

# STATE OF CLASS<sup>®</sup>

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# 2015

Teachstone<sup>®</sup> 

teachstone.com  
877.401.8007



# STATE OF CLASS 2015

No matter what your job title is, where you're located, or what your day-to-day looks like, if you're reading this, you care about improving education for today's young learners. You're also looking for answers. Maybe you're curious about how others are focusing on quality in their organizations. Maybe you want to know how programs like yours are using CLASS to impact child outcomes—and what challenges they're experiencing along the way.

Whatever brings you here, you'll find plenty of insights in this first-ever State of CLASS report.

*Welcome!*



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

1

### **Our users are experienced.**

Our users have an impressive amount of experience, both with early childhood education and CLASS.

2

### **CLASS is used correctly.**

CLASS is being implemented as it was intended—as a comprehensive system for improving quality.

3

### **Resources are limited.**

Programs face significant challenges such as limited staff, budget, time, and planning resources.

4

### **CLASS needs to scale.**

In order for programs to achieve success, they need systems and support to scale CLASS.

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*Questions?*

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## INTRODUCTION ABOUT THE REPORT

### BACKGROUND

It's been over seven years since Bob Pianta and Bridget Hamre led the development of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System® (CLASS®) to make effective teacher-child interactions objective and measurable. Since then, CLASS has evolved from an assessment measure to the cornerstone of a comprehensive system for improving teaching quality. Today:

- 20+ QRIS programs have included CLASS as a quality marker.
- 35,000 classroom observers have been certified on the CLASS.
- Millions of children have enjoyed better classroom interactions and improved social, emotional, and cognitive outcomes because the CLASS provided a much-needed language and lens for teacher effectiveness.

**20+**  
QRIS  
PROGRAMS

**35,000+**  
CERTIFIED CLASS  
OBSERVERS

**MILLIONS**  
OF CHILDREN  
IMPACTED BY CLASS



## WHY THIS REPORT?

Over the last seven years, there's been growing national attention to the importance of high quality early childhood education. The topic has surfaced into the headlines of major newspapers, numerous governors' State of the State addresses, and President Obama's annual State of the Union address. It's even captured the attention of celebrities. Some have said that ECE is having "a moment" in our national consciousness; we like to think it's finally getting the attention it deserves, and the real work—assuring that children receive the very best start in life—is just beginning.

No conversation about quality early childhood education is complete, however, without discussing teacher-child interactions. We know from decades of research that teachers' interactions with children make a real, measurable difference in their learning and development, even more so than other quality indicators like teacher-child ratio, teacher education, and classroom materials.\* When teachers' interactions connect with and stimulate the students in their care, children learn and achieve more—now and for the rest of their lives. That's the promise of CLASS.

\* Mashburn, A. J., Pianta, R. C., Hamre, B. K., Downer, J. T., Barbarin, O. A., Bryant, D., Howes, C. (2008). Measures of classroom quality in prekindergarten and children's development of academic, language, and social skills. *Child Development*, 79(3), 732-749.



# ECE IS FINALLY GETTING THE ATTENTION IT DESERVES



# CLASS IS INCREASINGLY USED IN CLASSROOMS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Given Teachstone's growing commitment to improving early childhood education and the proven link between teacher-child interactions and children's development, it's no wonder that CLASS is increasingly used in classrooms and child care centers across the country. With so many different types of CLASS implementations, we created this report, in part, to get a snapshot of how people are "doing CLASS" in the field. We heard anecdotally about the various ways that programs were "doing" CLASS, but we thought it was time to put together an official survey and report to help us better understand how CLASS is used and perceived in the field, and what challenges exist.

But most important, we also wanted you to have the chance to hear from other professionals in the field about their experiences. In this report you'll hear from many voices in many different facets of early childhood education. We hope that you enjoy hearing from your colleagues and using their stories to help you deliver on the promise of CLASS in your program.

## HOW THIS SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED

From September through November 2015, we asked early childhood professionals from around the globe to respond to a survey about how and why they use the CLASS to measure and improve teacher-child interactions.



# CHAPTER 1

## WHO'S USING CLASS

From this data, we produced graphs—lots and lots of graphs—and analyzed them to create the data narratives around which this report is built. We've organized this information into four chapters, some of which may be more relevant to your interests than others. Feel free to take whatever you need and leave the rest for another day.

### HOW WE CONDUCTED THE STATE OF CLASS SURVEY AT A GLANCE

#### THE SURVEY Survey Monkey



We asked respondents to share their experience with CLASS and early childhood education.

#### THE PROMOTIONAL CHANNELS



- Newsletters
- Social media
- Conferences
- List purchases
- Partner channels

#### THE GIVEAWAY iPad Air



Survey respondents were entered into a drawing for a free iPad Air.

#### THE SURVEY DATES

Opened

10/15/15

Closed

11/30/15



#### THE RESPONSE

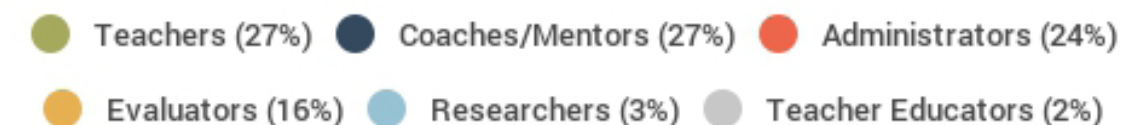
2,973

We heard from thousands of professionals in early childhood education, including teachers, observers, coaches, administrators, and researchers.

### ABOUT OUR RESPONDENTS

The nearly 3,000 respondents who completed this survey include teachers, coaches, administrators, researchers, and higher education professionals worldwide—each with a stake in improving educational opportunities for children.

#### Primary Job Responsibility





WHERE IN THE WORLD ARE OUR RESPONDENTS FROM?



US SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Today in the United States, programs in all 50 states are using CLASS to improve quality, and a growing number of states are using the CLASS within their QRIS. With such a strong national presence, it’s fitting that this report represents CLASS users from all 50 states, as well as four US territories.

INTERNATIONAL SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

CLASS is also gaining international attention with 30 countries now using it to measure and improve teacher quality. This State of CLASS report is thus appropriately a global document, representing users from 16 different countries like Canada, Chile, Singapore, and the Netherlands.

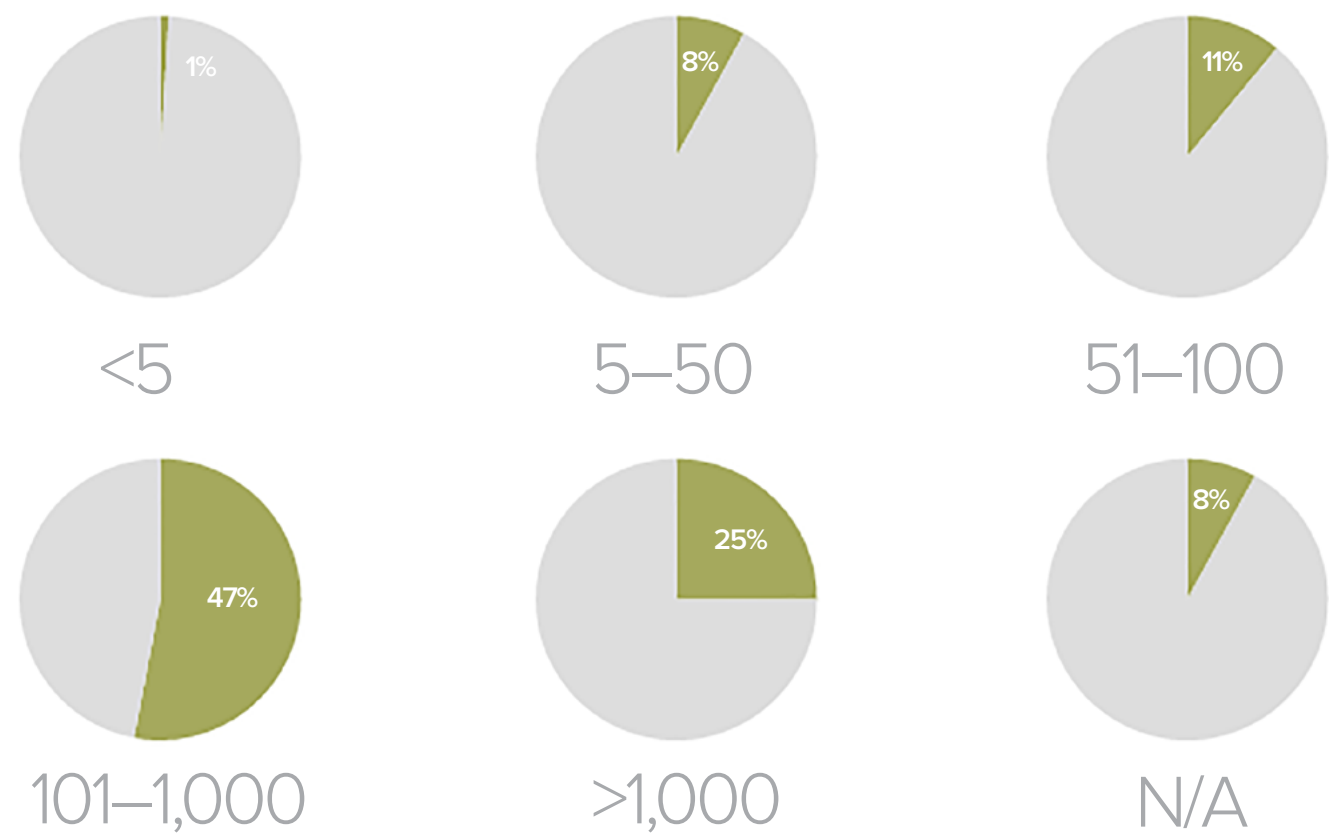


ABOUT THEIR ORGANIZATIONS

CLASS is used in early learning and child-care centers of all sizes, from programs with just a few children to statewide organizations serving thousands.

The majority of participants in this survey come from medium to large organizations, with 72% serving more than 100 children and 25% serving more than 1,000 children.

Number of Children Served



Employers span a diverse group of agencies and organizations, from private child-care providers (15%) to state and local Head Start grantees (40%).

TOP 5 employers

- 1 State or local Head Start grantee (40%)
- 2 Private child care provider (15%)
- 3 School district (15%)
- 4 Office of Head Start (7%)
- 5 An institution of higher education (7%)

As we work with states and other large organizations, the increasing levels of collaboration between Head Start, state QRIS systems, and other private providers are evident. States are trying to figure out how to best integrate publicly-funded early education and child-care programs into a mixed delivery system that includes Head Start providers, state-funded pre-K providers, not-for-profit providers, and for-profit providers. The hope is that this model ensures that the needs of children and families are met in a manner that guarantees both access and high-quality services.

“States are considering how they can build on the Head Start required use of CLASS to meet the federal Head Start performance standards within the QRIS protocols. Puzzling through these types of challenges helps reduce administrative burdens, streamlines participation for programs and enables everyone to focus on the core work of improving services for children and families.”

—Deb Mathias, Director of the QRIS National Learning Network with the BUILD Initiative

On the relationship between Head Start, QRISs, and other programs, Deb Mathias, director of the QRIS National Learning Network with the BUILD Initiative, had this to say:

“States are working to create an aligned, coherent continuum of services for families and move their QRISs toward cross-sector program participation including Head Start, child care and state pre-K. States are taking a close look at how they can economically build on each sector’s regulatory and program standard base by not duplicating monitoring and accountability structures. For example, states are considering how they can build on the Head Start required use of CLASS to meet the federal Head Start performance standards within the QRIS protocols. Puzzling through these types of challenges helps reduce administrative burdens, streamlines participation for programs and enables everyone to focus on the core work of improving services for children and families.”

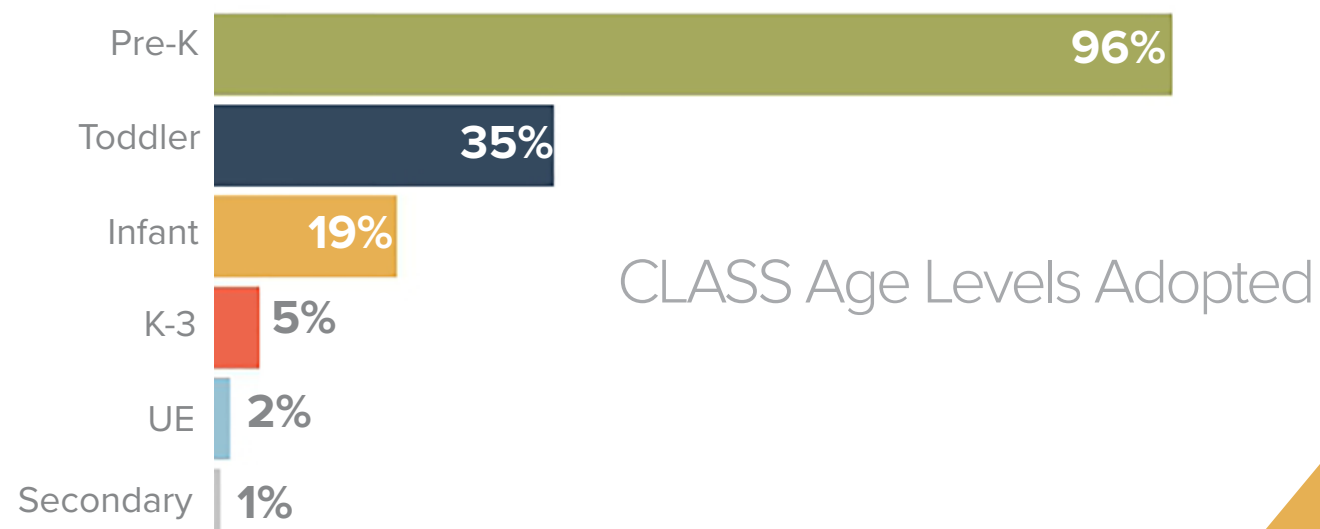


## ABOUT THE AGE LEVELS

Because interactions impact learning and development at all ages, CLASS is now used across infant, toddler, pre-K, K-3, upper elementary, and secondary age levels.

CLASS has its roots in preschool classrooms, however, and while we're concerned with quality education for learners of all ages, our focus at Teachstone is on early childhood education. It therefore came as no surprise that most users reported that their organizations use the Pre-K CLASS rather than other CLASS age levels (62%).

When users reported that they used the Infant CLASS or the Toddler CLASS, it was most often in combination with other age levels, especially with the Pre-K CLASS. We're encouraged to see that programs are expanding their CLASS initiatives beyond Pre-K, because consistency of quality interactions supports continuous quality of care for young children.



*It makes sense that most programs begin with the Pre-K CLASS; it's where we got started, and it's where much of the legislative focus is today. But we know how important the early years are, particularly for low-income children. We are starting to see an emphasis on the infant and toddler years at the state and federal level, and we hope this will lead to recognition that teacher-child interactions are the best indicator of quality programs for our youngest children and our efforts to provide the best experiences at those ages will reflect this recognition.*

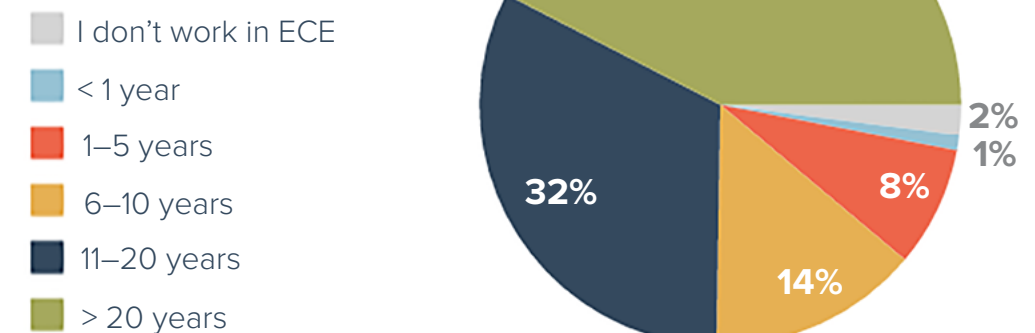
—Bob Pianta, Dean of the Curry School of Education at UVA & Teachstone Co-Founder

## ECE & CLASS EXPERIENCE

We opened up our survey to anyone, regardless of their role or knowledge of CLASS. Still, the data showed that respondents had significant experience in early childhood education, generally, and with CLASS, specifically.

Most respondents (74%) told us they had worked in early childhood education for over 11 years with 42% reporting more than 20 years of experience.

### Years in ECE



Of course, the amount of experience varied according to role in education. Keep in mind that we use the term “coach” throughout this report to refer to a variety of early childhood professionals. It encompasses education managers, education coordinators, T&TA specialists, mentors, center directors, and anyone spending the majority of their time supporting teachers' growth. It's interesting to note that many observers also serve as coaches, and many coaches conduct both formal and informal observations. (We discuss this in greater detail starting on p. 42.)



### TEACHERS

Most teachers (84%) reported having over 5 years teaching experience.



### COACHES

95% of coaches reported having 6+ years of ECE experience; 84% had more than 11 years and 50% had more than 20 years. (Wow!)



### CENTER DIRECTORS

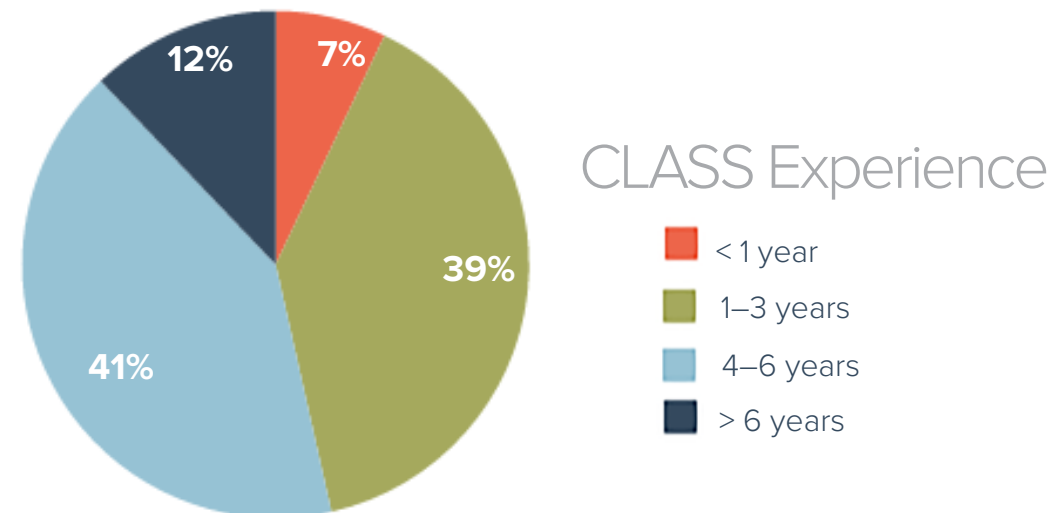
41% of center directors reported managing only one site, but some said they managed more than 10.



### ADMINISTRATORS

About half of administrators indicated that they work at the state and regional level and are responsible for administering Head Start programs (52%), state pre-K (23%), & a range of other programs (23%).

Almost half of our survey participants had over four years of experience using CLASS (41%), with the same number of participants having used CLASS for one to three years.



Here’s how that CLASS experience broke down according to role in education:



### TEACHERS

68% of teachers said they had been observed using the CLASS measure, and 25% said they had used CLASS for more than 4 years.



### OBSERVERS

87% of observers told us they use CLASS as one of their observation tools; more than half reported having used the CLASS for more than 4 years.



### COACHES

50% of coaches said they had been using CLASS for more than 4 years, and 60% reported talking about CLASS or teacher-child interactions in their coaching sessions.



### ADMINISTRATORS

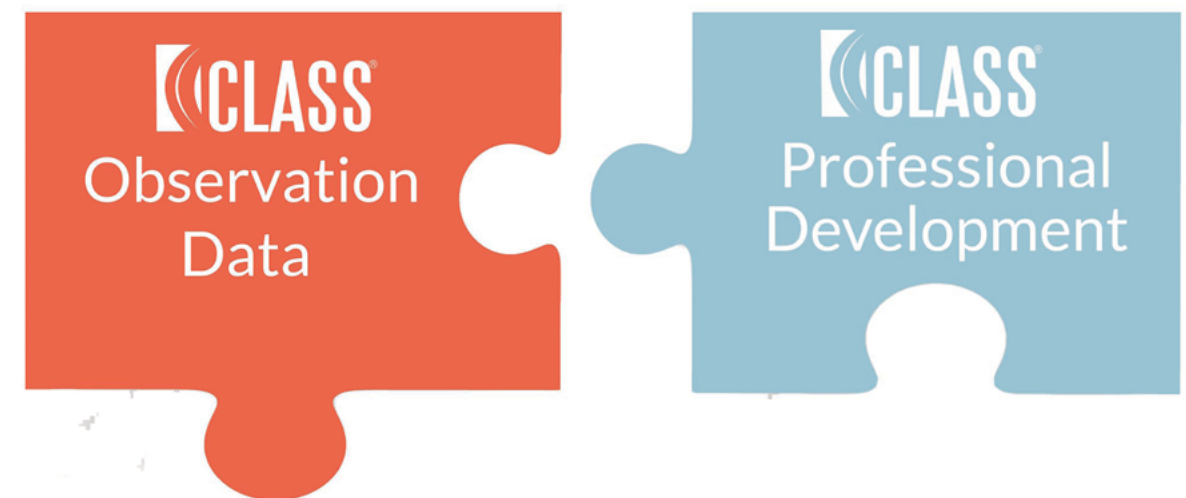
47% of administrators said they had been using CLASS for more than 4 years; 79% reported having attended a CLASS Observation Training.

What did almost all respondents have in common? Almost all (97%) self-reported a mid- to high- level of CLASS knowledge, with the majority (62%) telling us they “often or always think about the CLASS” in the work they do. This, of course, is great news! With so many educators— regardless of their roles and titles— incorporating CLASS into their day-to-day lives, children worldwide are better poised for brighter futures.

## WHAT IT MEANS TO DO CLASS “RIGHT”

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to CLASS implementation. One program’s CLASS implementation might look very different from that of another similarly sized program in the same state, due to differences in funding and other resources. This variance is to be expected, but it’s important to recognize that not all implementations are equally effective at driving results. There is a “right” way to “do CLASS,” one that promotes change over mere compliance.

We know from years of research that to see improvements in teaching quality, assessment data alone just won’t cut it. In order to actualize the potential of CLASS and improve outcomes for teachers and students, programs need to move beyond collecting CLASS data and into providing aligned professional development programs for teachers.



Our data showed that most of our respondents are using CLASS the right way— balancing observation data with CLASS-based professional development to support teachers in:

- » Understanding what effective interactions look like
- » Viewing their current practices with a CLASS lens
- » Engaging in more effective interactions with the children in their classrooms



Given the experience our respondents have with CLASS, this trend isn't surprising, but it is encouraging. The most promising results are in places that have been using CLASS for both observation and professional development for at least three years.

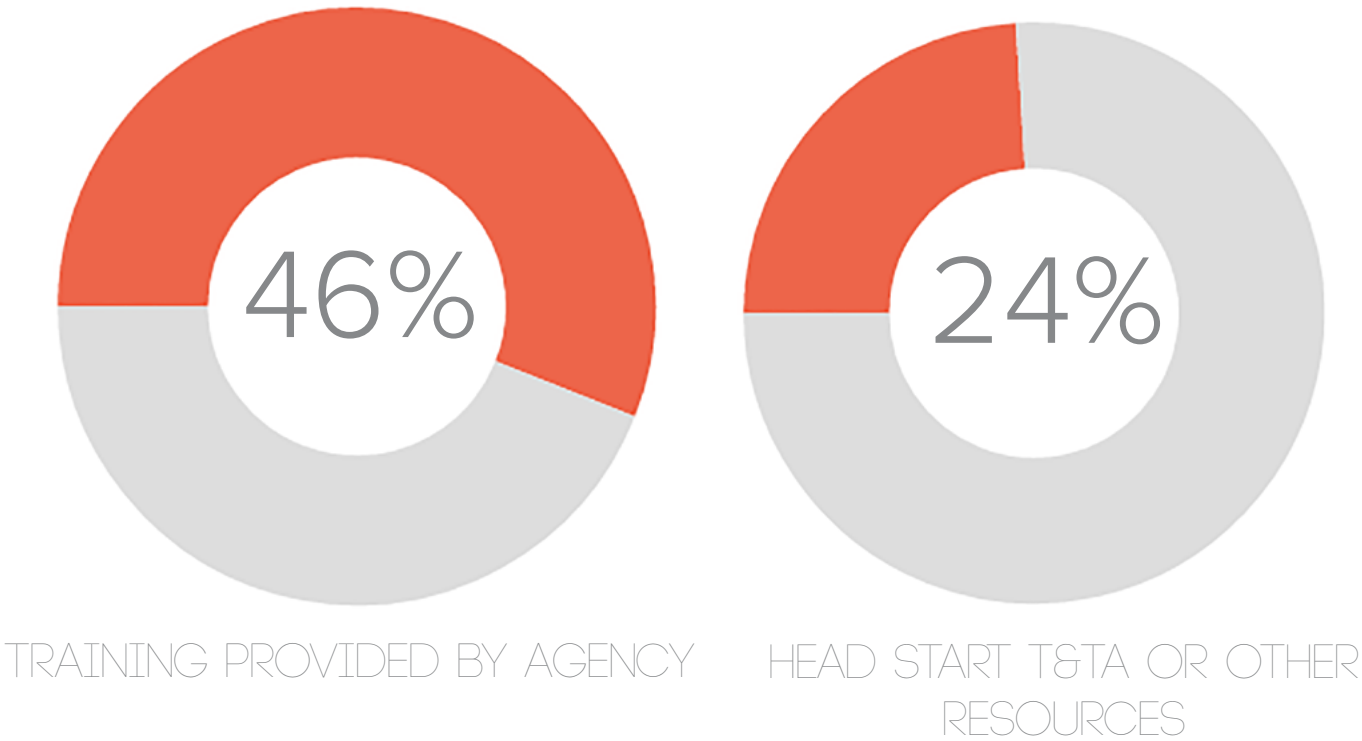
In this chapter we'll look at the following examples of what programs are doing particularly well.



**1. Getting teachers ready for CLASS observations and establishing buy-in.**

Most of the teachers we surveyed learned about CLASS through formal channels, with almost half (46%) learning through a training provided by their program or agency and a quarter (24%) learning through Head Start T&TA or other resources.

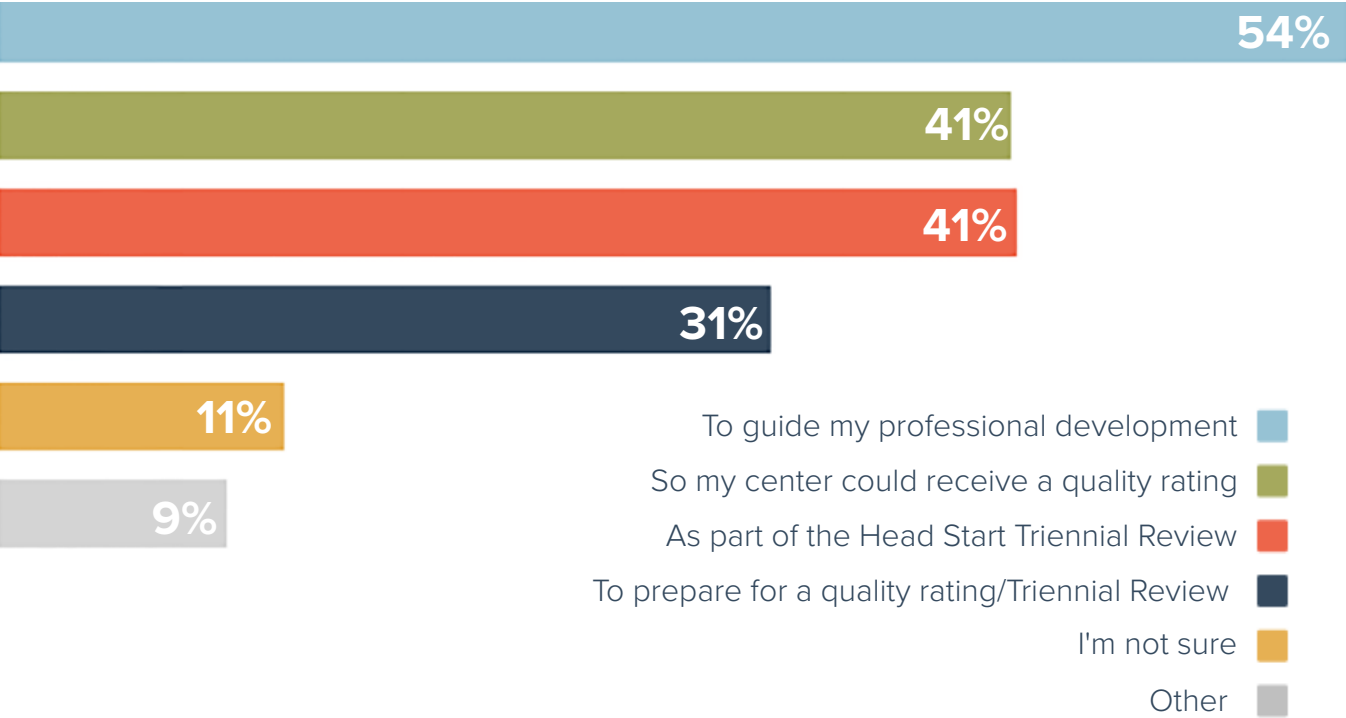
How Teachers Learned about CLASS



By learning about CLASS, teachers gain not only the context for why their classroom observations are occurring, but also insights into how their interactions impact children's learning.

When we asked teachers why their classrooms were observed, a little more than half (54%) said they were observed to guide professional development. That's great, and it's higher than what we expected! The power of CLASS to transform teaching and learning starts with collecting assessment data through classroom observations, but it's when that data is used to inform professional development that the promise of CLASS comes to fruition.

Teachers: Why My Classroom Was Observed



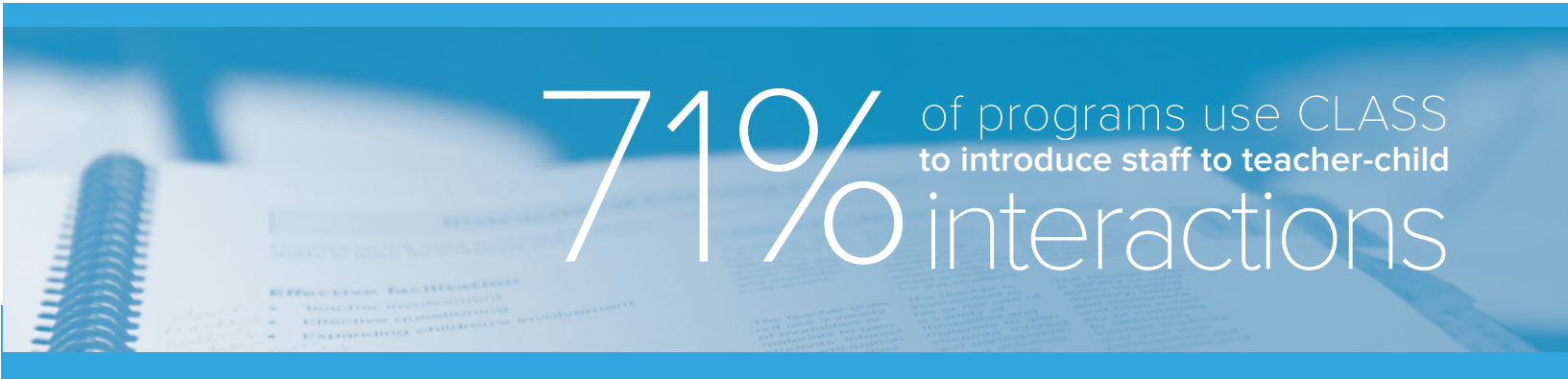
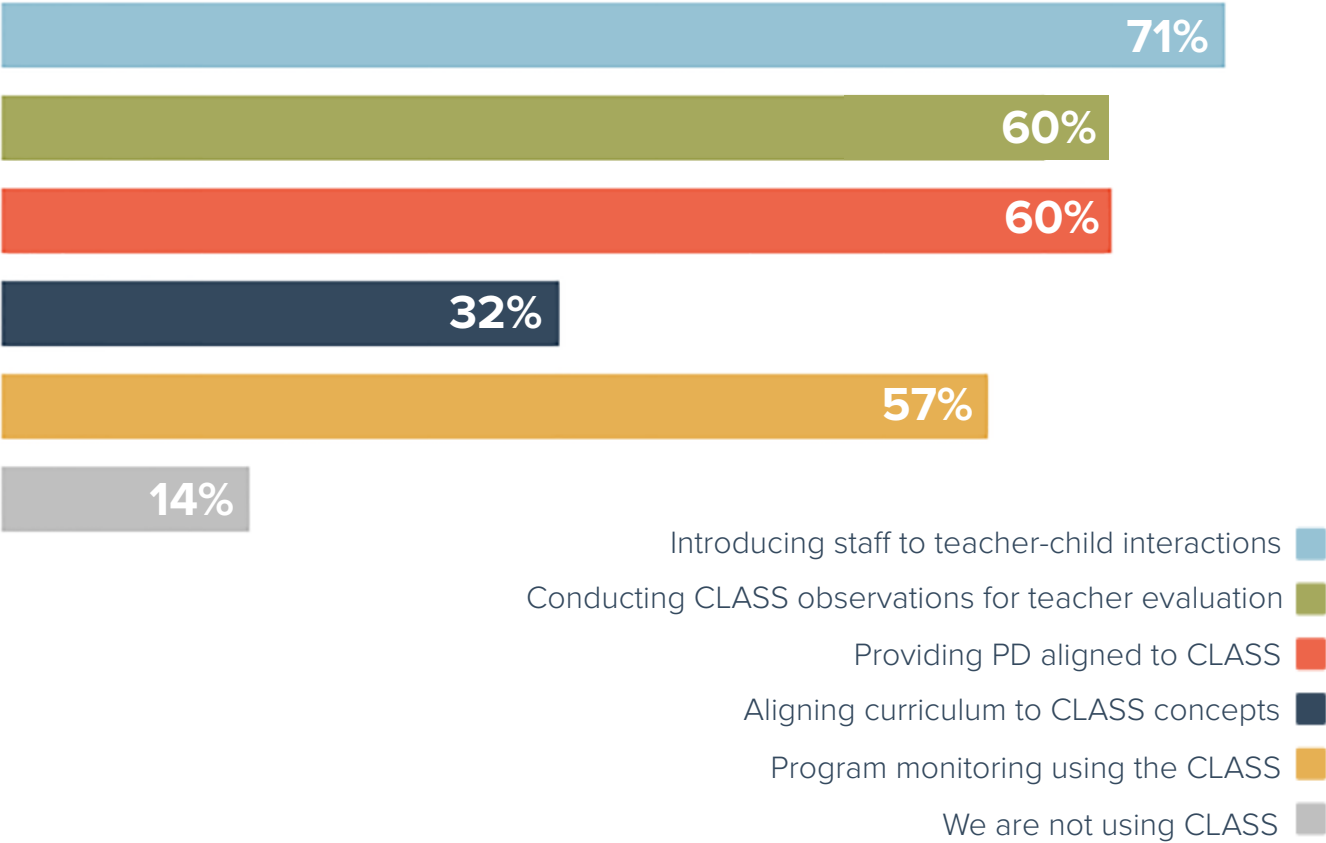
*“I’ve been presenting on CLASS at conferences and events for years, supporting early childhood leaders on leveraging data for improvement efforts. We are starting to see a real shift. I used to spend the majority of the presentation explaining why it was important to use data to support teachers; today, most organizations are already doing it. Now it’s just a matter of supporting them in doing it in the most effective ways possible.”*

—Rebecca Berlin, Chief Strategy Officer & Interim Chief Executive Officer, Teachstone

2. Giving teachers feedback on their CLASS observations

Four years ago, many programs were using CLASS exclusively for monitoring rather than improving teaching quality. Since then, the pendulum in early childhood education has swung from CLASS as a “gotcha” measure to CLASS as a vehicle for transforming teaching practices. Our survey validated this emerging—and promising—movement in the right direction.

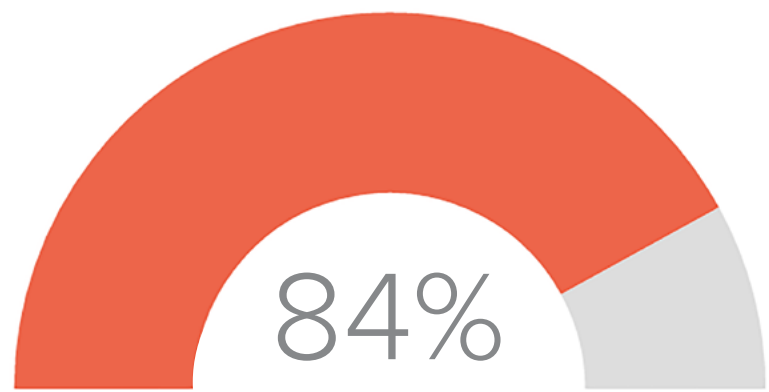
How Programs Are Using CLASS





These results align with data from teachers, who indicated they had an experience with CLASS beyond assessment and scores. Most teachers (84%) reported receiving feedback on their CLASS observations.

Teachers Who Received Feedback on CLASS Observations



Ideally we’d like to see all teachers receive feedback to better understand what’s working in their classrooms and where they need additional support, but 84% is a strong showing. The perception of CLASS has evolved—from something that’s “done” to teachers to a tool that helps teachers actualize their talents.

“During my time at Teachstone, I’ve seen a shift from CLASS being viewed as a gotcha measure—a way to catch teachers doing something wrong and to penalize them—to one that actually supports teacher growth and development. Teachers are getting feedback from their coaches and managers, and they are actually improving their practice and enhancing their love of teaching because of the CLASS.

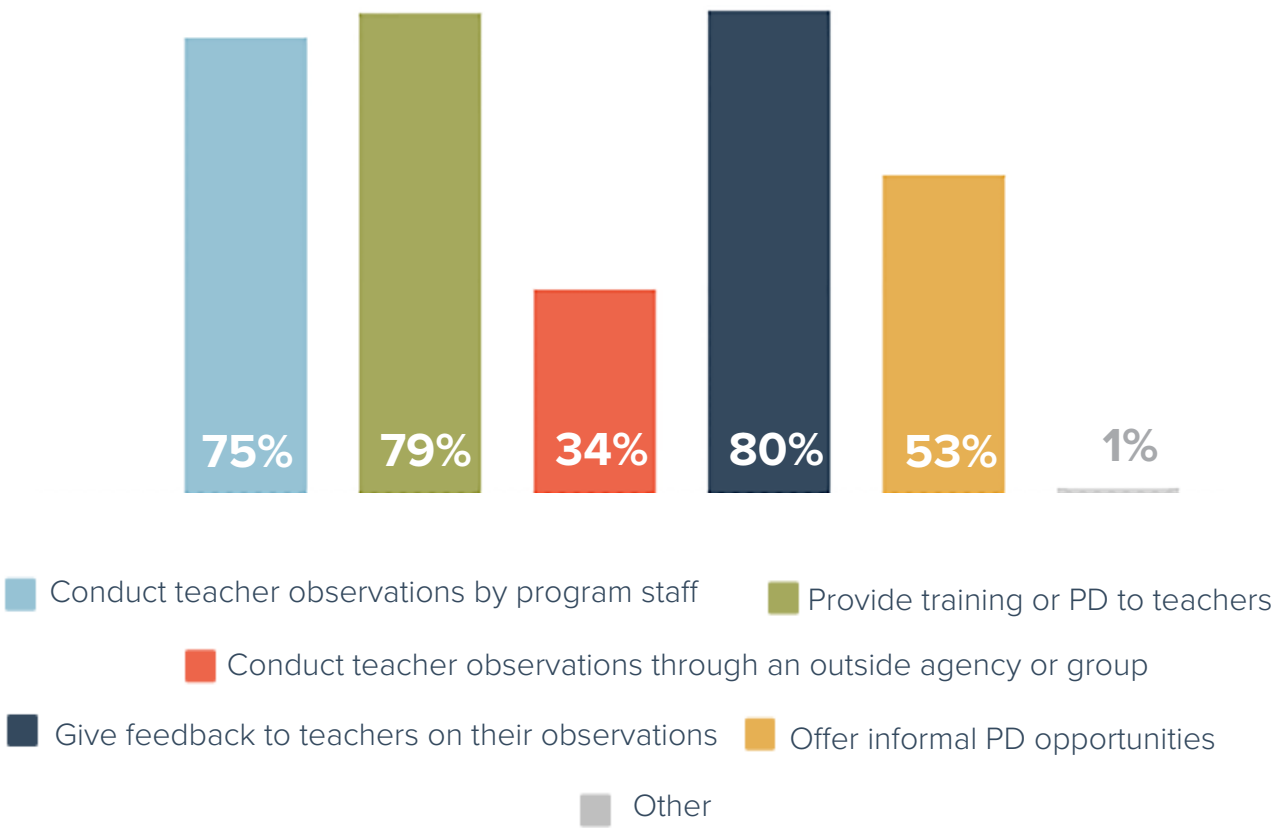
— Sarah Hadden, Senior Advisor, Teachstone

3. Coupling CLASS observations and professional development

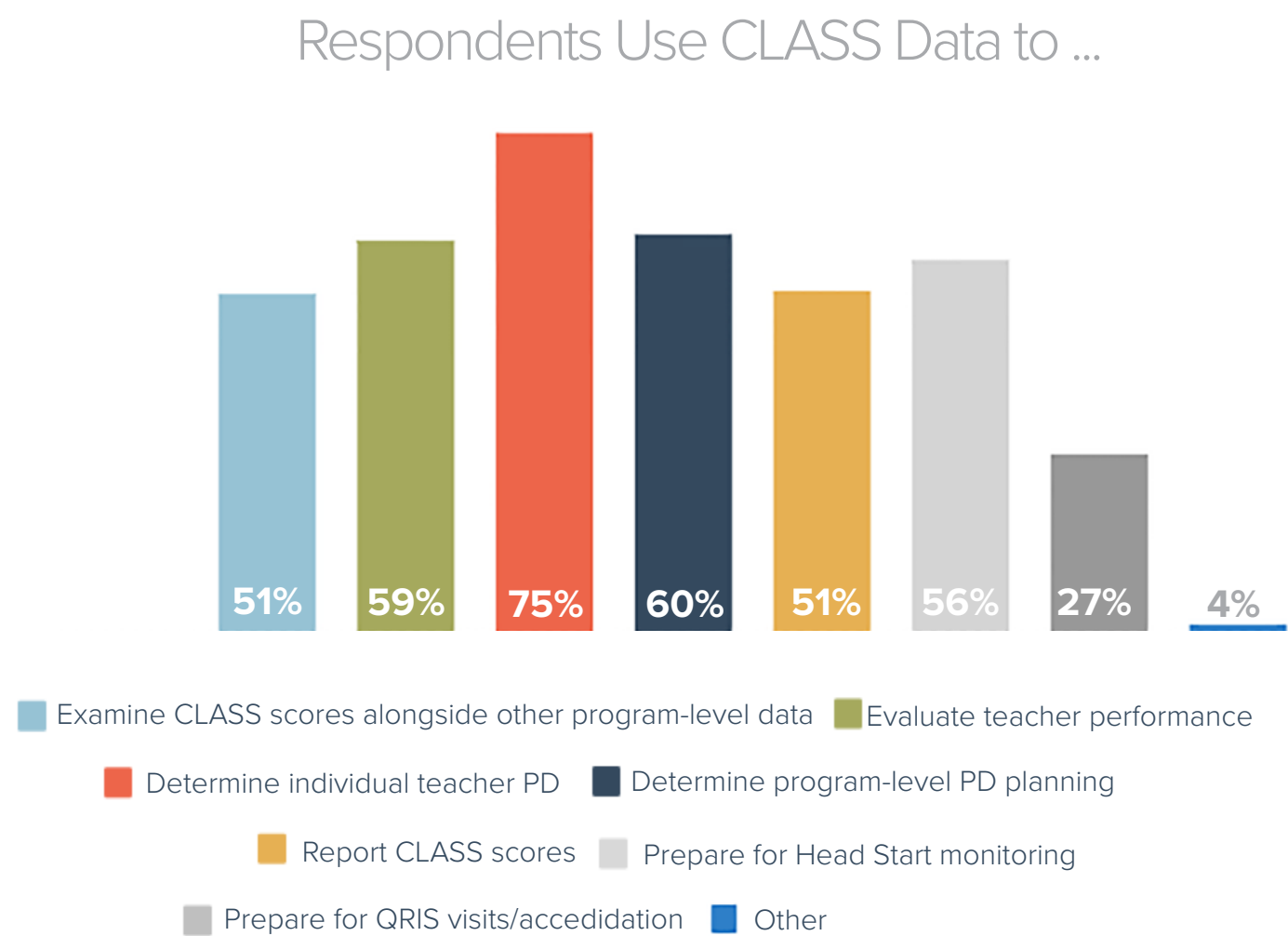
Related to teachers receiving feedback, we saw other promising indications that CLASS is increasingly used for professional development, rather than as an assessment tool alone.

A high number of respondents (including teachers, coaches, observers, and administrators) told us their programs were using CLASS to conduct teacher observations (75%), provide training or professional development to teachers (78%), or give feedback to teachers on their observations (79%).

Respondents Use CLASS to ...

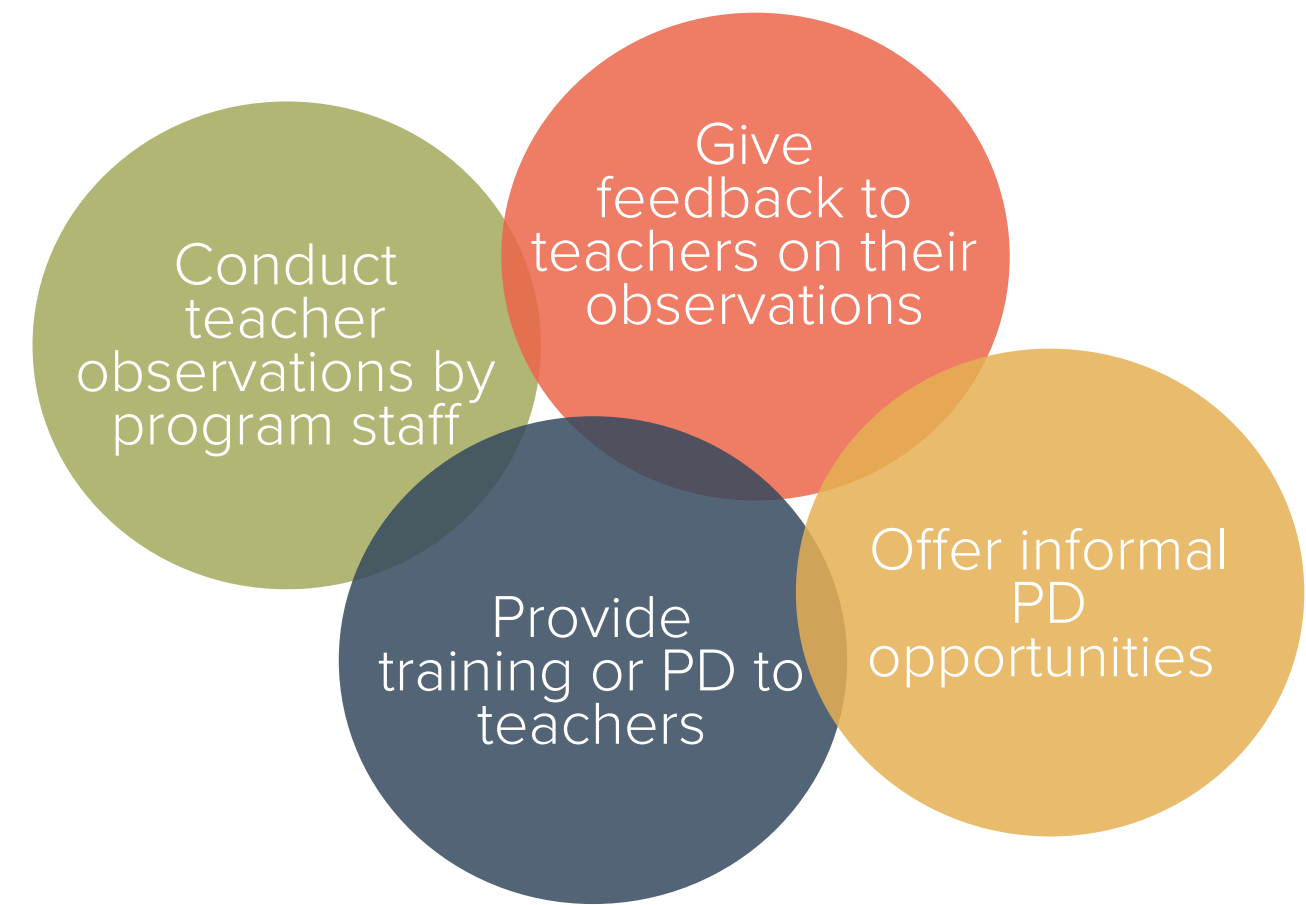


Three-quarters of respondents (75%) reported using CLASS data to determine individual teacher professional development, while only about a quarter (27%) said they were using CLASS to prepare for QRIS visits or accreditation.



All of this tells us that CLASS is increasingly being used as it was originally intended—as a tool for improving teaching quality as well as a way to measure it. We know that programs need to conduct teacher observations so they can gather assessment data and see what’s working in the classroom (and what’s not). But CLASS observations alone will not move the needle on quality. It’s only when assessment data is coupled with CLASS-based professional development that we see lasting, meaningful changes, both for teachers and for the children in their care.

Tellingly, the more ways a respondent’s organization is using the CLASS, the higher they rated their CLASS knowledge. Respondents tended to rate their CLASS knowledge as higher when their organizations used the CLASS to:



This points to the idea that deeper, richer use of the CLASS builds knowledge of the CLASS.

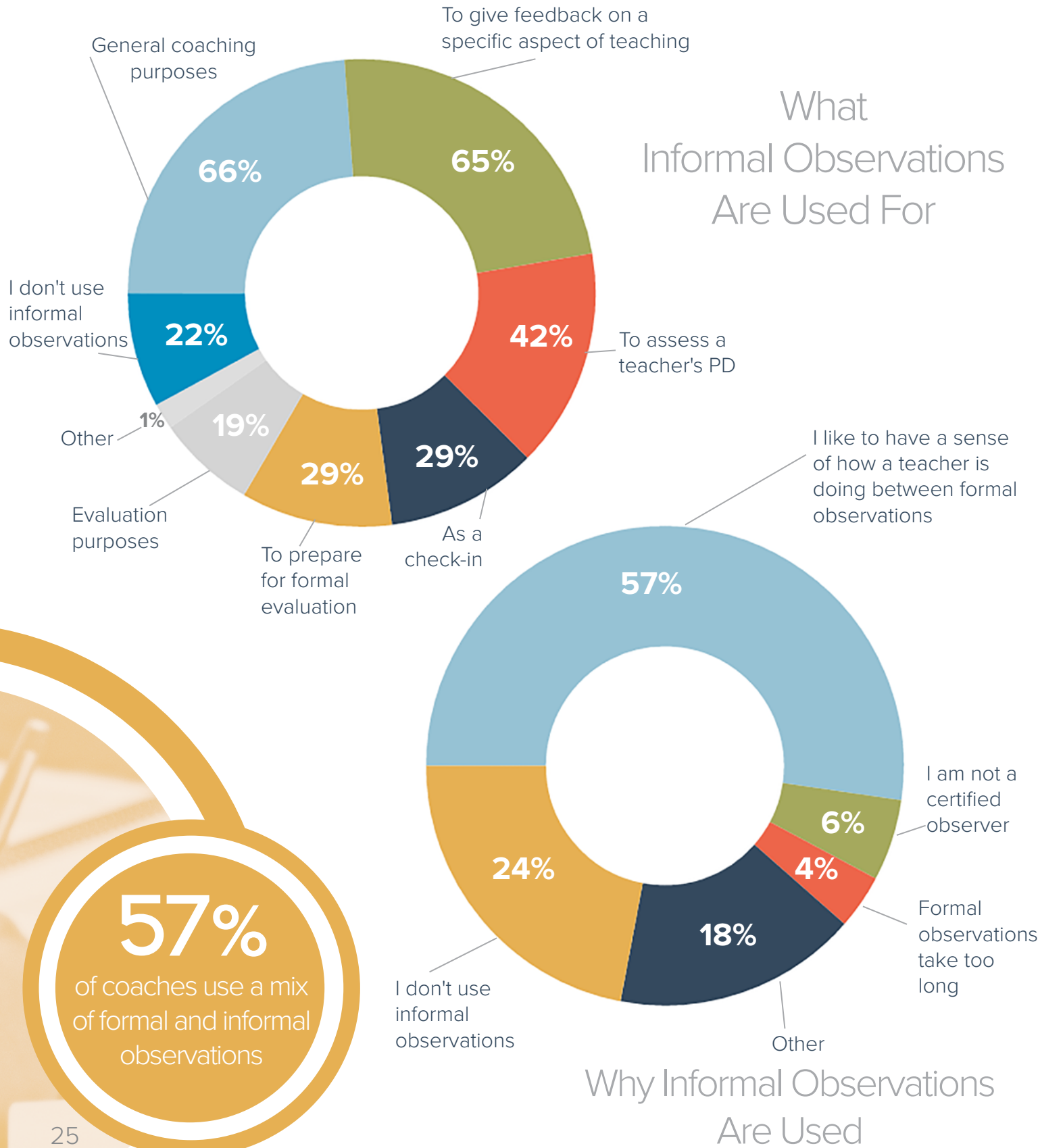
4. Using informal CLASS observations to further support teachers in understanding how to improve.

Another emergent trend in the field is the use of informal CLASS observations in conjunction with formal observations. What are the differences between formal and informal observations?

- » **Formal CLASS observations** consist of at least four observation cycles conducted across a single school day with scores averaged across cycles then recorded, assigned, and reported.
- » **Informal CLASS observations** consist of fewer cycles and are qualitative rather than quantitative (the observer only takes notes, and no numerical scores are recorded, assigned, or reported).

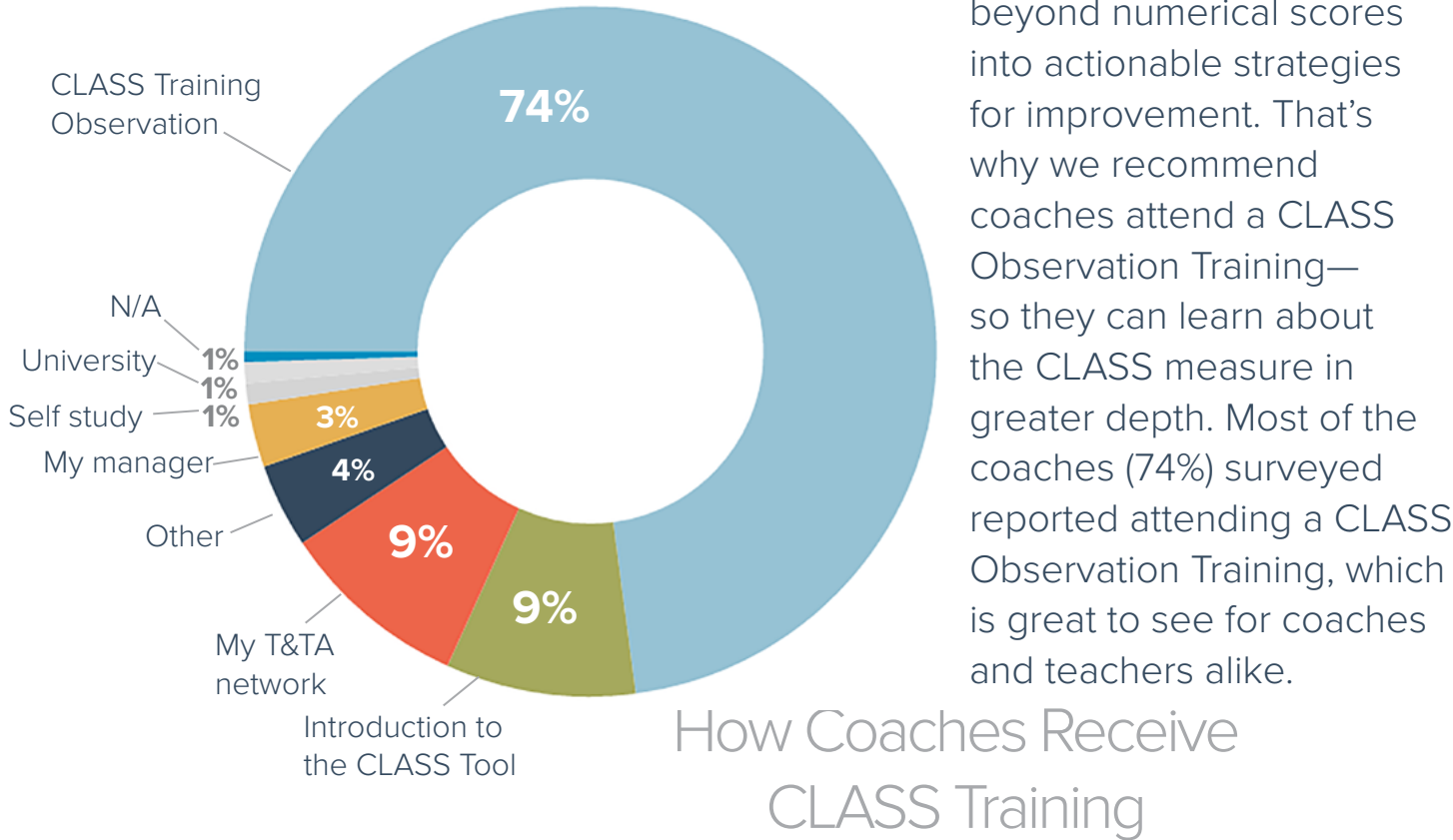


Our data showed that more than half of coaches (57%) use a mix of formal and informal observations to evaluate, coach, and give feedback to teachers. This methodology provides a systematic monitoring approach to continuous quality improvement and allows coaches to have their “finger on the pulse” of classrooms to ensure that change is happening.



**5. Supporting coaches in gaining expertise in CLASS—mainly through CLASS Observation Training, which we recommend for all coaches.**

With so many coaches providing CLASS feedback to teachers, coaches need to be fluent in the language of CLASS and skilled in really seeing and identifying effective and ineffective interactions. With that fluency they can help their teachers move beyond numerical scores into actionable strategies for improvement. That’s why we recommend coaches attend a CLASS Observation Training—so they can learn about the CLASS measure in greater depth. Most of the coaches (74%) surveyed reported attending a CLASS Observation Training, which is great to see for coaches and teachers alike.



**WHAT COACHES LEARN IN CLASS OBSERVATION TRAINING**

- ★ Why teacher-child interactions are important
- ★ CLASS dimensions, indicators, and behavioral markers
- ★ How teacher behaviors align with CLASS dimensions
- ★ How to make specific, objective classroom observations
- ★ How to reliably code classroom video using CLASS

Meeting these competencies in Observation Training allows coaches to use data, such as CLASS scores and behavioral observations, to identify areas of focus for coaching conversations and share meaningful feedback.



# CHAPTER 3

## THE CHALLENGE OF LIMITED RESOURCES

### OUR RESPONDENTS' CHALLENGES

In Chapter 2, we explored a number of indicators that CLASS implementations are moving in a positive—and promising—direction. Even with so many programs increasingly implementing CLASS the “right” way, there are obstacles, often not small ones, that can frustrate efforts to deliver on the promise of CLASS.

In this chapter we’ll cover the limitations (often inextricably intertwined) that can make proper implementation tricky.

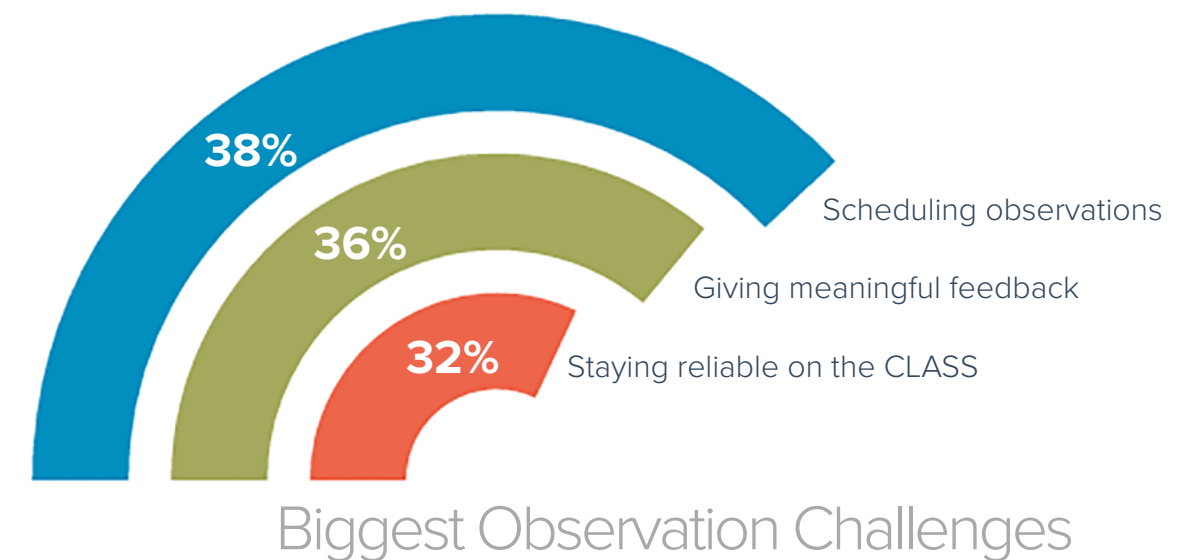


### 1. LIMITED TIME

Lack of time is a common theme in early childhood education. Anyone who has ever walked into a child care center knows that everyone—from the teachers to the Center Director—is strapped for time.

Limited time is a challenge for classroom observers as well. In addition to coding observations (inherently a challenging endeavor), observers have a number of moving parts for which they’re responsible. They have to schedule observations, manage data, report on their observations, and in some cases, provide feedback—all while regularly reviewing the CLASS manual and maintaining reliability.

When we asked observers to tell us the biggest challenges they face in conducting CLASS observations, the three top answers were scheduling observations (38%), giving meaningful feedback to teachers (36%), and staying reliable on the tool (32%).



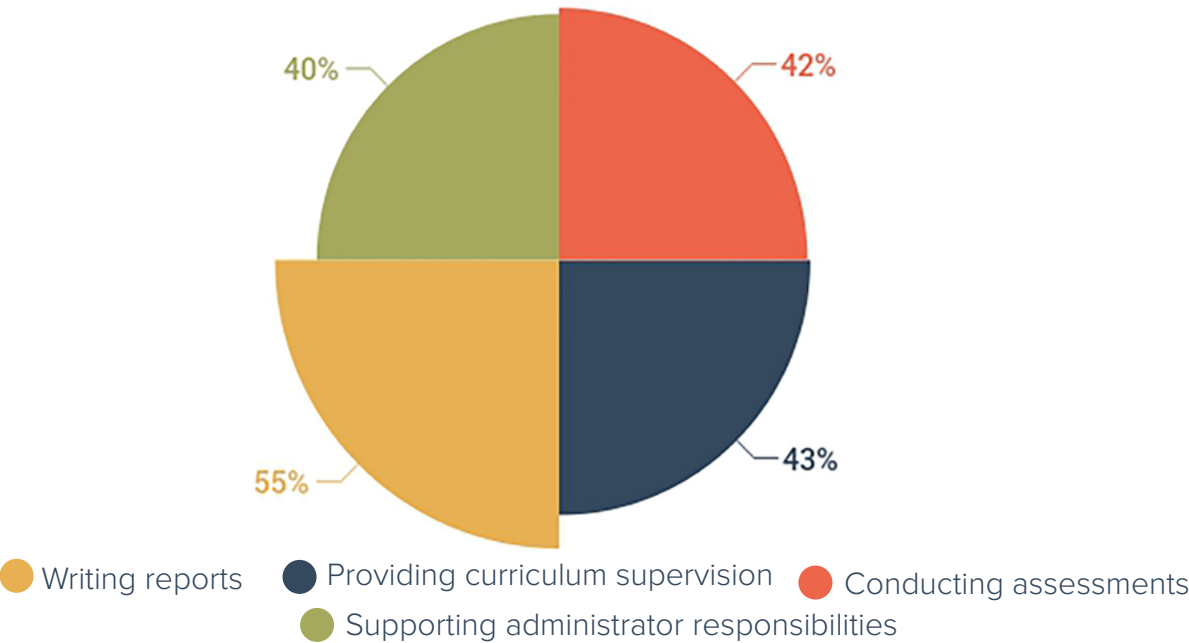
What these challenges have in common is time; it takes time to do each of these things—time that most observers simply don’t have. For observers to succeed, they need tools to help them scale their work efficiently and effectively. A comprehensive solution for managing these tasks and tools efficiently (like myTeachstone) can address the many needs of observers, while simplifying the process of scheduling observations, accessing resources, and running reports so that observers have more time to focus on their observations.



Like observing, coaching is a tough job—one that is as wide as it is deep. Some coaches are also observers (and vice versa), adding to the complexity of their roles.

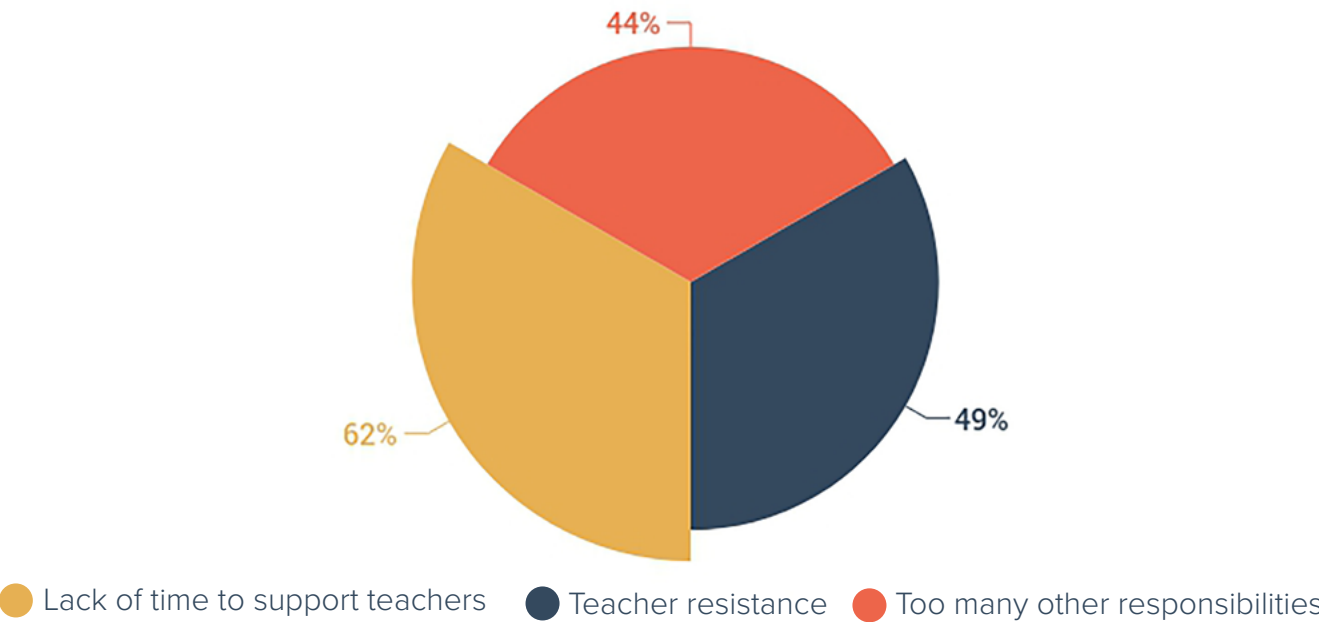
Although coaches spend most of their time supporting teachers, they juggle a long list of other responsibilities as well, including:

Top Coaching Responsibilities

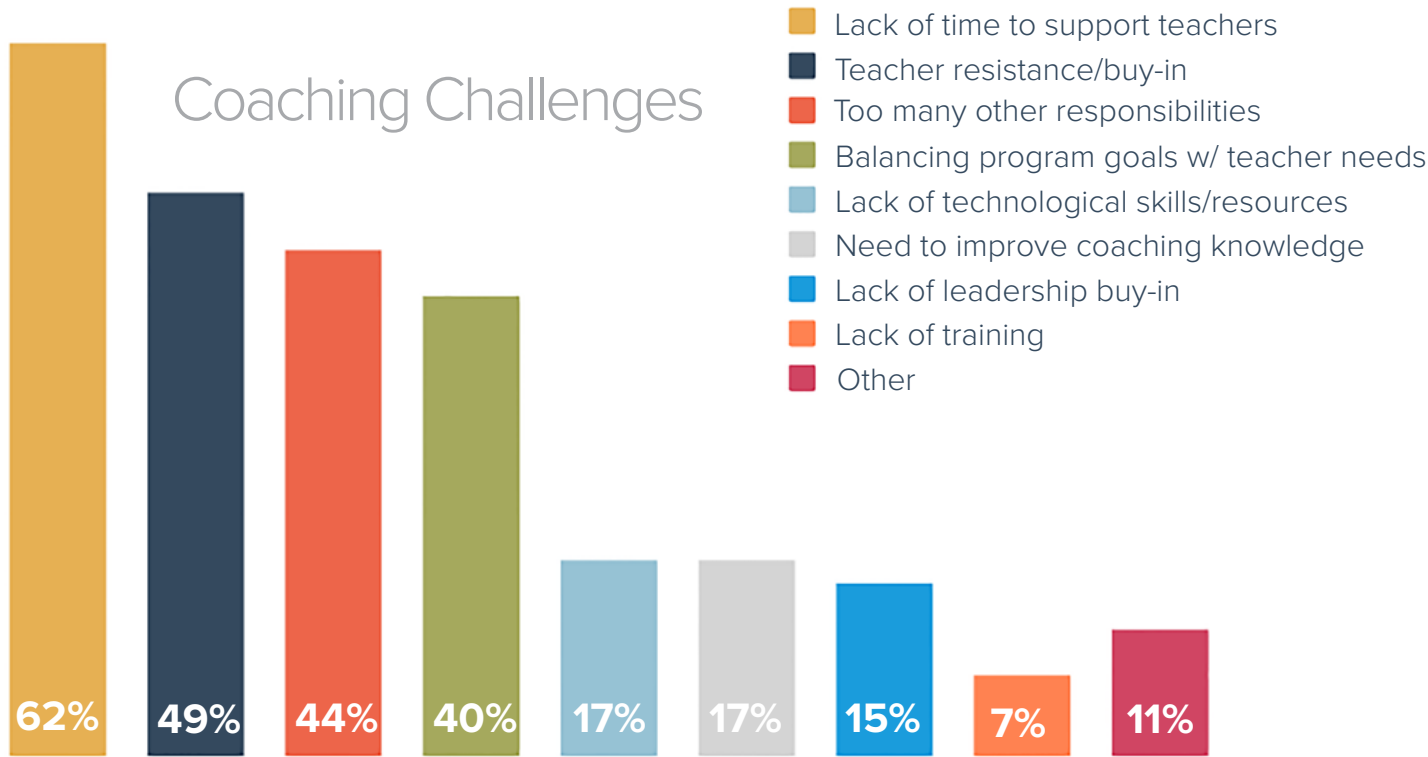


When we asked coaches to identify their top challenges, the top three responses were lack of time to support teachers, teacher resistance, and having too many other responsibilities.

Top Coaching Challenges



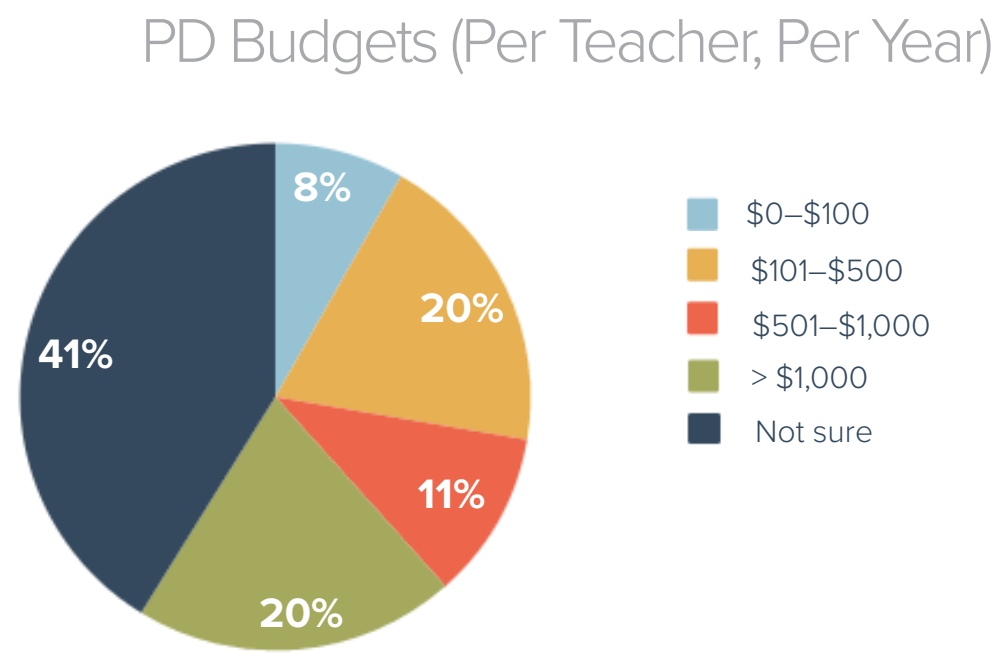
These challenges for coaches are interconnected around the common theme of time. Lack of buy-in, for example, is often related to time: if coaches do not have enough time to get to know, observe, meet with, and plan with their teachers, then it will be tougher for teachers to buy into coaching support. Likewise, the sheer number of responsibilities coaches have can make finding the time to execute extremely difficult.



So how can coaches effectively support large numbers of teachers in a short amount of time? The field is starting to solve that problem by building communities of practice and leveraging technology to more effectively connect coaches with teachers, both key features in myTeachstone. Likewise, MyTeachingPartner™ (MTP™) Coaching, our evidence-based coaching program, provides coaches with a framework, the training they need to carry out that framework, and support through an MTP Specialist who ensures they are effectively and efficiently providing teachers with the best coaching possible.

## 2. LIMITED BUDGET

Lack of funds to support professional development is a complaint we’ve heard again and again from our colleagues in ECE. To find out more, we asked survey participants to share their program budgets for professional development. We learned that only 20% of programs budget more than \$1,000 per teacher, per year. Compare that to the \$18,000 that’s reported to be allocated per teacher, per year in K–12\*, and it’s abundantly clear why early childhood educators often fail to get the professional development they need to succeed.

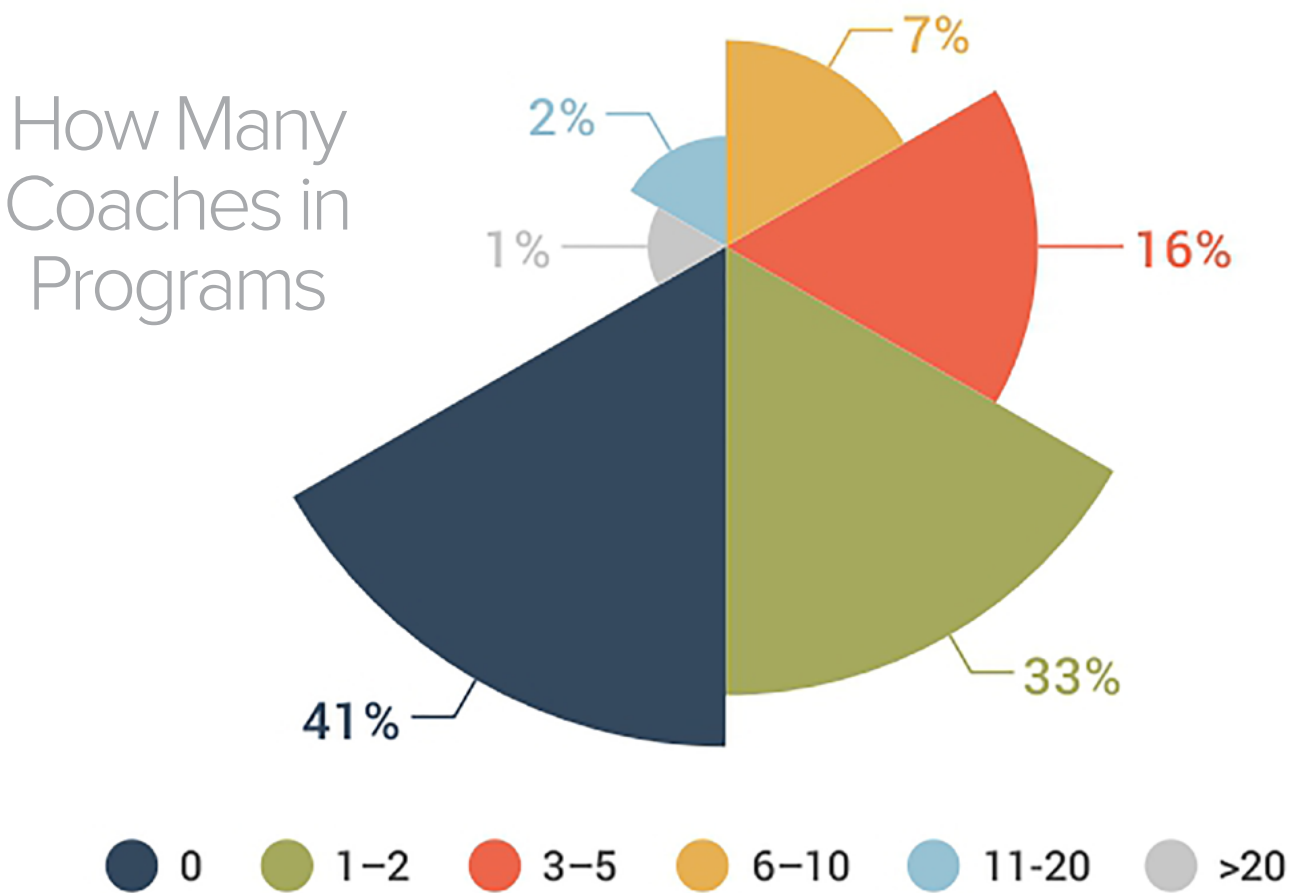


One challenge we’ve heard from many programs is that they begin collecting CLASS data but run out of funding for their professional development efforts—or they plan professional development but don’t have the right data to measure success. We know from years of research that to really see results in your organization, you need to couple observation data with professional development. It’s important to factor both elements into early conversations about available budget resources.

\* TNTP (2015). *The Mirage: Confronting the Hard Truth About Our Quest for Teacher Development*. Retrieved from [http://tntp.org/assets/documents/TNTP-Mirage\\_2015.pdf](http://tntp.org/assets/documents/TNTP-Mirage_2015.pdf).

## 3. LIMITED STAFF

Many programs, particularly smaller ones, have limited to no support staff to do the important work of professional development. In these small programs, staff wear many hats and are often stretched too thin to provide impactful coaching. Only about half of respondents (56%) reported that their program’s coaching structure included in-house coaches, while almost a quarter told us they do not have a coaching structure. And when we asked respondents how many coaches they had in their programs, just a small number (2.1%) reported having 11 to 20 coaches and a staggering 41% said they did not have any in-house coaches. This represents a significant threat to providing effective, ongoing professional development to teachers.

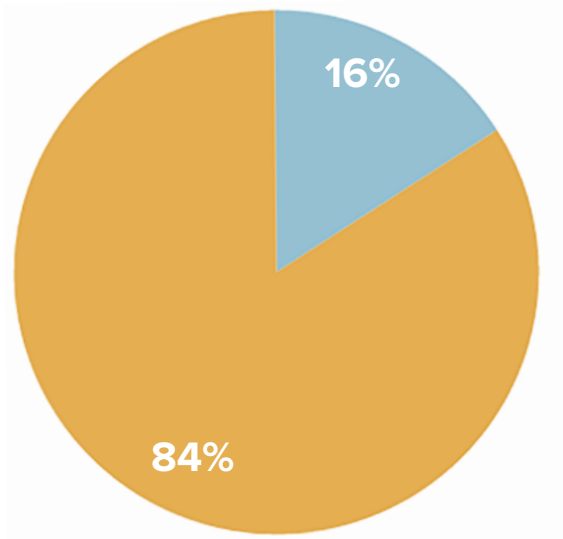


41% of programs do not have in-house coaches



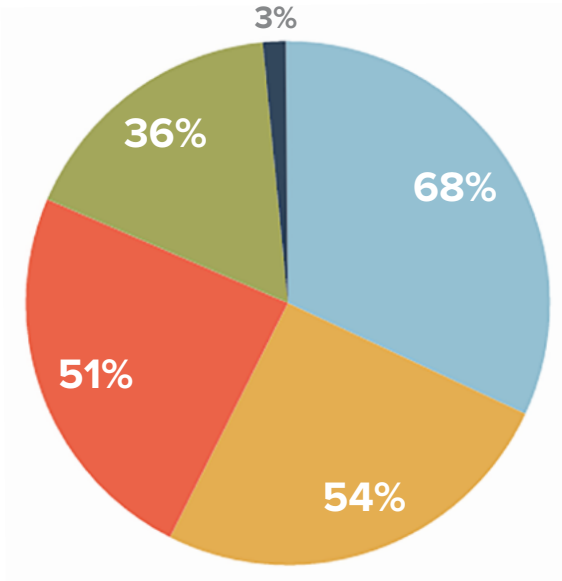
When we asked teachers if they received feedback on their observations, a large number of respondents (68%) told us they received feedback from written reports. We know that feedback is most effective when reports are accompanied by in-person conversations, preferably with a coach or mentor. Our data shows that when teachers are having feedback conversations, they're more often with classroom observers (51%) than with a coach or mentor (36%), a phenomenon that's certainly rooted in staffing limitations.

Teachers Who Received Feedback on Their Observations



- Have not received feedback
- Have received feedback

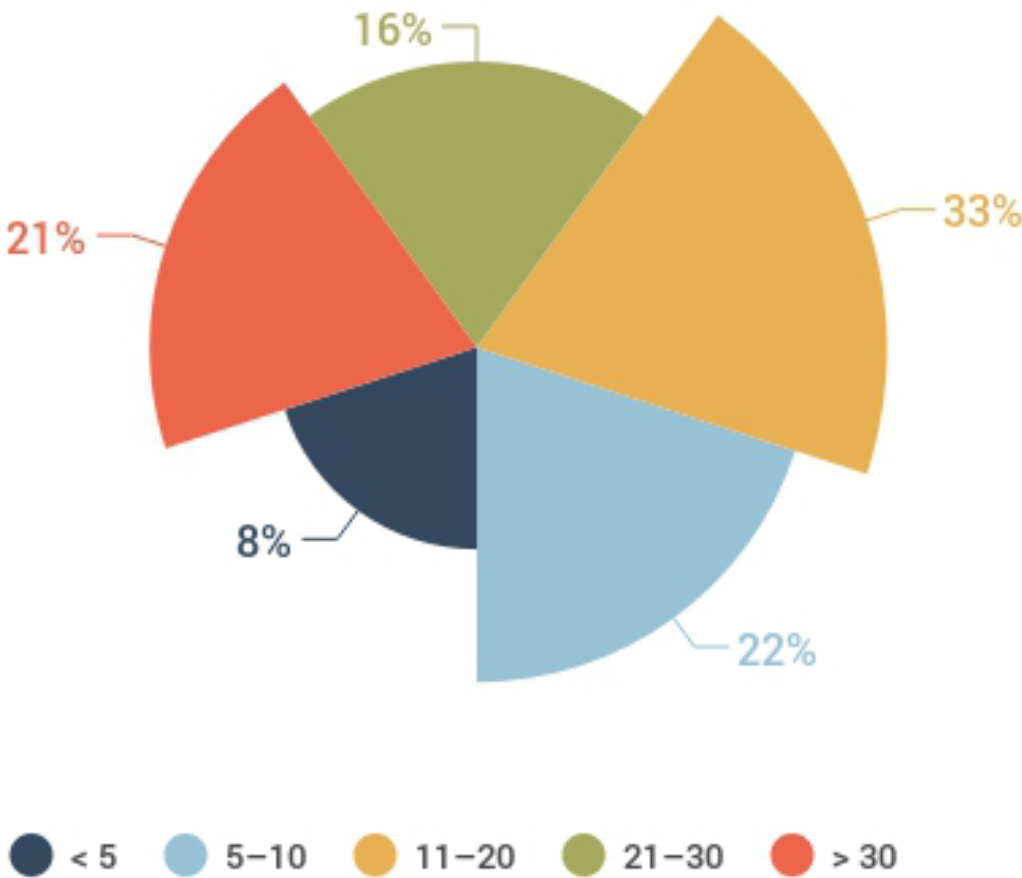
Types of Observation Feedback Received



- Written report
- Conversation with director or supervisor
- Conversation with observer
- Conversation with coach or mentor
- Other

Most coaches surveyed reported supporting a manageable number of teachers; however 16% of coaches told us they support 21 to 30 teachers, while a little less than a quarter (22%) support more than 30 teachers. We recommend that programs have one full-time coach per 18 teachers to give coaches enough time (see challenge #2) to plan and communicate with teachers, review classroom videos, and make professional development recommendations. This intensive, consistent coaching is what's been shown to actually impact teaching.

## How Many Teachers Do Coaches Regularly Mentor

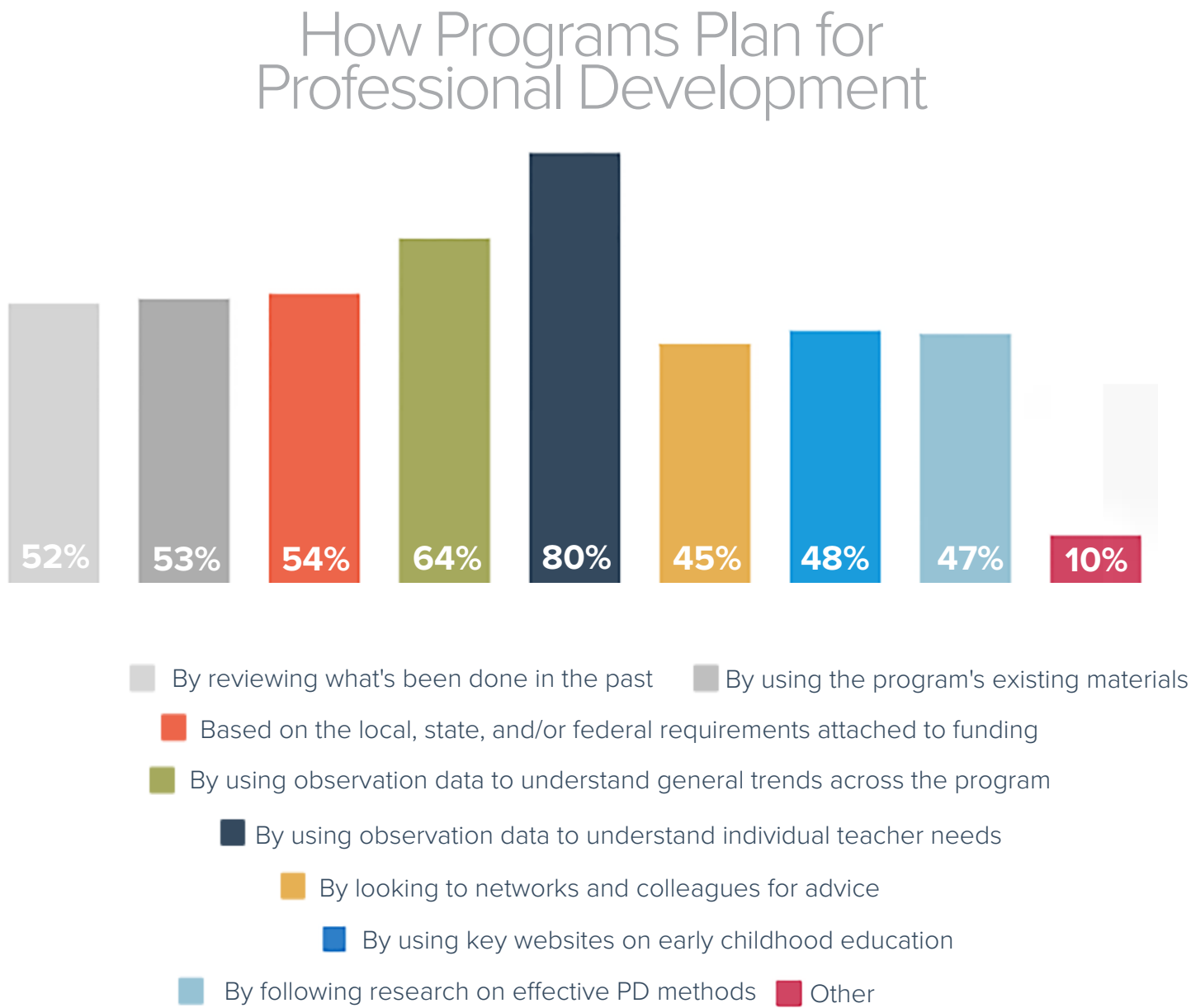


For those coaches who are supporting many teachers, we recommend solutions like online programs and comprehensive systems for improving quality, such as myTeachstone. By leveraging technology, these systems allow coaches to support more teachers more efficiently and without compromising the frequency of contact that leads to success. They also provide coaches with resources so they can spend more time coaching and less time identifying and creating coaching materials.

# 4. LIMITED PLANNING

When it comes to professional development, planning is what makes the difference between PD that is dry, boring, and ineffective and PD that actually impacts teaching and learning.

When asked how they were planning for professional development, programs reported employing a variety of tactics, like reviewing what’s been done in the past (53%), looking to their networks on early childhood education (48%), and using key websites on early childhood education (48%).



All of these planning techniques are important, but they need to be done intentionally, holistically, and from the start. Otherwise, with so many different strategies for planning professional development, programs end up with a disjointed assortment of approaches, some of which (watching videos of teachers) are more effective than others (one-day workshops).

## Top 5 PD Sources



### WHY 1-DAY WORKSHOPS DON'T WORK

A review of rigorously studied professional development programs found an association between professional development contact hours and effects on student achievement: the programs that involved the least amount of contact (fewer than 15 hours) had no effects on student outcomes at all.\*

\*Yoon, K. S., Duncan, T., Lee, S. W.-Y., Scarloss, B., & Shapley, K. L. (2007). Reviewing the evidence on how teacher professional development affects student achievement (Issues & Answers Report REL 2007-No. 033). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Southwest.



We heard loud and clear that for programs to successfully provide and implement professional development, they need planning support. They need to understand a path for success in order to avoid the “throw everything at the wall and see what sticks” approach that depletes budgets and morale with little return on investment.

That’s where Teachstone comes in. With all of the other challenges programs contend with, we can lighten the load by helping clients think through the most appropriate solutions to address the challenges of time, budget, staff, and planning. We know, very clearly, that interactions improve when teachers get individualized, focused feedback targeted on their interactions. This feedback must be tied to evidence-based professional development, such as MyTeachingPartner (MTP) Coaching and Making the Most of Classroom Interactions (MMCI), which allows teachers to practice their skills in identifying effective interactions.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE PROMISE OF SCALE

With so many programs restricted by the limited resources we explored in Chapter 3, how can professional development initiatives ever even get off the ground? If there’s not enough budget, staff, time, or support, is it even possible to deliver on promise of CLASS? Yes! Success is possible, but it’s contingent on a program’s ability to scale PD—to leverage talent, funds, and time as effectively and efficiently as possible. Scaling is what makes the difference between professional development that impacts just a handful of teachers and professional development that helps each teacher improve her teaching practice to better serve the children in her care.

In this chapter we’ll look at what programs need to scale successfully.

**1** Using data management systems that collect and manage quantitative and qualitative information

**2** Conducting CLASS observations with limited staff

**3** Leveraging in-house coaching structures to ensure more frequent contact

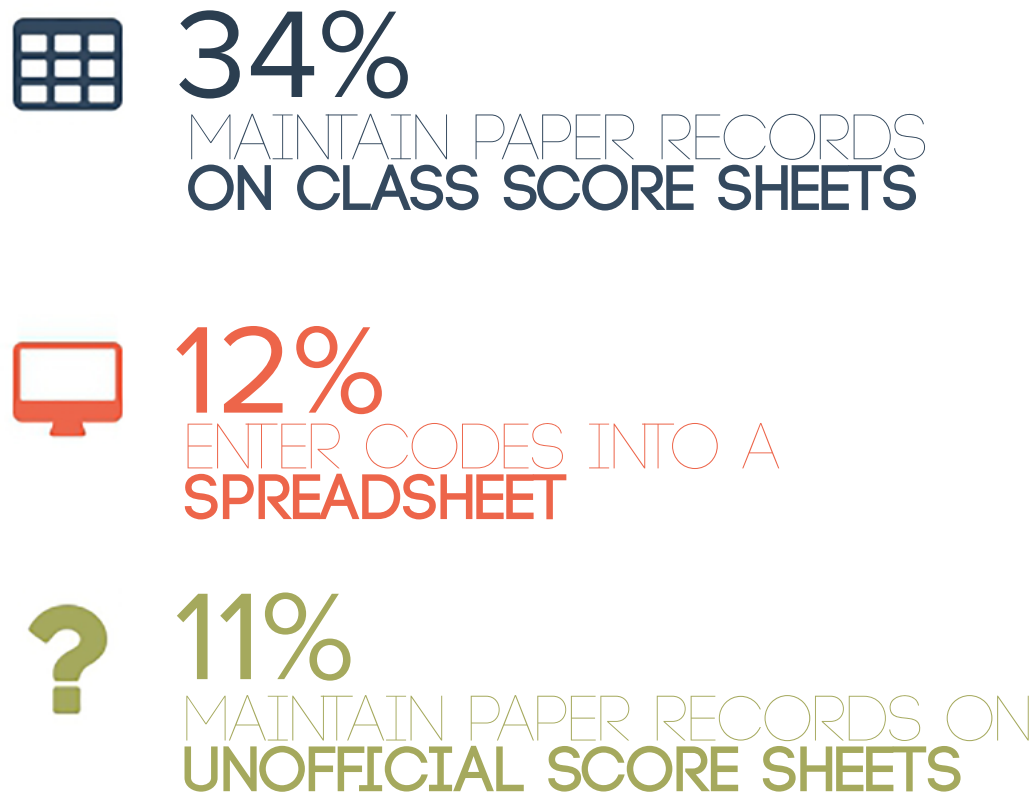
**4** Integrating CLASS with other tools and systems



1. Using data management systems that collect and manage both quantitative and qualitative information.

Technology is helping programs use data in more ways than ever before. Data management systems like myTeachstone not only allow programs to collect data from classroom observations, but also track teacher progress, identify areas for improvement, and develop goals based on objective information.

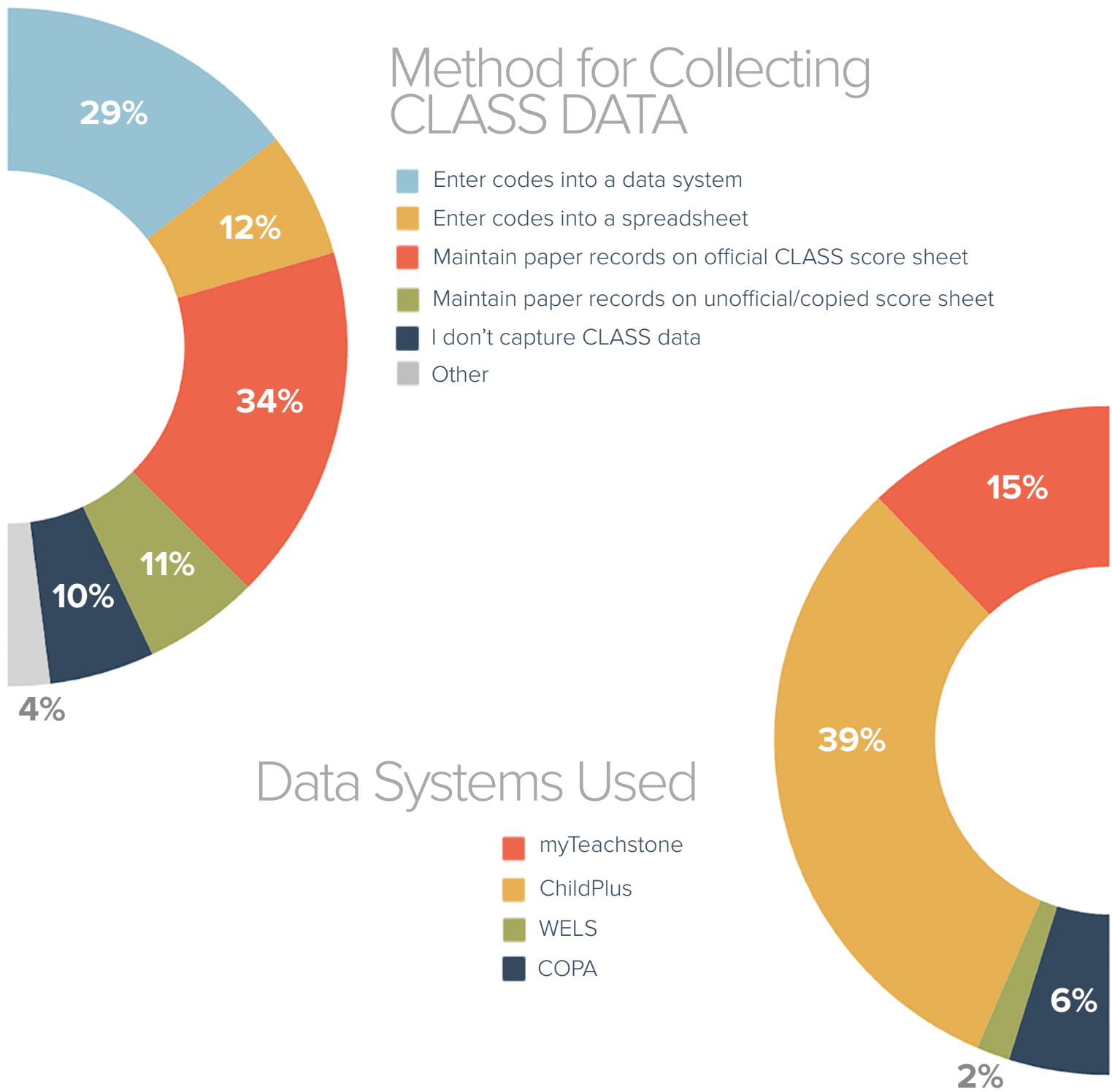
Only about a third (29%) of survey respondents reported capturing CLASS data using such a system, however. The majority of respondents are using traditional methods.



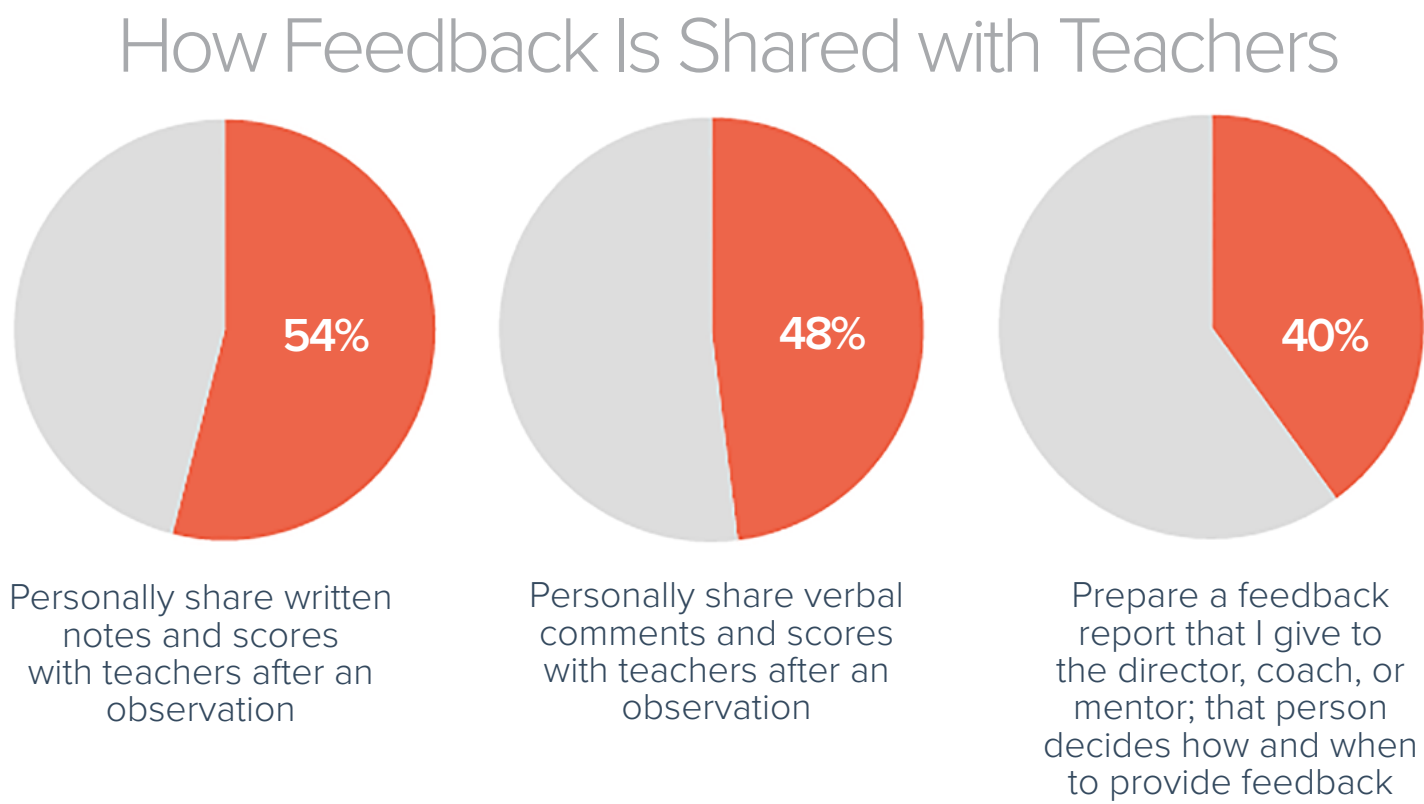
To scale, programs need to move away from paper and Excel spreadsheets. There are a number of systems out there to capture data, but programs see the greatest benefit from those systems that integrate both data management and professional development to drive personalized and meaningful improvements.

Our survey showed that adoption of such comprehensive data systems is still a young trend.

The most popular data system our respondents use for collecting data is ChildPlus (39%). Other systems like COPA, Branagh, and WELS were less commonly reported. The good news is that programs are beginning to move beyond paper and pencil and into more sophisticated systems. The bad news is that these systems merely collect and aggregate data for programs. They do not include a tie-in to professional development systems to align information about a teacher’s needs to materials that can drive improvement.



As we saw in Chapter 3, observers are often overworked and strapped for time. Wherever technology can be leveraged to simplify and streamline the more burdensome aspects of their jobs, the more time and energy they will have to devote to meaningful classroom observations. We learned in our survey that very few observers (9%) are simply entering codes into a system; most observers create reports that they personally share with teachers.



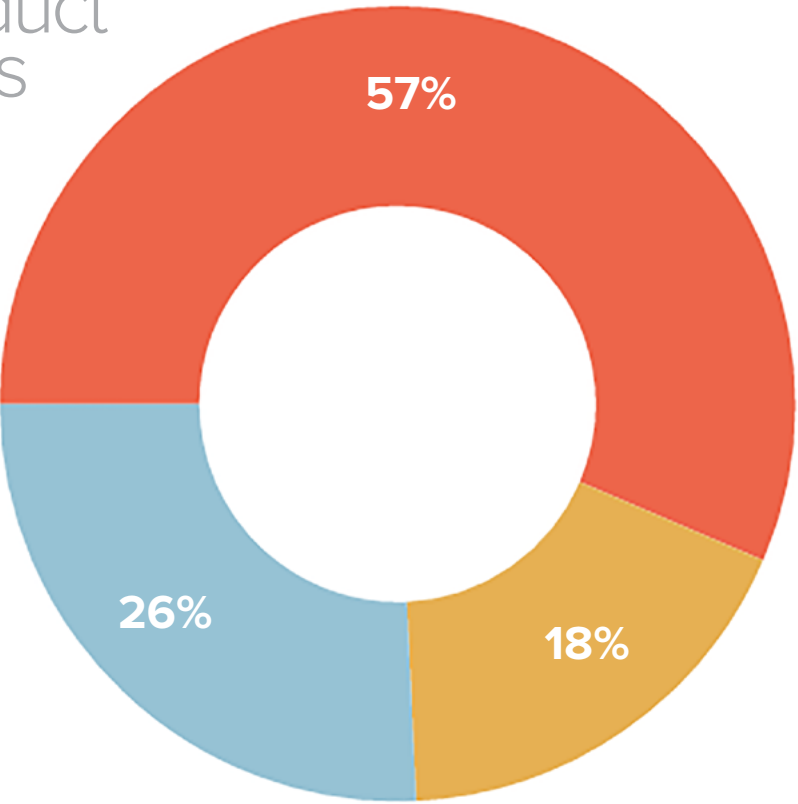
We need to ensure that observers have a framework both for capturing scores and observational notes. After all, these notes are just as important as the numerical scores they provide. If taken and recorded correctly, they not only serve to justify CLASS scores, they form the foundation for the feedback teachers need for improvement.

**2. Conducting CLASS observations with limited staff.**

As mentioned in Chapter 3, where we addressed the challenge of limited staff, we noticed a strong trend of coaches (rather than observers) conducting formal observations for teachers. In fact, over half of the coaches we surveyed said they observe and code the teachers they coach. Given the overlap in the coach and observer roles, it’s possible that some observers identified as coaches and vice versa. This could be a potential error in our data.

### How Coaches Conduct CLASS Observations

- Observe and formally code observations
- Observe but do not formally code observations
- Receive observation data from observers

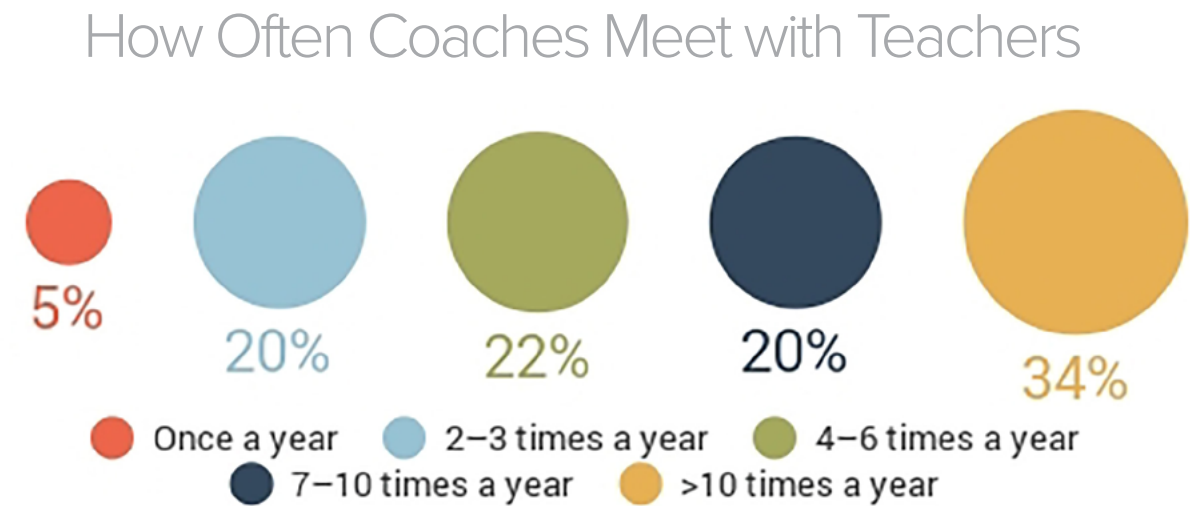


When staff is limited and budgets are tight, “double dipping” observer and coaching roles is understandable—even necessary. But in order for CLASS data to be valid, it needs to be objective. It’s the objective nature of the CLASS tool that enables certified observers to identify interactions and score them with reliability, and it’s the objective nature of the data that gives program administrators the confidence they need to make data-based decisions. This objectivity can get lost when a coach who spends a significant amount of time working with a teacher—and may have formed opinions about her teaching practice—conducts a formal observation.

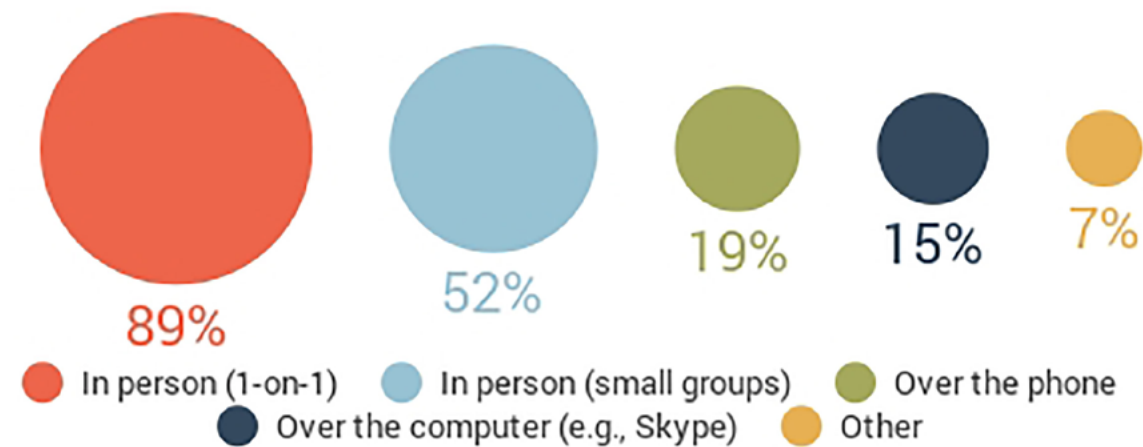
- Some programs are getting creative about how they maintain objectivity, while working within staffing constraints:
- » **Sharing or swapping observers** with another organization in order to limit bias
  - » **Using classroom video**, rather than live observation, to code classrooms in order to extend the observer pool geographically
  - » **Leveraging Teachstone’s Observer Directory** to find outside observers in their area to conduct formal observations

3. Leveraging in-house coaching structures to ensure more frequent contact.

To see change, it's important that coaching programs use a protocol that ensures that all teachers are coached in a manner known to drive change and impact outcomes. We learned from coaches that 20% are meeting with teachers only 2-3 times a year, while the same amount are meeting with teachers 7-10 times a year. We also discovered that 89% of coaches are meeting with teachers individually and face-to-face.

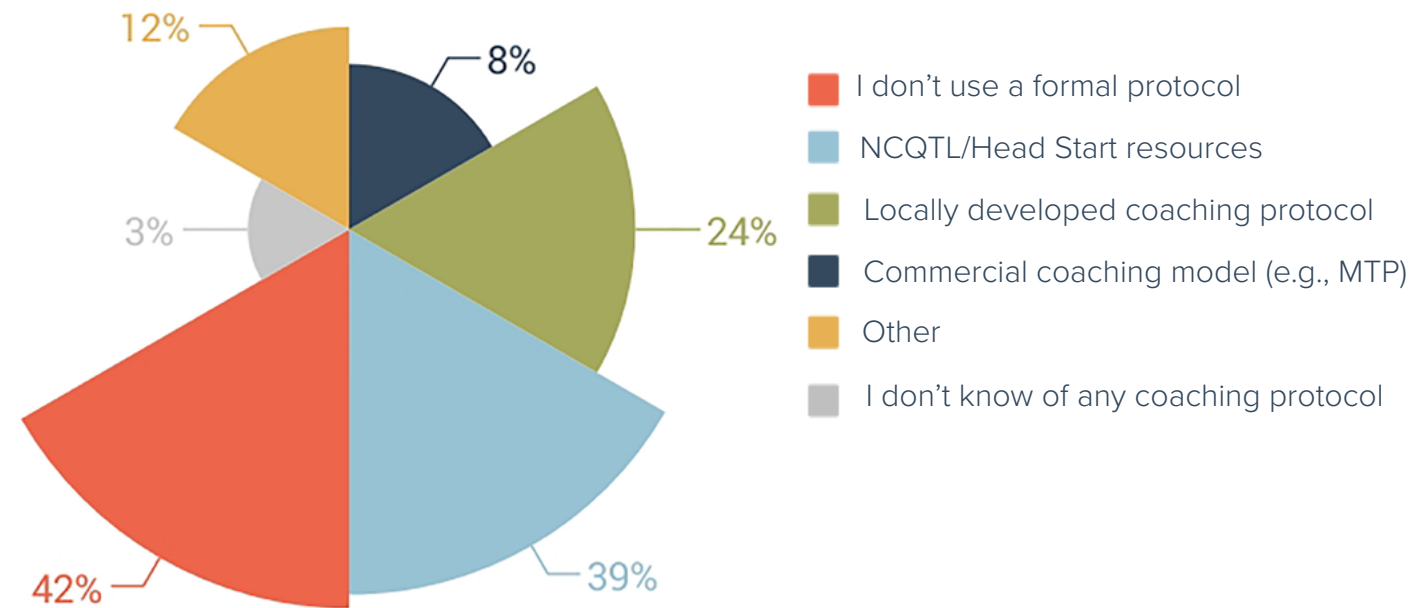


### How Coaches Are Conducting Meetings with Teachers

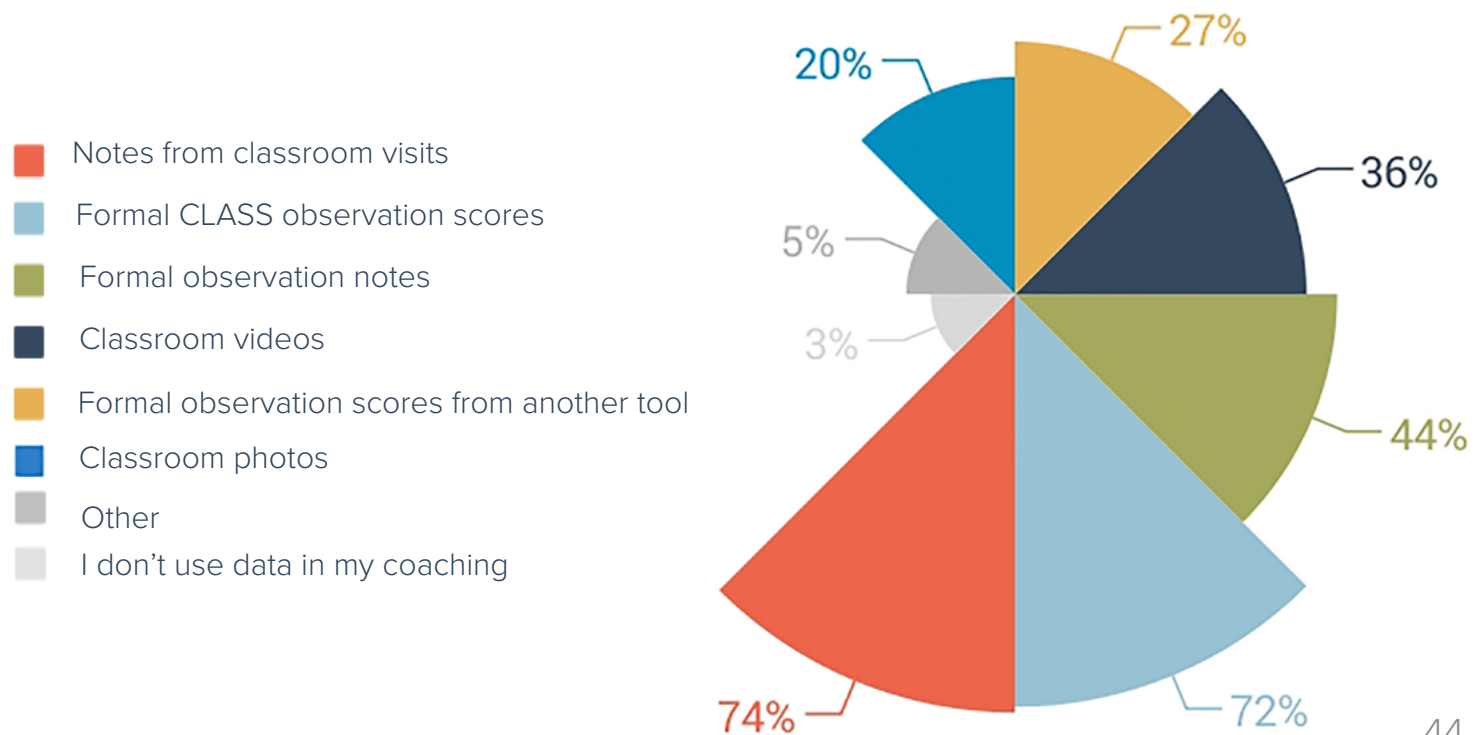


There are many different ways that programs provide coaching to their teachers. To get a sense of this, we asked coaches what methodology they used to support their teachers. Surprisingly, less than half of respondents (42%) told us they were using a formal protocol with just 8% using a structured and focused coaching model like MyTeachingPartner (MTP) Coaching.

### How Coaches Conduct CLASS Observations



### What Types of Observational Data Coaches Use in Coaching



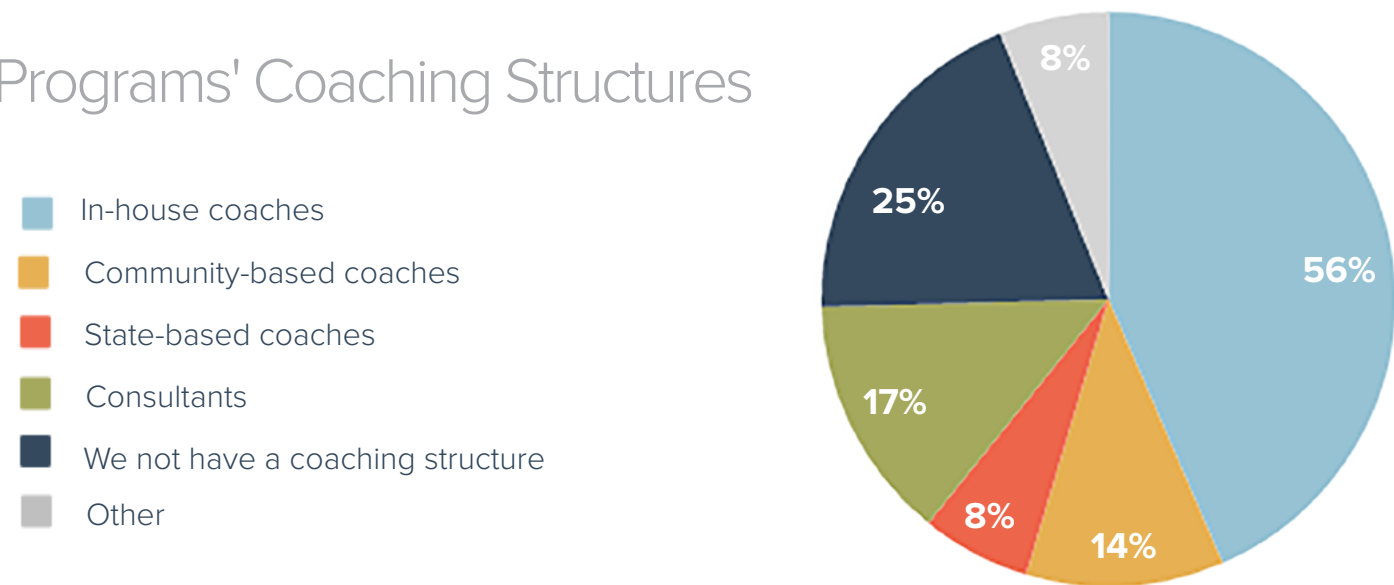


# A COACHING MODEL THAT ALIGNS INTENSITY WITH EVIDENCE-BASED BEST PRACTICES IS ESSENTIAL FOR DRIVING CHANGE

While many organizations have coaching programs in place, not all coaching programs create meaningful results. A coaching model that aligns intensity with evidence-based best practices is essential to driving change.

Because programs lack the budget and staff needed to foster more frequent engagement between coaches and teachers, technology can help scale those interactions. myTeachstone, for example, allows coaches to monitor teacher activity in professional development, while sending teachers reminders, commenting on their progress, and recommending small chunks of content at frequent intervals. In this way, technology supports frequent contact between teachers and coaches when there just aren't enough hours in the day for face-to-face coaching sessions.

Programs' Coaching Structures

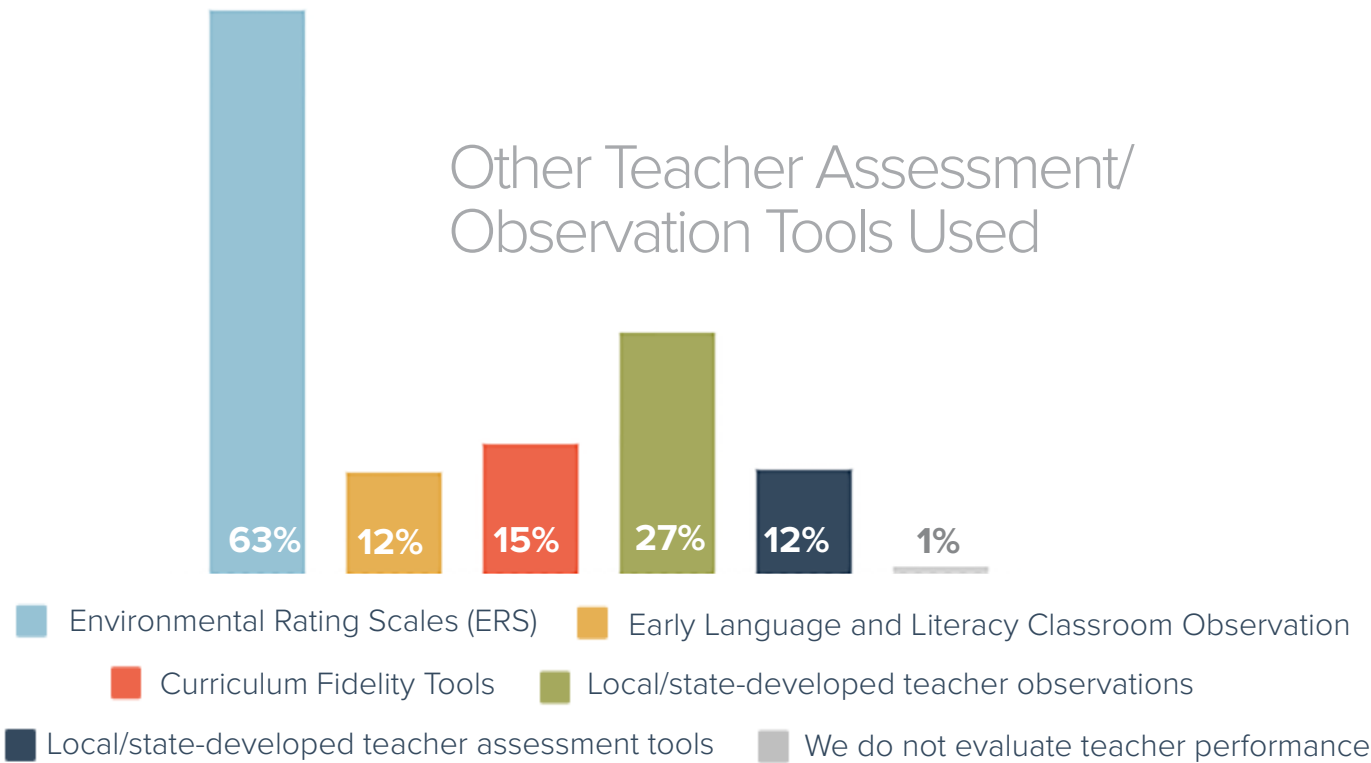


63% USE ERS IN ADDITION TO CLASS

## 4. Integrating CLASS with other existing tools and systems.

We know that when it comes to improving education for young learners, CLASS is just one piece of the puzzle. There are numerous other measures for monitoring the many (many) factors—from classroom environment to curriculum—that affect program quality. Programs often use these measures alongside CLASS, but sometimes use them instead of CLASS.

While only a small number (12%) of our respondents reported CLASS as their only assessment tool, more than half of our respondents (63%) told us that they're using Environmental Rating Scales (ERS) in addition to CLASS. This makes sense, as ERS helps ensure that classrooms are safe places for children to play, equipped with stimulating materials and books to read; it is these structural components that create a foundation of quality. But it is the teacher-child interactions as measured by the CLASS that drive the effective and interactive use of materials that have been shown to be the strongest predictor of children's learning.\*

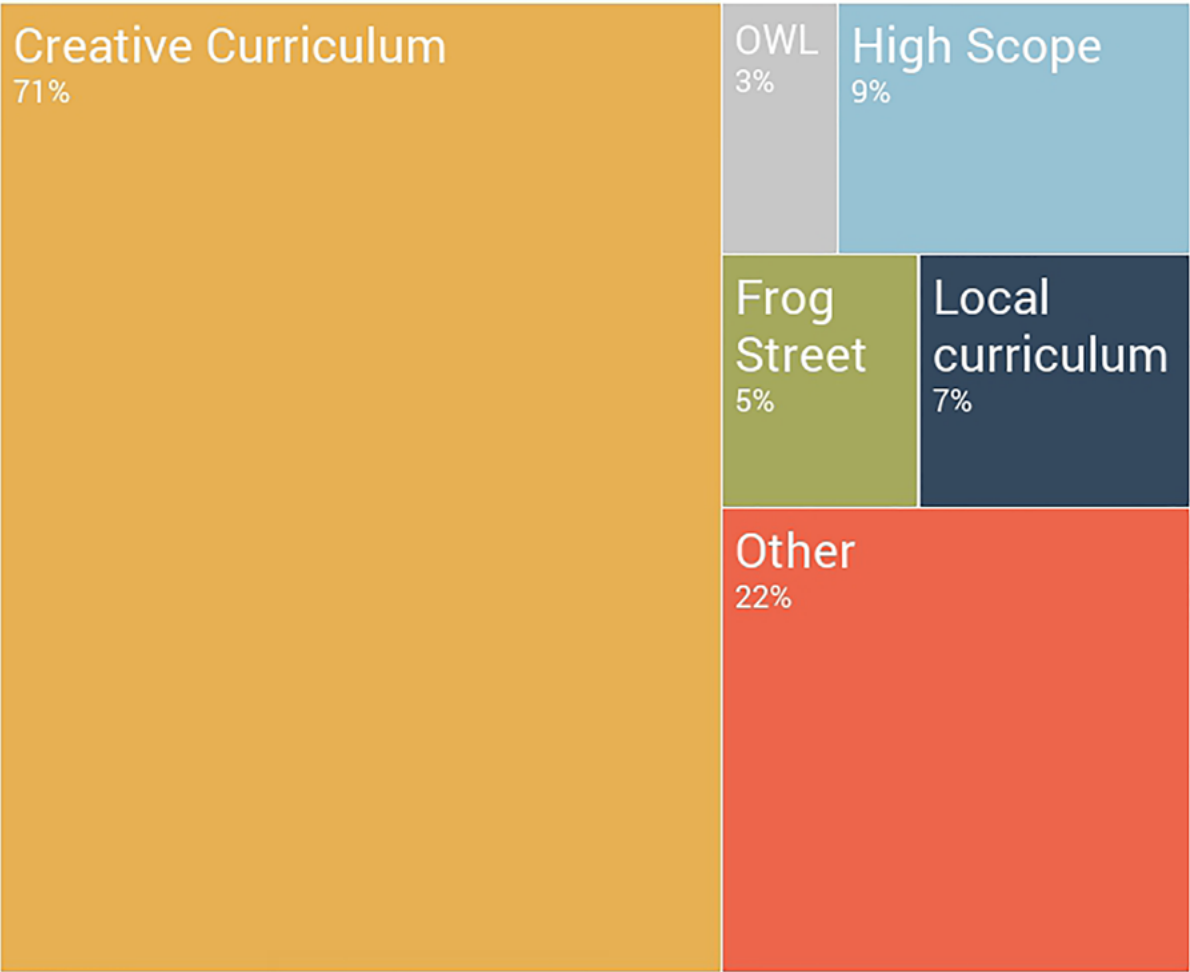


\*Sabol, T.J., Soliday Hong, S.L., Pianta, R.C., & Burchinal, M.R. (2013). Can Rating Pre-K Programs Predict Children's Learning? Science, 341, 845-846.

Because quality education is a holistic goal with teacher-child interactions being only one marker of success, CLASS will always be used in addition to other tools and systems. To help our partners scale their PD efforts, we must provide the support they need to use CLASS in conjunction with other popular tools while maintaining fidelity.

One of the useful characteristics of CLASS is that it is curriculum neutral, meaning that it can be used effectively with any curriculum. That’s great because our respondents are using a number of different curricula. We know that some programs have questions about how to use CLASS at certain times of the day, such as during routines, or with content areas, such as math and literacy. That’s why we’re working to tag our classroom videos with times of day and content areas so that it’s easier to find needed examples of effective teacher-child interactions.

Other Curricula Used in Programs



# CONCLUSION

## BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

### WHAT DID WE LEARN?

After looking at all the data from almost 3,000 surveys, we learned a LOT about our users and how CLASS is being used in the field. What follows are our biggest takeaways.

- 1

Our users have an impressive amount of experience, both with early childhood education and CLASS.
- 2

By and large, CLASS is being used as it was originally intended—as a comprehensive system for improving teaching quality. With so many users combining CLASS assessment data with an evidence-based professional development solution, the days of CLASS being perceived as just another “gotcha” measure seem to (finally!) be over.
- 3

Programs face significant challenges which can sometimes prevent CLASS from being used to its fullest potential. Those challenges include limited time, staff, budget, and planning.
- 4

These challenges are not insurmountable—rather, they speak to the need for tools to help programs scale CLASS. Scaling CLASS hinges on appropriate planning and systems. Early childhood leaders and administrators must think through the staffing, budget, and time they can commit to CLASS up front. Based on those decisions, organizations should invest in technology and systems to collect and manage data, personalize professional development, support existing coaching structures, and provide visibility and accountability into what is taking place across the organization.



Access to high-quality education should not be a game of chance. With the right supports, programs can ensure that all children receive the positive, nurturing education shown to create lasting developmental benefits. ***That's the promise of CLASS.***

## WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

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This is our first State of CLASS report, but we hope it won't be our last. Next time we'd like to hear from more non-CLASS users to get a wider view of what's happening in the field. We would also like to figure out a way to test respondents' CLASS knowledge so that we can report the connection between CLASS knowledge level and stage of CLASS implementation with better accuracy.

Like everything we do at Teachstone, we want to ensure that what we create meets your needs. If you have ideas about what we can do to make the report even better next time, please email Lisa Rogoff, Director of Product Marketing, with your feedback: [lisa.rogoff@teachstone.com](mailto:lisa.rogoff@teachstone.com).

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# THANK YOU!

If you were one of the 2,973 survey respondents to our 2015 State of CLASS survey, THANK YOU!!! Your contribution extends well beyond this report; your feedback will impact our work indefinitely as we deliver on the promise of CLASS. And if you didn't get a chance to take the 2015 survey, thanks for taking the time to read this report. It's your interest in and commitment to early childhood education that is making a difference for young learners worldwide.



## QUESTIONS?

**877.401.8007 • [learnmore@teachstone.com](mailto:learnmore@teachstone.com)**

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