

CLASS TODDLER TOOL DOMAINS

The following discussion elaborates on the major domains of teacher–child interactions in group settings assessed by the CLASS Toddler tool. The CLASS Toddler tool is intended for

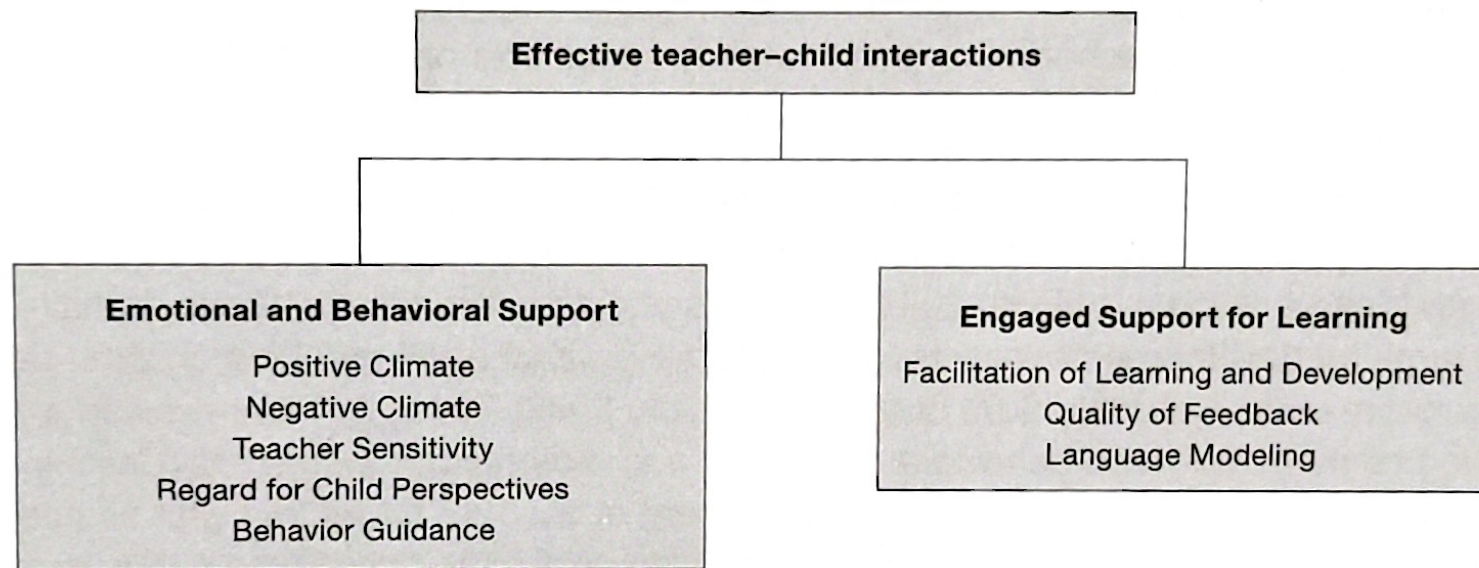


Figure 1.2. Overview of the CLASS® domains as measured by the CLASS Toddler tool.

Emotional and Behavioral Support

The Emotional and Behavioral Support domain within the CLASS Toddler tool is defined by teacher and child expression of emotions (positive or negative), the responsiveness and sensitivity of the teacher, the degree to which children's perspectives are considered and independence is fostered, and the support of the development of behavioral regulation so that children can meet expectations in the classroom and fully participate in classroom activities.

Toddlers are in a developmental phase heightened by factors such as their emerging capacity for regulation of their physiological and emotional arousal, the demands of compliance with adult directives, and challenges in formal group settings that often require children to end a pleasurable activity and begin something less desirable (e.g., the transition from playing with toys to putting the toys back on the shelves or from running around chasing peers to a more stationary activity). In addition, toddlers in early care and education settings explore social relations; they are presented with a variety of opportunities and challenges while exploring people, materials, and activities. The unique developmental characteristics of toddlers to have "autonomy with connectedness" (Sroufe, 1996, p. 620) increase the importance of emotional and behavioral support in toddler child care settings.

Relationships with adults in their environment help guide and foster toddlers' development and independence; for toddlers, these relationships provide the context for development (Thompson, 2006). Children's experiences and success in classrooms are optimized when the teacher monitors children's behavior, sets clear expectations, uses positive phrasing and redirection, and consistently provides children with activities and materials (Bredekamp & Copple, 2008; Feldman & Klein, 2003). Positive emotional and behavioral support in toddler classrooms is important for children to feel secure enough to form relationships with their teachers. For positive early social and behavioral development, toddlers need warm and consistent interactions with the adults in their environment.

The first bonds for children are typically with a parent or primary caregiver. As children enter child care, they have opportunities to develop an attachment with teachers in these settings (Gonzalez-Mena & Widmeyer Eyer, 2007). The theoretical underpinnings of this domain include work by developmental psychologists studying attachment and how children develop self-regulatory skills (Calkins, 2007; Gianino & Tronick, 1988; Raver, 2004) as well as work examining relations between behavioral regulation and externalizing behaviors (Calkins & Johnson, 1998; Da Ros & Kovach, 1998; Eisenberg et al., 1997). Children with secure attachments to a teacher tend to explore their environment more fully, try new things, exhibit higher levels of play, and develop a sense of independence or autonomy (Gonzalez-Mena

& Widmeyer Eyer, 2007). Toddlers' relationships with teachers and caregivers provide them with a secure base from which to explore all facets of their world, and these emotional bonds play a prominent role in toddlers' language and cognitive development.

These early relationships with teachers also foster cooperation and behavioral regulation (Grolnick, Bridges, & Connell, 1996; Matas, Arend, & Sroufe, 1978). The term *behavioral regulation* (Calkins, 2007; Kopp, 1989) generally refers to children's abilities to control impulsive behavior and comply with external requests. Relatedly, the acquisition of these standards of conduct allows children to function successfully in school environments and with peers (Calkins, 2007). Hence, the relationships developed and sustained for toddlers in child care contribute to their development and learning in significant ways.

The Emotional and Behavioral Support domain consists of five dimensions:

- *Positive Climate*: This dimension reflects the connection between the teacher and children and the warmth, respect, and enjoyment communicated by verbal and nonverbal interactions.
- *Negative Climate*: This dimension reflects the overall level of expressed negativity in the classroom. The frequency, quality, and intensity of teacher and child negativity are the key to this scale.
- *Teacher Sensitivity*: This dimension encompasses the teacher's responsiveness to and awareness of children's individual needs and emotional functioning. The extent to which the teacher is available as a secure base (being there to provide comfort, reassurance, and encouragement) is included in this rating.
- *Regard for Child Perspectives*: This dimension captures the degree to which the teacher's interactions with children and classroom activities emphasize children's interests, motivations, and points of view and encourage children's responsibility and independence.
- *Behavior Guidance*: This dimension encompasses the teacher's ability to promote behavioral self-regulation in children by using proactive approaches, supporting positive behavior, and guiding and minimizing problem behavior.