



MINDFUL FOUNDATIONS

WHAT EVERY CHILD DESERVES

**Mindful Foundations Curriculum Alignment with
CLASS® (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) – Three Domains &
Ten Dimensions**

About This Document

This document maps the key components of Mindful Foundations (Mercedes Finstuen, 2026) to the three domains and ten dimensions of the CLASS® (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) observation tool. CLASS® measures the quality of educator–child interactions across Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support — the dimensions most predictive of children's academic, social, and emotional outcomes. Mindful Foundations directly develops the instructional practices, relationship-building skills, and environmental conditions that CLASS® observers look for and score.

Emotional Support (ES)	Classroom Organization (CO)	Instructional Support (IS)
Positive Climate Negative Climate Teacher Sensitivity Regard for Student Perspectives	Behavior Management Productivity Instructional Learning Formats	Concept Development Quality of Feedback Language Modeling

Domain 1: Emotional Support — "The Heart of the Classroom"

The Emotional Support domain reflects the degree to which teachers create a warm, safe, and responsive environment where children feel connected, valued, and emotionally secure. It is the domain most closely aligned with the trauma-informed philosophy at the core of Mindful Foundations.

Mindful Foundations Component	CLASS Domain	CLASS Dimension	Description of Alignment
L.O.V.E.E. Foundation Phase — Classroom Family Building (Weeks 1–2)	Emotional Support	Positive Climate	The Foundation Phase of the L.O.V.E.E. Method centers entirely on establishing emotional safety, trust, and a sense of belonging. Teachers use connection rituals, the Heart Poster Activity, and read-alouds about classroom community to build warm, genuine relationships. CLASS Positive Climate looks for warmth, verbal and nonverbal affection, and mutual respect between teacher and child — all of which are intentionally cultivated from Day 1 of Mindful Foundations.
Daily Affirmations (Weeks 1–5, every morning)	Emotional Support	Positive Climate	Daily affirmations are delivered with warmth, enthusiasm, and eye contact as a whole-class ritual. They create a consistent moment of positive, affirming interaction between teacher and children that CLASS observers would recognize as high Positive Climate — characterized by enthusiasm, smiling, and verbal connection that conveys genuine care.
Teacher Self-Reflection Journey & Mindfulness Practice (Part 1 & Toolkit I)	Emotional Support	Negative Climate	Mindful Foundations dedicates an entire Teacher Self-Reflection component to helping educators identify and manage their own stress, triggers, and emotional reactions before entering the classroom. CLASS Negative Climate scores rise when teachers express irritability, harshness, or hostility. By regulating the teacher's own nervous system first, Mindful Foundations directly reduces the likelihood of the negative emotional tone that CLASS flags in this dimension.
Trauma-Informed Behavior Response Guide (Toolkit III)	Emotional Support	Negative Climate	Toolkit III replaces punitive behavior responses (threats, sarcasm, raised voices) with instructional, relationship-preserving strategies. Mindful Foundations trains teachers to respond to dysregulated behavior with curiosity and calm rather than reactivity. This directly addresses CLASS Negative Climate indicators by eliminating the harsh discipline patterns that damage teacher-child relationships and classroom safety.
Fade-Away Approach — Real-Time Co-Regulation (Weeks 2–5)	Emotional Support	Teacher Sensitivity	The Fade-Away Approach requires teachers to observe children's real-time emotional and behavioral readiness and adjust their level of direct support accordingly — providing more scaffolding when a child is struggling and gradually stepping back as readiness grows.

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			CLASS Teacher Sensitivity specifically measures this ability: noticing student distress and responding promptly and effectively. The Fade-Away Approach operationalizes Teacher Sensitivity as a daily, moment-to-moment instructional practice.
Psychosocial Stage Assessment — Developmental Responsiveness (Part 1 & throughout)	Emotional Support	Teacher Sensitivity	Mindful Foundations directs teachers to assess each child's actual psychosocial stage (using Erikson's framework), not assume age-based readiness. This ensures teachers identify and respond to each child's individual emotional and developmental needs rather than applying a one-size-fits-all approach. CLASS Teacher Sensitivity is highest when teachers demonstrate awareness of individual students' needs — Mindful Foundations builds the observational and conceptual tools to develop this awareness.
Breathing Strategies — Student-Centered Choice (Toolkit V — 10+ strategies offered)	Emotional Support	Regard for Student Perspectives	Mindful Foundations offers children a library of 10+ breathing strategies and empowers them to choose tools that work for their bodies. The curriculum encourages teachers to honor individual children's preferred regulation tools, not mandate a single approach. CLASS Regard for Student Perspectives scores highest when teachers acknowledge and incorporate children's interests, choices, and perspectives — Mindful Foundations builds this into its self-regulation framework.
Guided Meditations with Visualization & Role-Play (Weeks 3–5)	Emotional Support	Regard for Student Perspectives	Meditation and role-play activities are child-centered and imagination-led — children are guided to visualize their own experiences, connect to personal feelings, and explore social scenarios at their own pace. This learner-centered, strengths-based approach to instruction directly supports CLASS Regard for Student Perspectives, which looks for evidence that teachers value and build on children's ideas and experiences.

Domain 2: Classroom Organization — "The Skeleton of the Classroom"

Classroom Organization reflects how effectively teachers manage students' behavior, time, and attention to create a smooth, predictable, and productive learning environment. Mindful Foundations addresses this domain through intentional routine design, environmental setup, and proactive behavior management.

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Trauma-Informed Behavior Response Guide (Toolkit III)	Classroom Organization	Behavior Management	Toolkit III provides teachers with structured, proactive strategies for preventing and responding to unwanted behaviors — including specific language scripts, environmental modifications, and step-by-step de-escalation protocols. CLASS Behavior Management scores reflect whether teachers use effective, consistent, and instructional approaches to guide student behavior. Mindful Foundations' behavior guide is precisely this: a proactive, consistent behavioral management system rooted in relationship rather than punishment.
Classroom Expectations: Be Respectful, Be Responsible, Choose Kindness (Part 2)	Classroom Organization	Behavior Management	Three positively stated, memorable classroom expectations are established in the earliest weeks and revisited throughout the curriculum. CLASS Behavior Management looks for clear, consistently communicated expectations that students understand and teachers reinforce consistently. Mindful Foundations fulfills this by defining universal expectations and embedding them into daily rituals, scripts, and acknowledgment systems.
Daily Routine Structures (Arrival → Peaceful Pause → Lesson →	Classroom Organization	Productivity	Mindful Foundations establishes a predictable daily flow from Week 1, with structured transitions, consistent routines, and purposeful activity sequences. CLASS Productivity evaluates how

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Transitions → Cleanup — All weeks)			effectively classroom time is used — whether transitions are smooth, routines are efficient, and instructional time is maximized. The Mindful Foundations daily schedule design directly supports high Productivity scores by minimizing transition chaos and creating a calm, time-efficient classroom rhythm.
Pre-Implementation Environment Setup (Toolkit I — Pre-week environment preparation)	Classroom Organization	Productivity	Before implementation begins, Toolkit I guides teachers to prepare the physical classroom: materials organized, visuals displayed, Calm Island set up, and daily schedule established. CLASS Productivity scores rise when materials are ready, transitions are brief, and the environment is set up to support smooth learning flow. Mindful Foundations' pre-implementation setup ensures this foundation is in place from Day 1.
Mindful Strategy of the Day / Peaceful Pause (Daily opening ritual, all weeks)	Classroom Organization	Instructional Learning Formats	The Peaceful Pause is a structured, multimodal whole-class activity that transitions children from arrival to learning readiness using breathing, stillness, and teacher-guided connection. CLASS Instructional Learning Formats looks at how effectively teachers use varied formats to engage children and prepare them for instruction. The Peaceful Pause is an innovative, high-engagement format that effectively shifts the class's attentional and emotional state before academic learning begins.
Calm Island — De-Escalation Space & Sensory Tools (Toolkit II & Part 2)	Classroom Organization	Instructional Learning Formats	The Calm Island functions as a purposefully designed, self-directed learning format — a structured space with materials (sensory tools, visual supports, regulation cards) that children use independently when dysregulated. CLASS Instructional Learning Formats values diverse activity formats that actively engage students. The Calm Island is a unique instructional format that serves both a behavioral and learning function: teaching children to independently use regulation strategies in context.
Read-Alouds with Pre- and Post-Discussion (Weekly, Toolkit II — curated book list)	Classroom Organization	Instructional Learning Formats	Weekly SEL-connected read-alouds are structured with pre-reading warm-up questions, interactive discussion during reading, and post-reading reflection activities. CLASS Instructional Learning Formats rewards varied, engaging formats that maintain children's active participation. The structured read-aloud format in Mindful Foundations balances whole-group engagement, individual response, and discussion — all markers of high-quality instructional format.

Domain 3: Instructional Support — "The Brain of the Classroom"

Instructional Support reflects the degree to which teachers promote children's cognitive and language development through high-quality feedback, concept-building, and rich language modeling. While CLASS observers frequently find this the most underdeveloped domain in early childhood settings, Mindful Foundations builds several of its key dimensions directly into teacher language, lesson design, and reflective practice.

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Neuro Tips — Brain Science Embedded in Every Lesson (Throughout, all lesson plans)	Instructional Support	Concept Development	Every lesson in Mindful Foundations includes a Neuro Tip: an age-appropriate explanation of the neuroscience behind the strategy being practiced — mirror neurons, amygdala function, neuroplasticity, left/right brain balancing. CLASS Concept Development scores highest when teachers promote higher-order thinking by making connections between concepts, explaining 'why' rather than just 'what,' and encouraging children to think analytically. The Neuro Tips do exactly this: connecting children's lived experience to scientific concepts.

Mindful Foundations Component	CLASS Domain	CLASS Dimension	Description of Alignment
Role-Play Scenarios in Guided Meditations (Weeks 3–5)	Instructional Support	Concept Development	Children are guided to 'live' social-emotional scenarios before encountering them in real life — visualizing how they would respond to frustration, conflict, or big emotions. This imaginative problem-solving and application of concepts to real-world situations directly reflects CLASS Concept Development indicators: application, analysis, and connection-making rather than rote recall.
Sample Teacher Scripts — Open-Ended Questions & Emotion Coaching (Throughout curriculum)	Instructional Support	Quality of Feedback	Mindful Foundations provides detailed sample scripts for teachers to use during emotional coaching moments — scripts that ask open-ended questions, reflect children's feelings back to them, expand on their thinking, and scaffold next steps. CLASS Quality of Feedback is highest when teachers respond to children's ideas with expansion, specific feedback, and scaffolding. The scripted coaching language in Mindful Foundations models exactly this type of high-quality, growth-expanding feedback.
Fade-Away Approach — Scaffolded Release of Responsibility (Weeks 2–5)	Instructional Support	Quality of Feedback	The Fade-Away Approach is a systematic scaffolding framework: teachers provide direct support, gradually reduce it based on child readiness, and eventually release full responsibility to the child. CLASS Quality of Feedback includes scaffolding as a key indicator — breaking down tasks, prompting, and building on children's current level. Mindful Foundations structures this scaffolding process explicitly across all five curriculum weeks.
Emotional Literacy Core Vocabulary (Weeks 1–5, daily teacher language)	Instructional Support	Language Modeling	Mindful Foundations introduces weekly emotional vocabulary (calm, frustrated, worry, anxiety, advocate, accept, patient, choice, control) and guides teachers to use this language naturally and consistently in daily interactions. CLASS Language Modeling evaluates the frequency and quality of teachers' vocabulary use, open-ended questioning, and conversational engagement with children. Mindful Foundations' vocabulary instruction is embedded in authentic daily conversation — exactly the type of naturalistic language modeling CLASS rewards.
Read-Alouds — Open-Ended Discussion Questions (Weekly, Toolkit II)	Instructional Support	Language Modeling	Every Mindful Foundations read-aloud is accompanied by teacher-facilitated open-ended questions before, during, and after reading. Examples include: 'What do you think will happen when he gets frustrated?' and 'How do YOU feel when someone doesn't listen?' CLASS Language Modeling is highest when teachers use open-ended questions, self-and-parallel talk, and advanced vocabulary in extended conversations — the Mindful Foundations read-aloud structure is a perfect vehicle for all of these.
Sign Language Tools for Emotional Communication (Toolkit I)	Instructional Support	Language Modeling	Mindful Foundations includes sign language as an alternative and augmentative communication modality, particularly for children with limited verbal expression. CLASS Language Modeling values multimodal language support and communication expansion. The inclusion of sign language tools reflects a commitment to extending every child's capacity to communicate feelings and needs — a form of language modeling that broadens communication beyond spoken words.
Swivl Video Observation & Reflective Practice Conversations (Toolkit IV, all weeks)	Instructional Support	Concept Development + Quality of Feedback	Teacher Reflective Practice Conversations use structured video review to help teachers identify patterns, make connections between their instructional choices and children's responses, and refine their approach. This meta-cognitive reflective practice develops teachers' ability to use higher-order analysis of their own teaching — the same Concept Development and Quality of Feedback skills they are being developed to use with children. Mindful Foundations creates a continuous improvement cycle that mirrors CLASS's own observational development model.

CLASS® Dimension Coverage Summary

Domain	Dimension	Mindful Foundations Components
Emotional Support	Positive Climate	L.O.V.E.E. Foundation Phase (Classroom Family Building), Daily Affirmations, Heart Poster Activity, Connection Rituals
Emotional Support	Negative Climate	Teacher Self-Reflection Journey, Trauma-Informed Behavior Response Guide (Toolkit III) — eliminating harsh/punitive responses
Emotional Support	Teacher Sensitivity	Fade-Away Approach, Psychosocial Stage Assessment (Erikson), Brain State Model (Conscious Discipline integration)
Emotional Support	Regard for Student Perspectives	Breathing Strategy Choice Library (10+ strategies, child-led), Guided Meditations with Visualization, Child-Centered Role-Play Scenarios
Classroom Organization	Behavior Management	Trauma-Informed Behavior Response Guide (Toolkit III), Classroom Expectations (Be Respectful, Be Responsible, Choose Kindness), Reward Jar & Positive Reinforcement System
Classroom Organization	Productivity	Daily Routine Structures (predictable schedule), Pre-Implementation Environment Setup (Toolkit I), Smooth Transition Protocols
Classroom Organization	Instructional Learning Formats	Peaceful Pause (daily engagement ritual), Calm Island (structured self-directed learning space), Read-Alouds with Interactive Discussion
Instructional Support	Concept Development	Neuro Tips (age-appropriate neuroscience in every lesson), Role-Play Scenarios (application/analysis), Swivl Reflective Practice (meta-cognitive analysis)
Instructional Support	Quality of Feedback	Sample Teacher Scripts (open-ended emotion coaching), Fade-Away Approach (scaffolded release of responsibility), Swivl Reflective Practice Conversations
Instructional Support	Language Modeling	Emotional Literacy Core Vocabulary (weekly, embedded in daily dialogue), Read-Alouds with Open-Ended Questions, Sign Language Tools (multimodal language expansion)

Note: Mindful Foundations was designed as a trauma-informed classroom management and behavior guidance curriculum, not as a CLASS® coaching tool. However, its implementation directly develops the teacher-child interaction patterns that CLASS® observes and scores. Programs using Mindful Foundations alongside CLASS® observation and coaching will find that the two systems reinforce each other: Mindful Foundations builds the practices, and CLASS® provides the measurement and feedback loop for continuous improvement.

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