations with experts on scaling options and opportunities

Job- Embedded Project: Key Leadership Skills and Competencies Utilized and Developed

Thinking systemically, including:

- **Mental Models:** Ensuring that I am constantly challenging my mental models of infant care and our accountability system
- **Surfaces and Tests Assumptions:** Using pilot process and pilot data to engage on any and all assumptions about infant classrooms, quality, and data
- **Short Term, Long Term, and Unintended Consequences:** Anticipating all consequences of any action on incorporating infant CLASS ratings

Honing communication skills, including:

- Finding the best frame for specific policy changes
- Determining how to present information without the jargon
- Incorporating data compellingly into narrative and elevator pitch

Other Critical Leadership Learnings

- **Reframing my mental image of myself as a leader of people:**
 - Being intentional in adjusting communication style based on MBs
 - Preparing agendas for critical meetings with consideration of accountability and results
 - Leading from the top vs. middle vs. bottom
- **Connecting and integrating the vision into each part of the work, for myself and my team**
- **Focusing on the messaging and communication of big ideas as part of the strategy of the project**



Next Steps

- **January- March 2019:** Use CLASS observation data to run simulations of different ways to incorporate infant observations or change ratings, run critical internal workgroup, consult with experts
- **April 2019:** Draft policy updates and consult key stakeholders
- **May 2019:** Bring policy updates to Early Childhood Care and Education Advisory Council
- **June 2019:** Bring policy updates to BESE
- **2019-2020:** Statewide Learning Year for Infant CLASS
- **Fall 2020:** Practice ratings released
- **2020-2021:** Infant CLASS incorporated into overall ratings, incentives/consequences

Q & A

