

A Research Practice Partnership Promoting High Quality Pre-K

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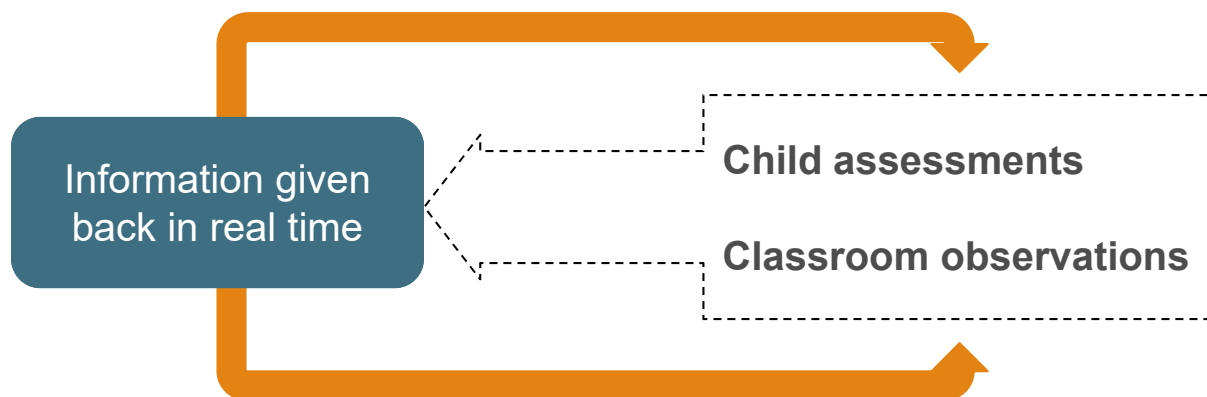


Three “model” pre-k hubs in MNPS (August, 2014)

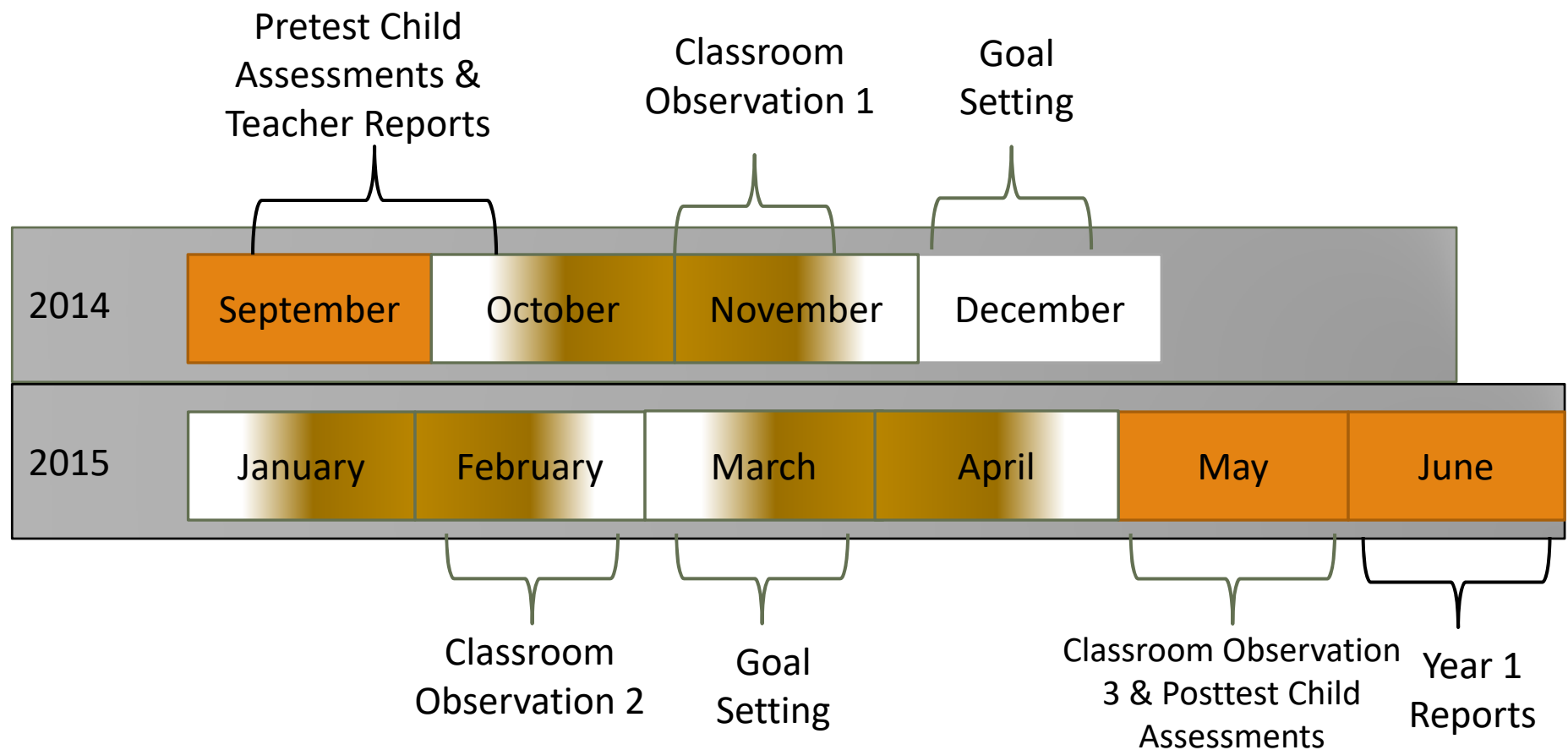
Partnership formed with Vanderbilt (PRI)

Goals of the partnership

1. A data-driven change process to determine markers of classroom quality related to improved child outcomes
2. Identified markers will lead to a model that can be disseminated and implemented by all pre-k teachers district-wide to improve the pre-k system as a whole



Timeline Example (2014-15)





Child Observation in Preschool

(Farran & Anthony, 2014; Farran & Son-Yarbrough, 2001)

back to list

Math
Literacy
SCi
Soc Stud
Toy
Art
Music/Move
Gross Motor
Drama
Worksheet
Media
None
Can't Code

Literacy
LangArts
Lit - Writing
LA - Writing
Reading
Math Nam
Math Con
SCi
Soc Stud
Gross M
Drama
Other
None

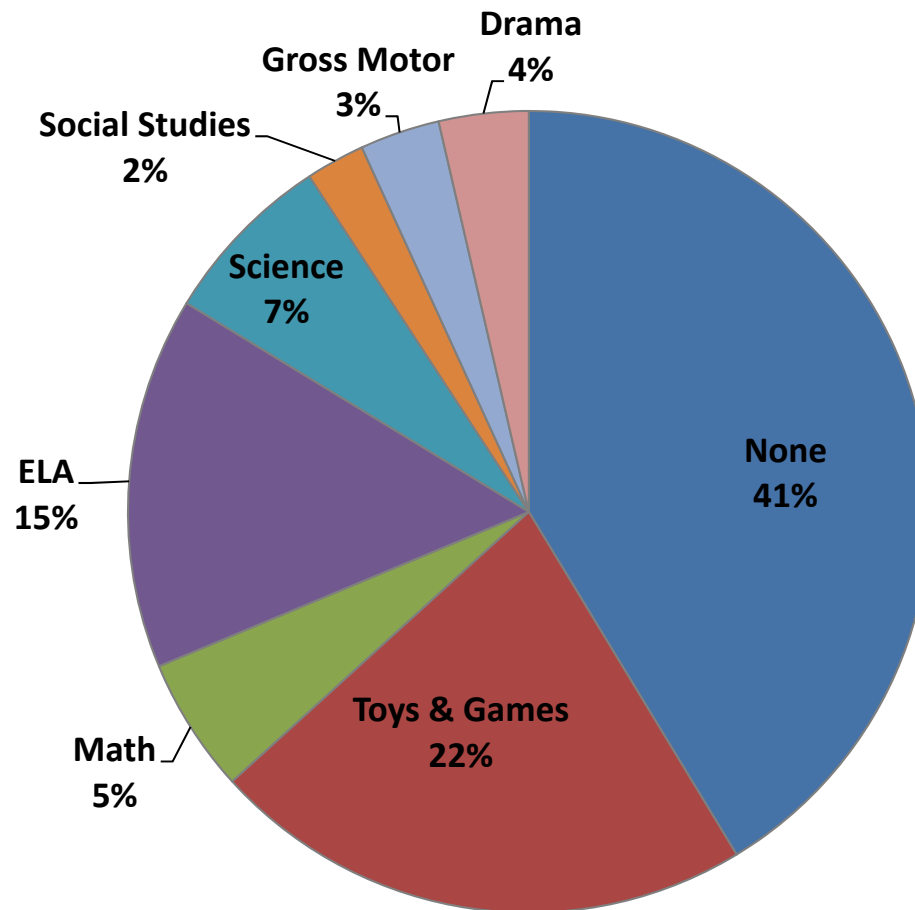
status report

Help Screen

POST

		No Talk, Eng Talk, Other Talk, Sounds Listen Eng Listen, Oth FssCry	Teacher Child Sm Grp SGT Wh Grp WGT Self No Talk	WG Centers SGC SPecial Trans MealTime Other Nap	N/A WG Centers SGC SPecial Trans MealTime Other Nap	Teacher Child SG SGT WG WGT Self	Non Acad Parallel ASsoc Coop ALone Onlooker SOCial Unocc TimeOut	Pass Inst Non Seq SeQ Fantasy Dr None Other SOCial Disrupt Disrupt X TimeOut	High Med H Med Med L Low	Material	Focus	Outside	Notes	
Time	SW	Verbal	To Whom	P Sched	S Sched	Prox	Interact	Type	Involv				next	
	1												next	
	2												next	
	3												next	
	4												next	
	5												next	

% Sweeps in Content Areas (26 classrooms)

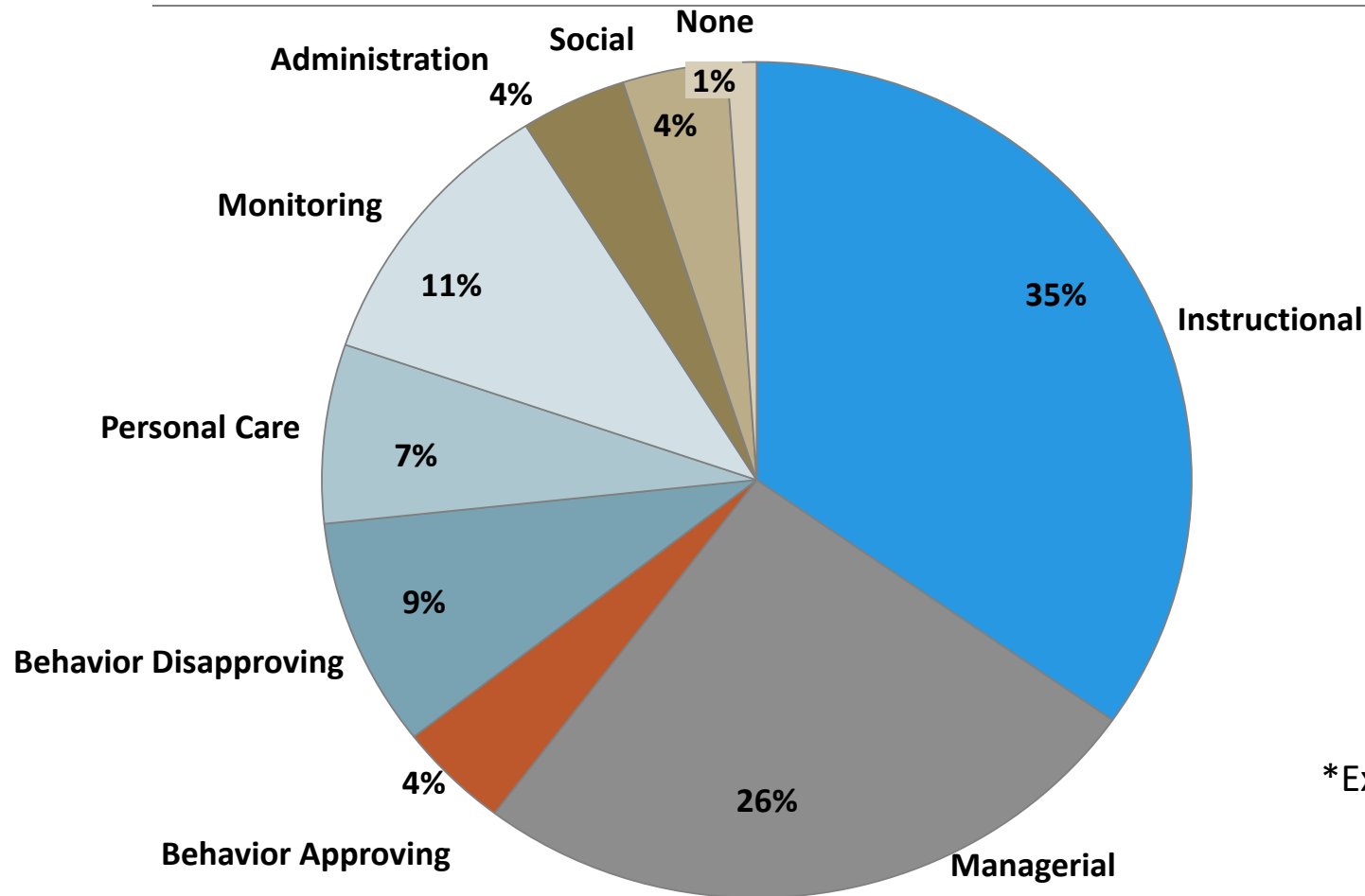


*Excluding Nap

(Bilbrey, Vorhaus & Farran, 2007)

										back to list		status report		Help Screen	
														POST	
<u>Time</u>	<u>SW</u>	<u>Verbal</u>	<u>To Whom</u>	<u>P Sched</u>	<u>S Sched</u>	<u>Prox</u>	<u>Task</u>	<u>Inst</u>	<u>Desc</u>	<u>Material</u>	<u>Focus</u>	<u>Tone</u>	<u>Outside Notes</u>		
1													next		
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4													next		
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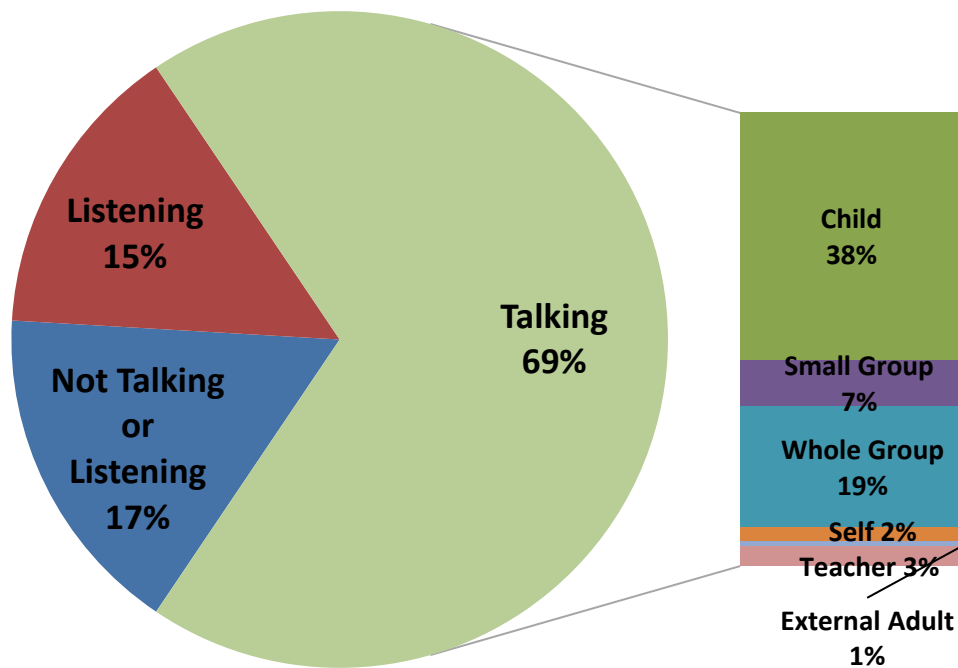
Teachers' task divisions in 1st year*



*Excluding Nap

Teacher Verbal Behavior

(EXCLUSIVE of Meal & Nap)



	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Not Talking or Listening	17%	9.4%	0%	33%
Listening	15%	8.9%	5%	32%
Talking	69%	7.6%	58%	80%
Child	38%	8.2%	17%	47%
Small Group	7%	5.3%	0%	21%
Whole Group	19%	6.1%	8%	29%
Self	2%	4.2%	0%	13%
External Adult	1%	2.4%	0%	6%
Teacher	3%	3.9%	0%	14%

Associations between achievement gains and classroom practices

Variability among the classrooms in gains for children across the year in different domains

Variability among the classrooms in time spent and interactions observed

Goal: To examine relationships between gains and observed classroom practices

Aligned Definition of Quality

Examples from TDOE Quality Matters: Defining Quality in Early Education

- Data from our efforts in the MNPS-PRI partnership provide evidence supporting a definition of quality that aligns with components TDOE has included in *Quality Matters* such as
 - Effective use of time
 - “Maximize learning through the appropriate use of instructional time that reduces transitions between activities...”
 - Promoting teachers’ listening to children
 - “Asking questions that prompt children’s critical and inferential thinking”
 - Incorporating sequential activities
 - “Support higher-order thinking through inclusion of sequential learning activities”

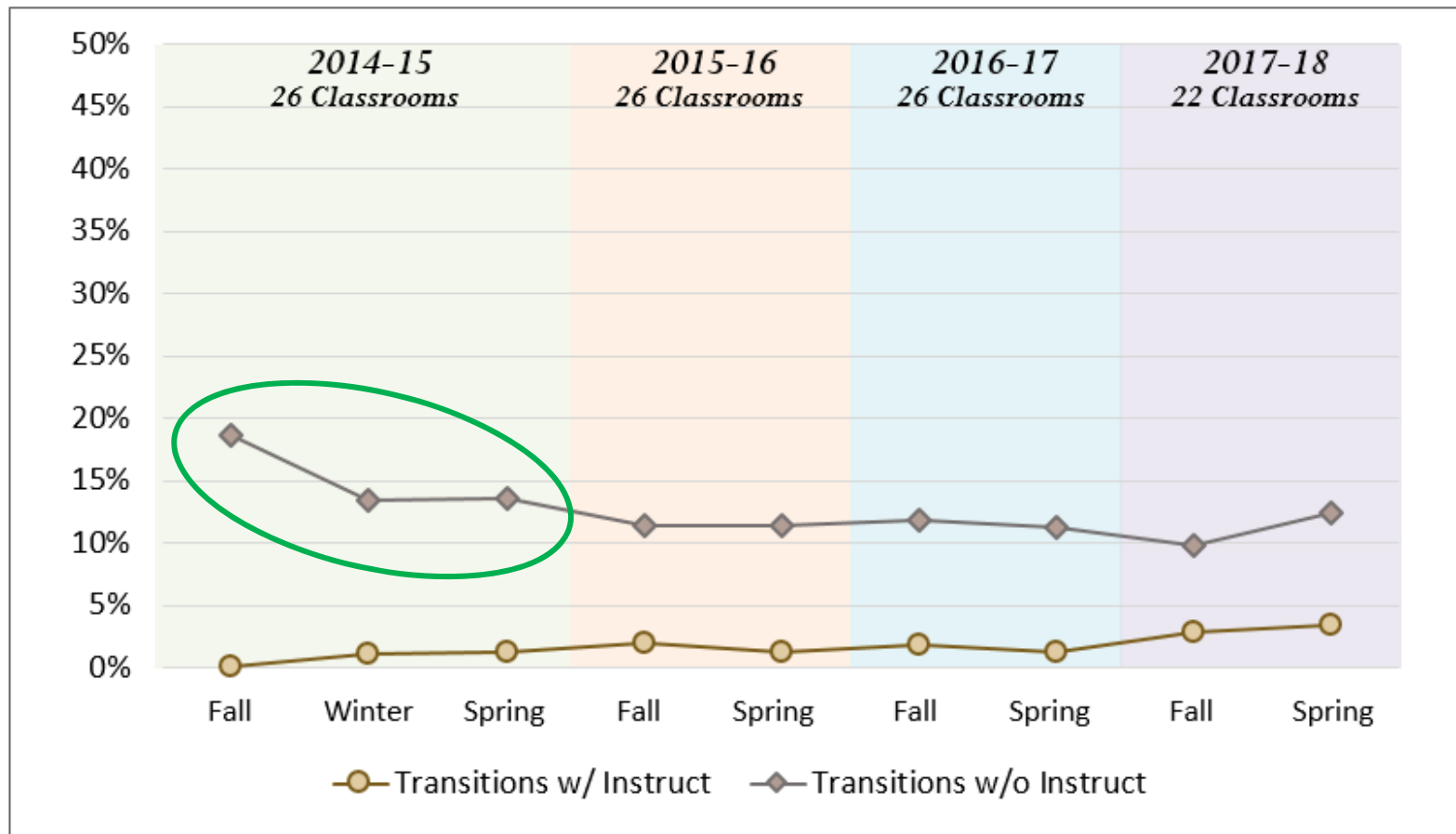
The “Magic Eight”

1. Reduce transitions
2. Increase level of instruction
3. More positive environment
4. Increase teacher listening to children
5. Increase opportunities for sequential activities
6. Foster associative and cooperative interactions
7. Foster higher levels of involvement
8. Create more math opportunities
9. More in-depth literacy instruction

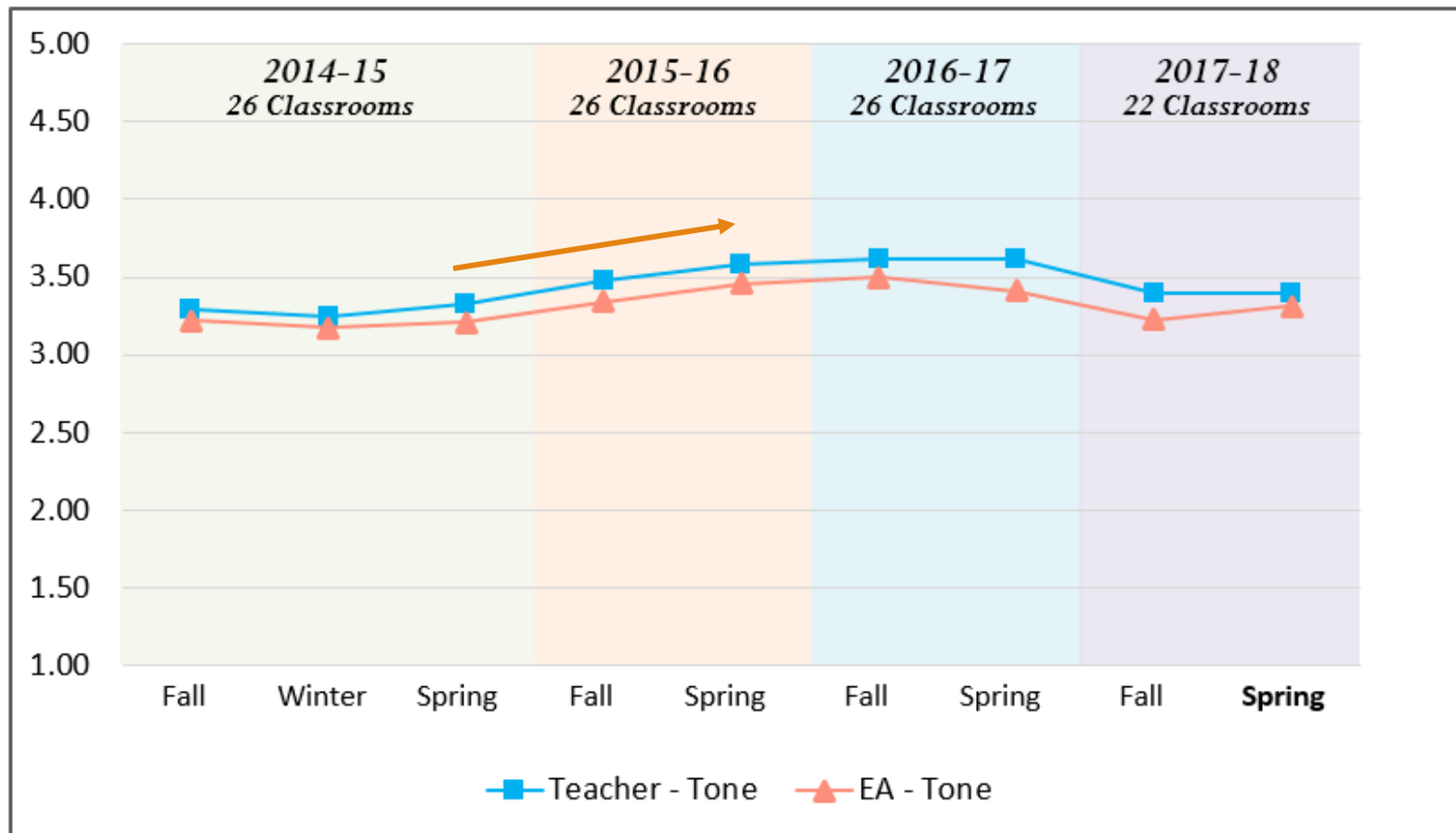


Classroom practices that
showed some amount of
improvement

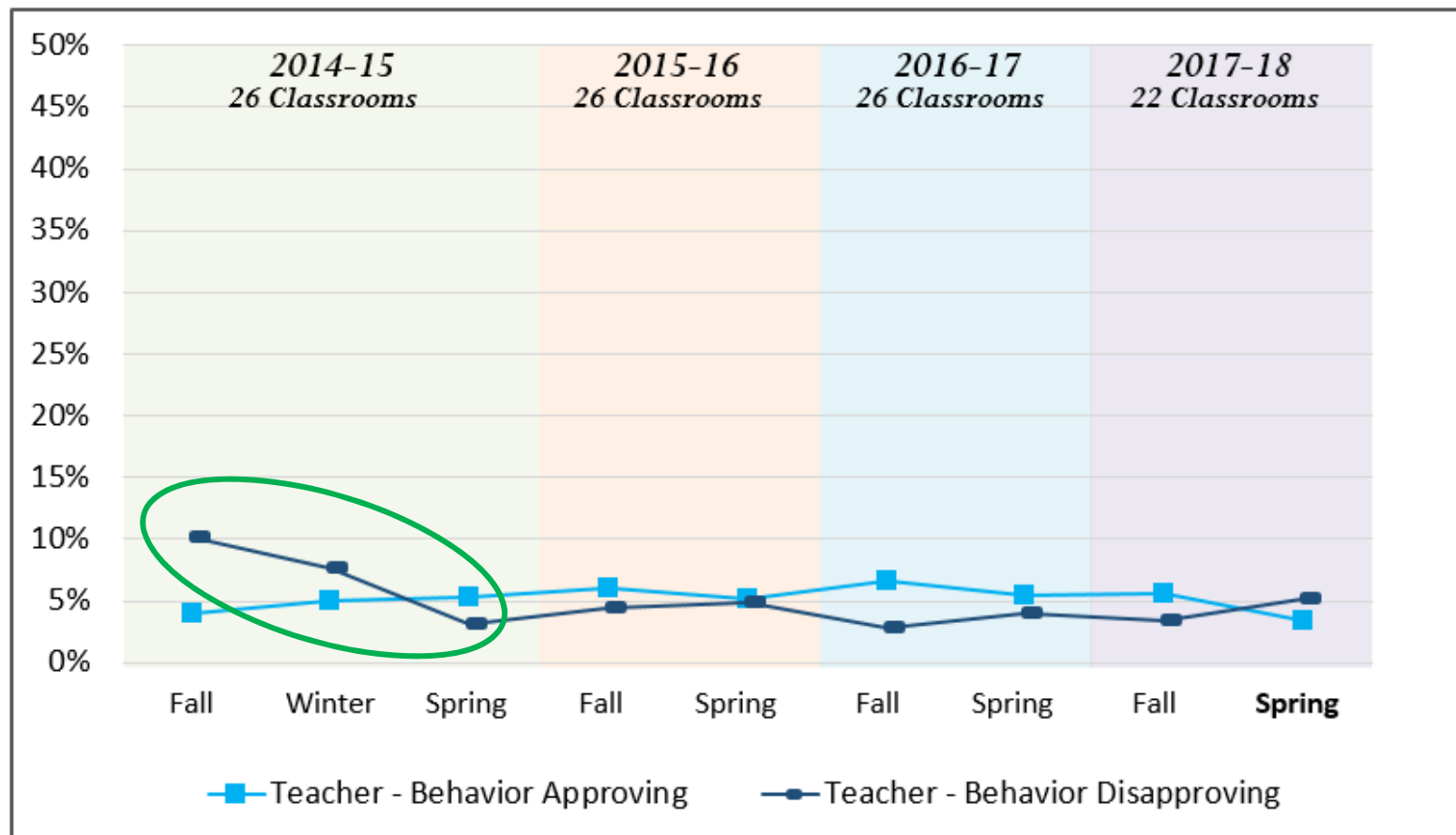
Goal 1: Reducing Transitions



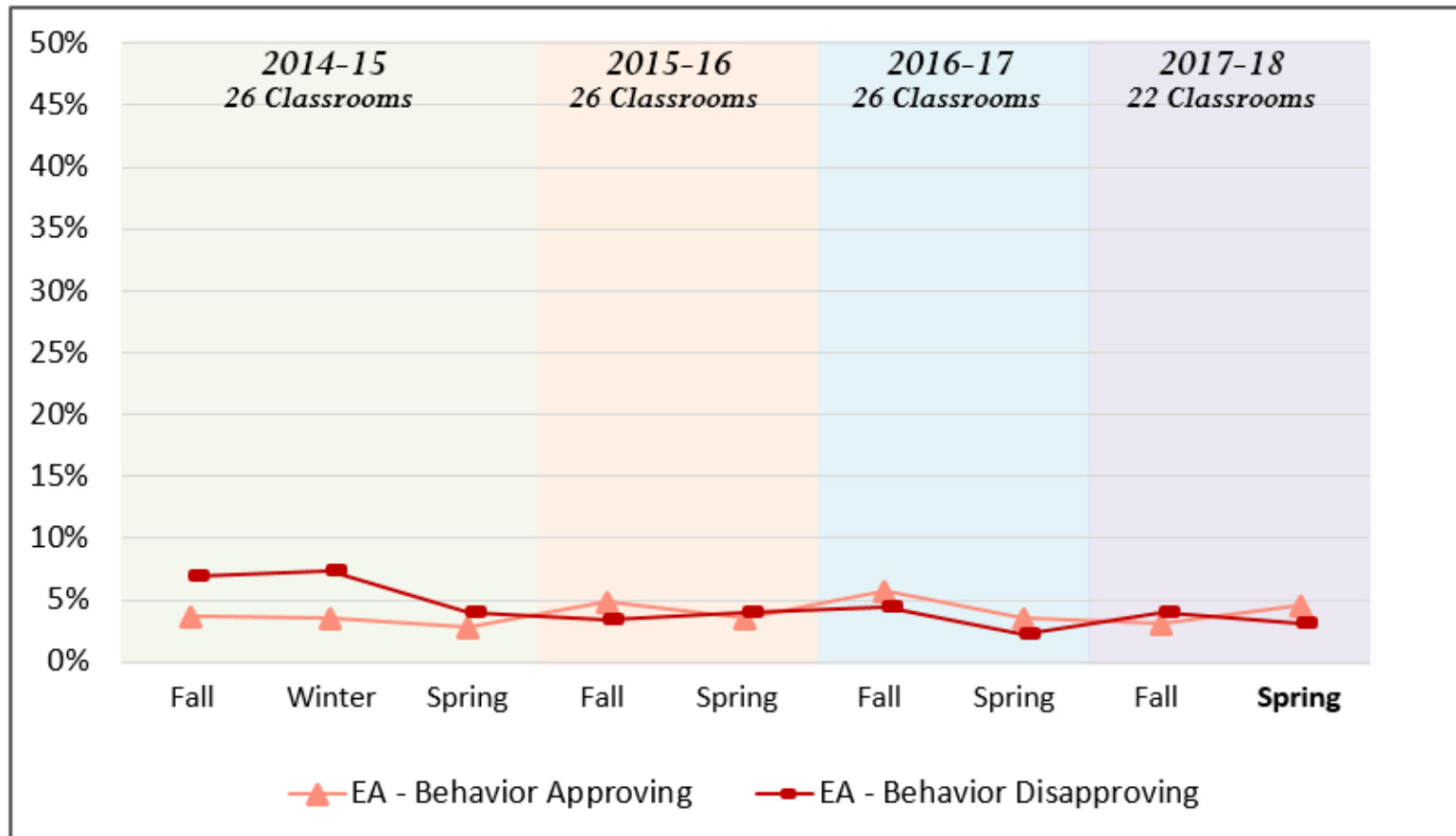
Goal 3: Creating a More Positive Emotional Climate



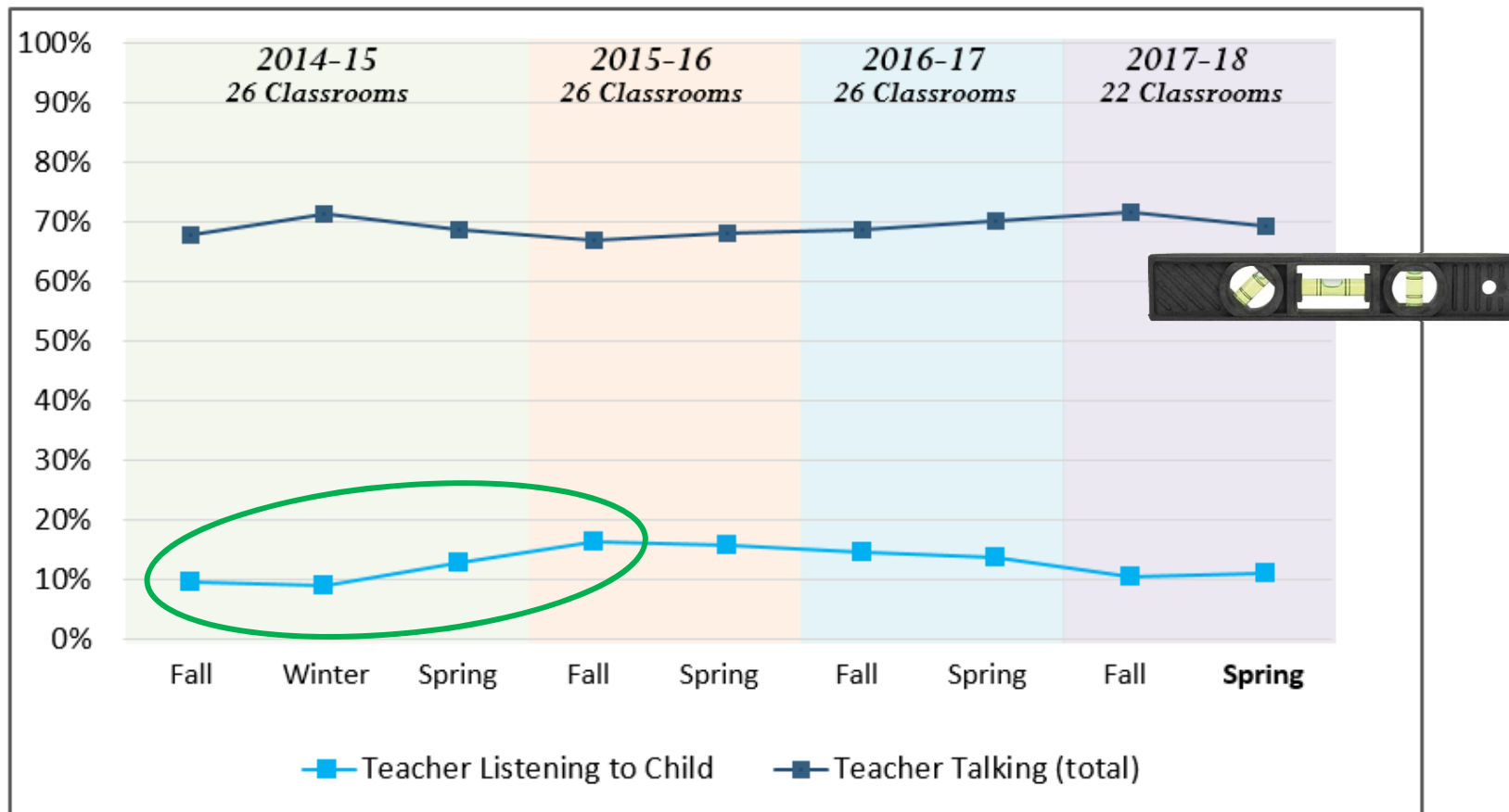
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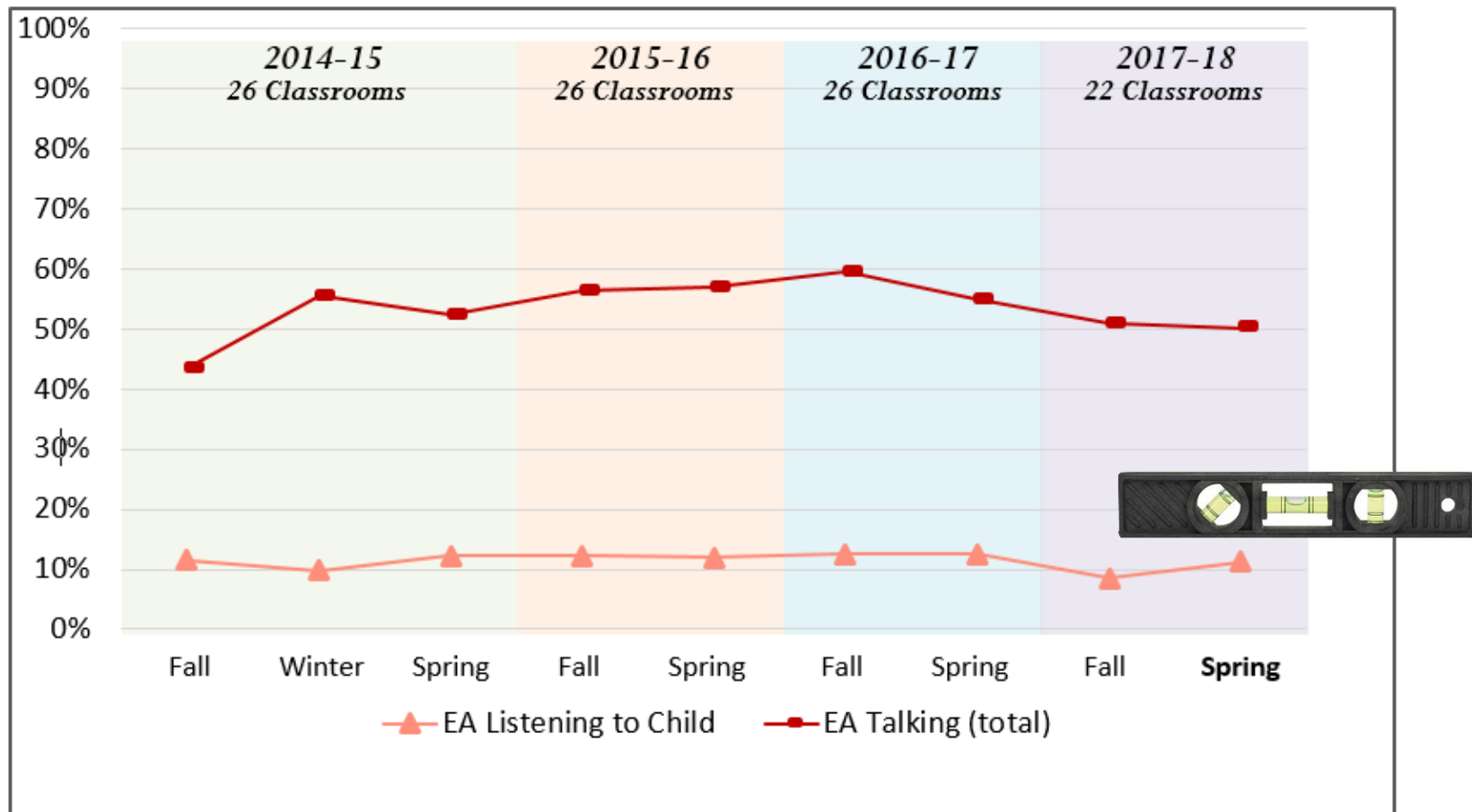
Goal 3: Creating a More Positive Emotional Climate



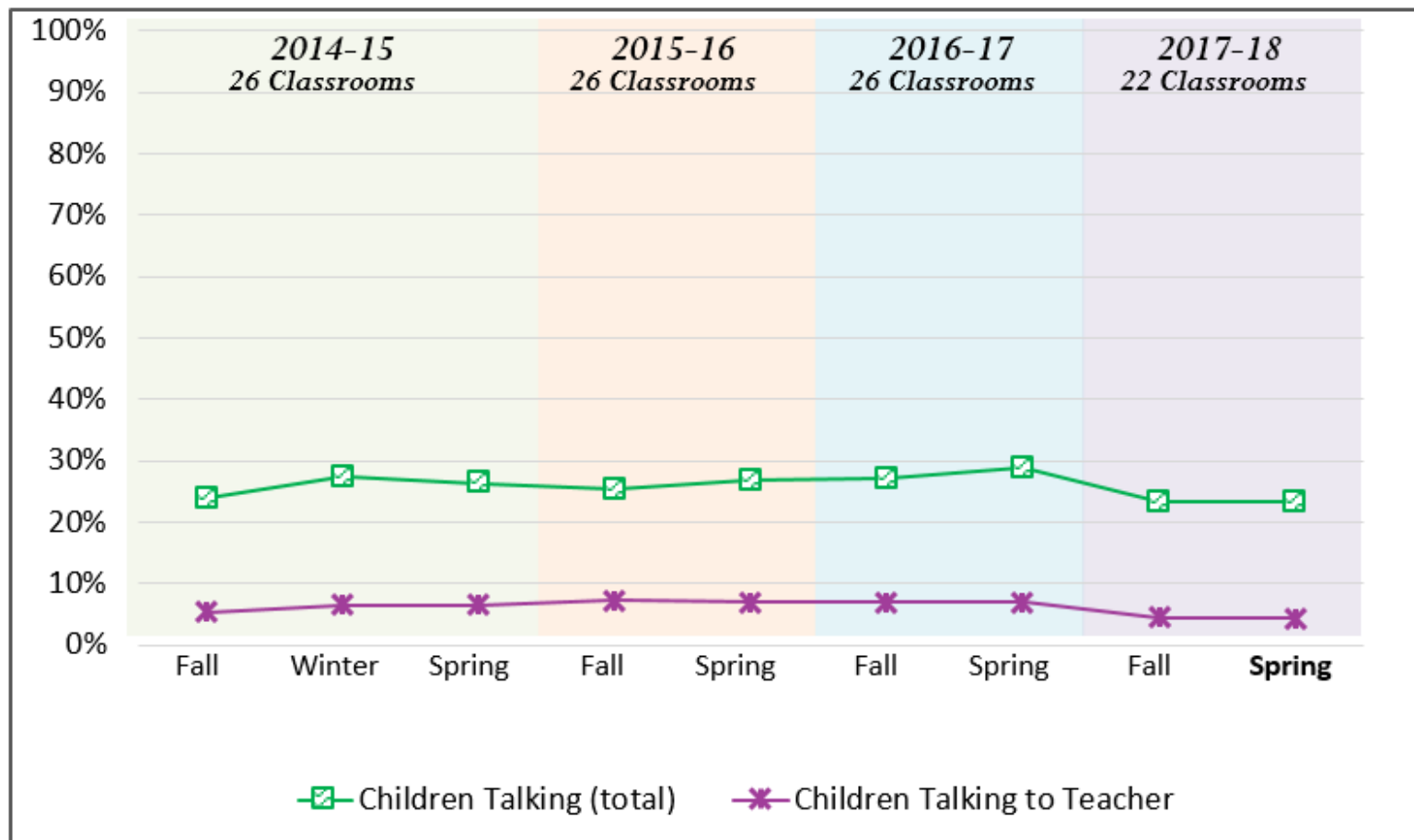
Goal 4: Increasing Teacher Listening to Children



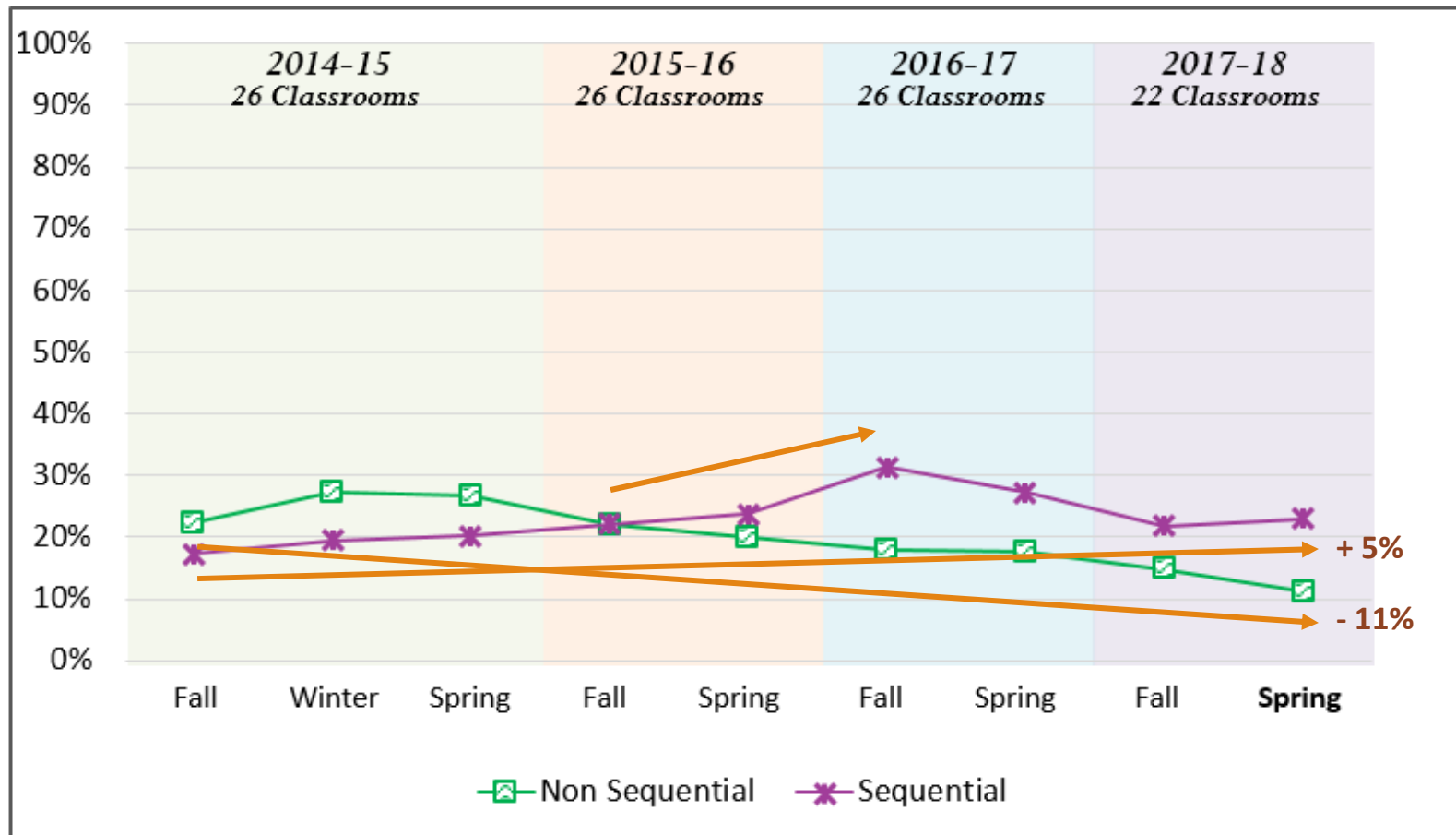
Goal 4: Increasing Teacher Listening to Children



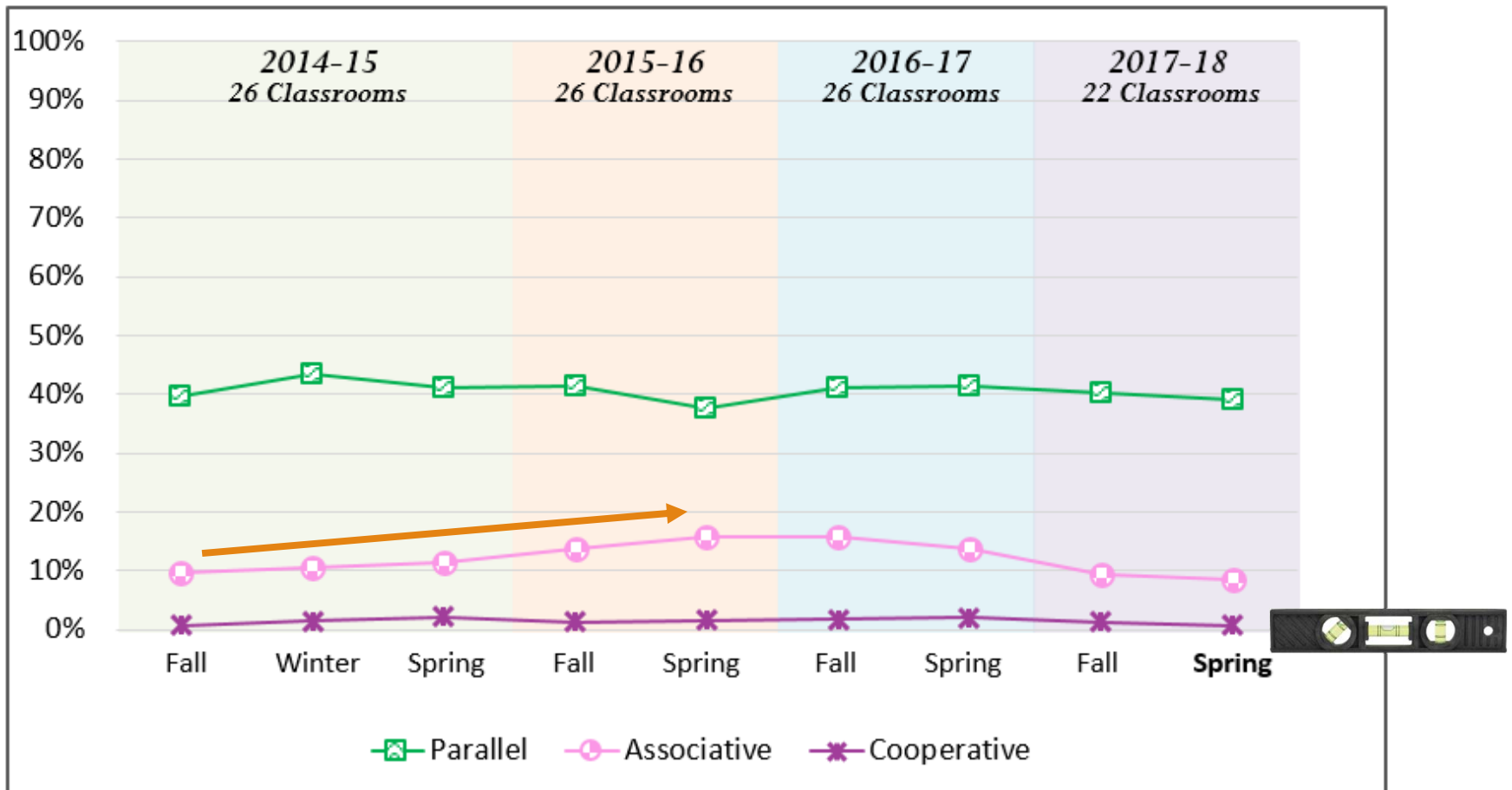
Goal 4: Increasing Teacher Listening to Children



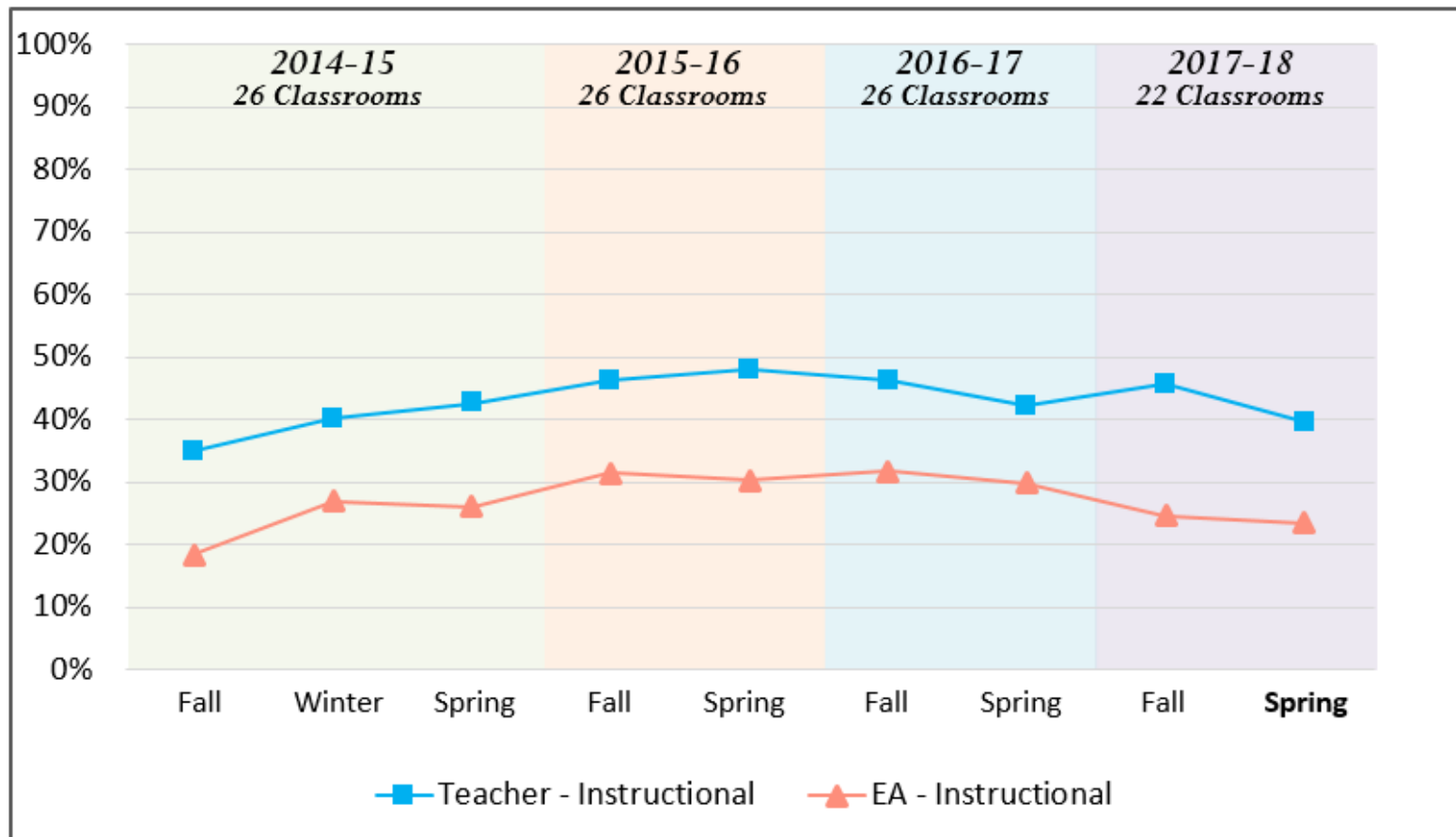
Goal 5: Creating Opportunities for Sequential Activities



Goal 6: Fostering Associative/Cooperative Interactions

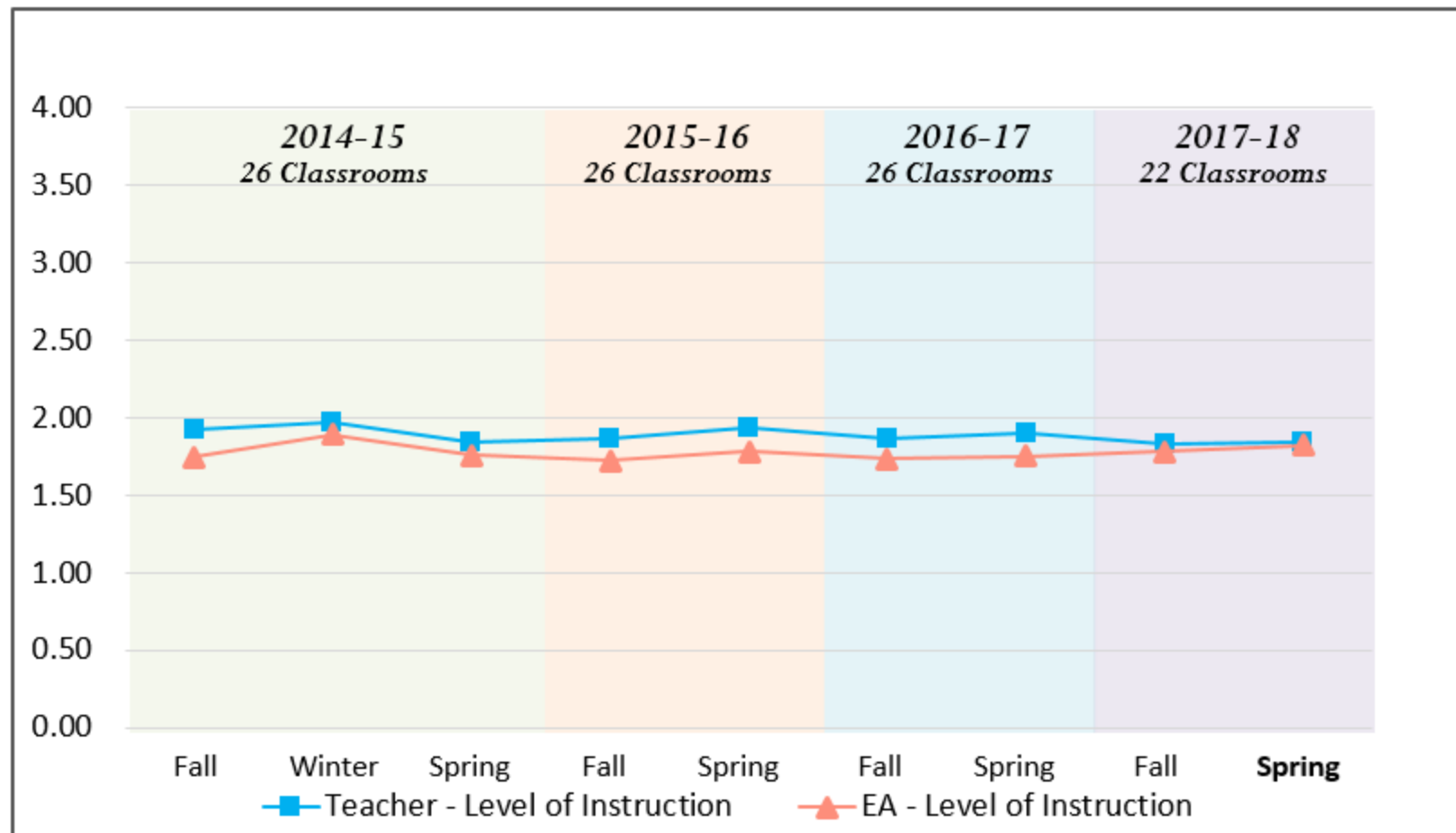


Additional Information: Teachers' use of time

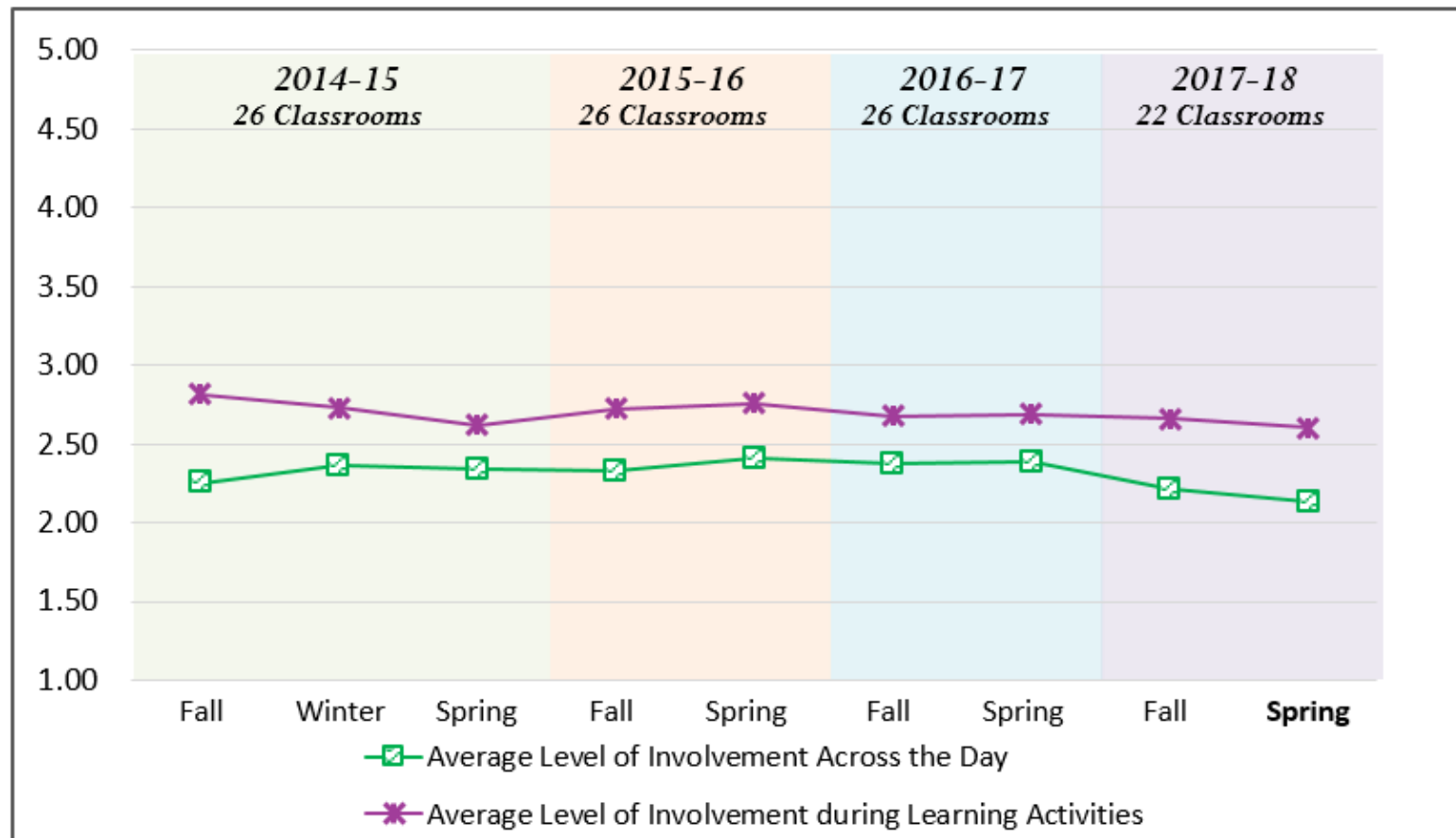


Classroom practices that
proved more difficult to change

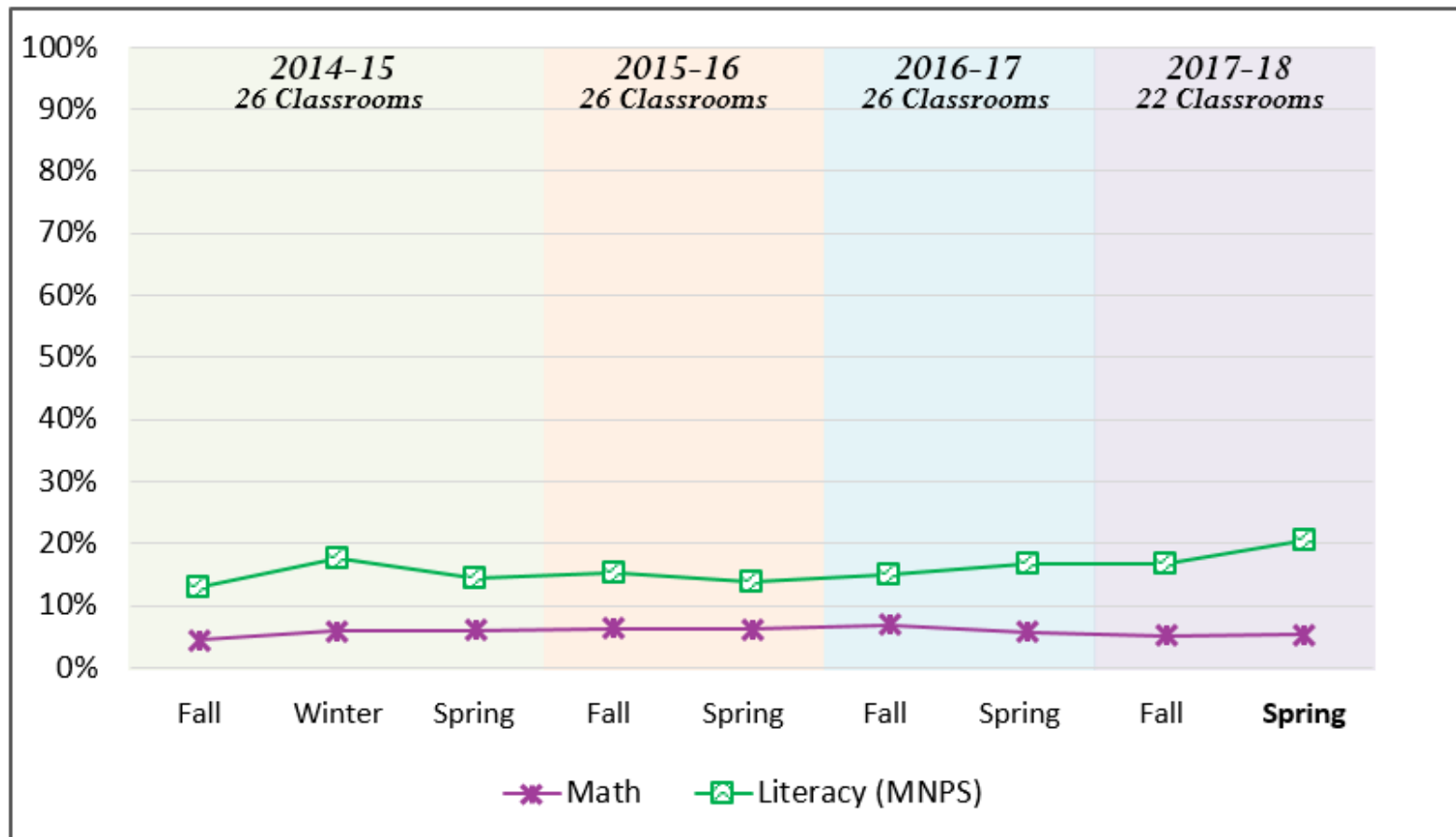
Goal 2: Increasing Level of Instruction



Goal 7: Fostering Higher Levels of Involvement



Goal 8: Creating more Math Opportunities for Children



Professional Development Efforts

Began providing targeted professional development events for Pre-K teachers and coaches in Year 3 (Fall 2016)

Professional Development events

- Planned in conjunction with district staff, as well as individual ELC principals, instructional coaches, and teachers
- Tailored sessions designed to incorporate individual ELC data and focus on the specific needs of their teachers
- Have included round table discussions, as well as hands-on activities for developing strategies and producing instructional materials

Professional Development Efforts

PRI Partnership with MNPS Instructional Coaches began in Year 4 (Fall 2017)

- Creating “mini PD sessions” based on Magic 8
- Iterative feedback
- Materials freely available at:

<https://my.vanderbilt.edu/mnpspartnership/magic8/professional-development-materials/>

Professional Development Materials: Examples from Goals 2 and 4

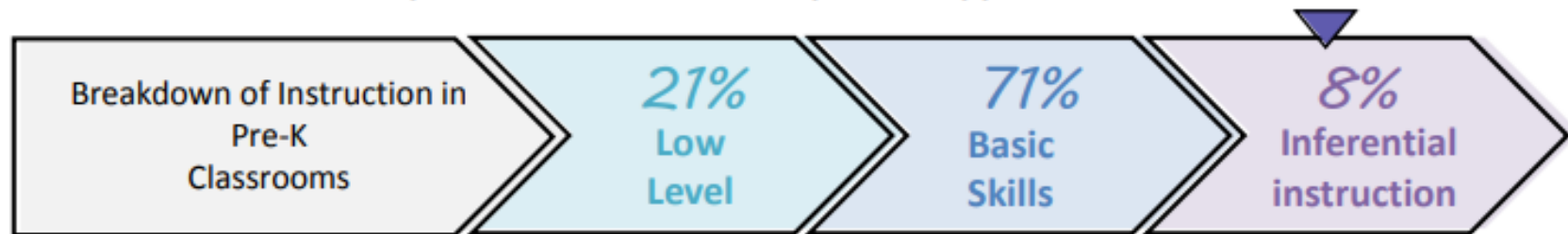
IMPROVING LEVEL OF INSTRUCTION

INCREASING TEACHER LISTENING AND CHILD TALK

Improving Level of Instruction

Moving Beyond Basic Skill Instruction

Some Basic Skills instruction is necessary in preschool, but research shows that young minds also thrive when they have opportunities to think more deeply. **The goal for improving level of instruction is to provide more of these important opportunities.**



BASIC SKILLS INSTRUCTION	INFERENTIAL INSTRUCTION
Requires children to...	
Give the right answer (e.g., recite facts, identify objects)	Draw from experiences, background knowledge, context clues
Sit quietly and take in new information (e.g., listen to a story)	Actively construct links between experiences and ideas, past/present content; interact with peers and teachers

The key to moving beyond Basic Skills instruction is to **help children make inferences.**

Inferential questions are open-ended and have **more than one possible answer.**

Try asking children to...

Explain their thought process to a teacher or peer

Predict based on context clues or prior knowledge

Connect content with personal experiences

Reflect back on parts of previous activities or lessons

Achieving a higher level of instruction is not only about asking the right questions. Teachers must also build upon children's responses to deepen their understanding.



Tips for Leveraging Children's Responses

Ask authentic, open-ended questions

Positively acknowledge contributions

Encourage conversations among peers

Allow wait time for responses

Extend and elaborate responses

Provide scaffolds for low-language children

Increasing Teacher Listening & Child Talk

Importance of Listening to Children

Talking to teachers and peers allows children to express themselves and build self-confidence. Children who have opportunities to talk in their classrooms can **develop better pro-social skills and effective ways to communicate**. Adults are integral supports for children's language development, and **through conversation with teachers, children develop both vocabulary and syntax**.

Increased Teacher Listening leads to more opportunities for Child Talk.



Children in classrooms with **teachers who listened** more had greater gains in **Math, Vocabulary, and Letter & Sight Word Recognition**

Children who were observed **talking more frequently** had greater gains in the **above-mentioned skills and Self-Regulation**.

This was **especially true** for children who **entered pre-k with lower skills** than their peers!



Emphasizing Children's Voices

When you want to **get children talking**:

- **Physically get down** on the child's level. Looking up at an adult can be intimidating!
- Show that you **value** children's **home languages**. Learning a simple greeting can greatly increase their comfort level!
- Ask **authentic, open-ended questions**; this elicits more child talk *and* **contributes** to a **higher level of instruction**.

When it's **time for children to listen**:

- When you need children's attention, emphasize that it is **time for them to listen**, rather than focusing on them being quiet.
- Try using a **song** to get children's attention or implement a **call and response**:

TEACHER:
Listen up!
CHILDREN:
What's up?

TEACHER: Class-class?
CHILDREN: Yes-yes?

Increasing Teacher Listening & Child Talk

Creating Environments to Support Child Talk

Adapted from Guest Blog Posts by Mendy Coe & Teneice "Neicy" Kirby



VANDERBILT
PEABODY COLLEGE

Arrival & Dismissal

Get to know your students!
Send home an interest inventory or ask about their families and favorite things.

Meals

In addition to encouraging social talk, meals are also natural opportunities to discuss children's favorite foods, how foods are made, and their nutritional properties.

- *What's your favorite food? Why?*
- *How do you think they made this?*
- *Why do you think we need to eat vegetables?*

Free Choice Centers

- **Dramatic Play** – let the child pretend to be the "adult", and you are the child
- **Blocks** – ask questions about what they are building and why. "How can I help?" Have students interview each other about what they built
- **Discovery** – get EXCITED about what you see through the magnifying glass; this will spark children's curiosity and inspire conversation.

Small Group

Provide mutual experiences from which you and the children can draw

- **Leverage children's experiences and background knowledge.** Start activities by asking children what they know about a topic. They might surprise you!
- Plan a **special activity** such as cooking from a recipe or conducting an experiment.
- Talk to children about their **journaling** pages while they work.

"What's happening here?"

Morning & Afternoon Meeting

- Develop and teach expectations for participating in group conversation.

"How can we show Jason we care about what he has to say?"

- Let children **lead parts of the routine**
"Does anyone have questions for Sara?"
- Bring in **unusual, real-world objects** to spark conversations!

Storytime

Incorporate **quality children's literature** and take time to **examine vocabulary**. Choose literature that is linked to the current topic of study so that children use new words in the context of classroom activities.

The **Book Discussion Cards** provided by Creative Curriculum give excellent examples of open-ended questions!

When asking these questions, remember:

- ★ Allow sufficient wait time for response ★
- Positively acknowledge contributions ★
- Extend and elaborate ★
- Provide additional support and scaffolding when necessary ★

Managing off-topic comments can be challenging!
Try to differentiate responses based on the child:

For a child who rarely contributes:
Encourage participation and find a way to ask more questions

For a child who often contributes:
Identify a link between child's comment and current topic –OR– **Ask them to tell more about it later**, and bring attention back to topic at hand.
Set aside a time for children to come talk to you.



Magic 8 Professional Development Series

SPECIAL THANKS & ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

A sincere thank you to Dale Farran for your leadership in
this work!

We are grateful to the following MNPS Pre-K Instructional
Coaches and Multi-Classroom Leaders for their invaluable
feedback in developing these materials:

SeTara DeThrow
Carrie Head
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Holly Stone
Ashley Aldridge Wilson
Rhiannon Wilson

<https://my.vanderbilt.edu/mnpspartnership/>

