

# Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)

## ***What is CLASS?***

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) is a classroom observation tool developed at the University of Virginia’s Curry School of Education. It aims to provide a common lens and language focused on classroom interactions that encourage student learning.

CLASS observations break down the complex classroom environment to help educators focus on boosting the effectiveness of their interactions with learners of all ages. Observations rely on categorizing interactions within the CLASS framework.

The CLASS tool organizes teacher-student interactions into three broad domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support. The upper elementary and secondary tools include an additional domain, Student Engagement. Within all domains except Student Engagement, interactions are further organized into multiple dimensions. **Table 1** lists the domains and dimensions for each level.

**Emotional Support:** Students’ social and emotional functioning in the classroom is increasingly recognized as an indicator of school readiness, a potential target for intervention, and even as a student outcome that might be governed by a set of standards similar to those for academic achievement. Students who are more motivated and connected to others are much more likely to establish positive trajectories of development in both social and academic domains. Teachers’ abilities to support social and emotional functioning in the classroom are therefore central to ratings of effective classroom practices.

**Classroom Organization:** The classroom organization domain assesses a broad array of classroom processes related to the organization and management of students’ behavior, time, and attention in the classroom. Classrooms function best and provide the most opportunities for learning when students are well-behaved, consistently have something to do, and are interested and engaged in learning tasks.

**Instructional Support:** The theoretical foundation for the instructional support domain is based on research on children’s cognitive and language development. Thus the emphasis is on students’ construction of usable knowledge, rather than rote memorization, and metacognition—or the awareness and understanding of one’s thinking process. As a result, the instructional support domain does not make judgments about curriculum content; rather, it assesses the effectiveness of teachers’ interactions with students that support cognitive and language development.

**Student Engagement:** Unlike other domains, student engagement focuses strictly on student functioning, and measures the overall engagement level of students in the classroom.

Table 1: CLASS Domains and Dimensions

Domain	Dimensions			
	Pre-K	Lower Elementary	Upper Elementary	Secondary
<b>Emotional Support</b>	Positive Climate Negative Climate Teacher Sensitivity Regard for Student Perspectives	Positive Climate Negative Climate Teacher Sensitivity Regard for Student Perspectives	Positive Climate Teacher Sensitivity Regard for Student Perspectives	Positive Climate Teacher Sensitivity Regard for Adolescent Perspectives
<b>Classroom Organization</b>	Behavior Management Productivity Instructional Learning Formats	Behavior Management Productivity Instructional Learning Formats	Behavior Management Productivity Negative Climate	Behavior Management Productivity Negative Climate
<b>Instructional Support</b>	Concept Development Quality of Feedback Language Modeling	Concept Development Quality of Feedback Language Modeling	Content Understanding Analysis and Inquiry Instructional Learning Formats Quality of Feedback Instructional Dialogue	Content Understanding Analysis and Inquiry Instructional Learning Formats Quality of Feedback Instructional Dialogue
<b>Student Engagement</b>	n/a	n/a	Student Engagement	Student Engagement

Based on research from the University of Virginia’s Curry School of Education and studied in thousands of classrooms nationwide, the CLASS

- focuses on effective teaching
- helps teachers recognize and understand the power of their interactions with students
- aligns with professional development tools
- works across age levels and subjects

CLASS-based professional development tools increase teacher effectiveness, and students in classrooms where teachers are observed to demonstrate and earn higher CLASS scores achieve at higher levels than their peers in classrooms with lower CLASS scores.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Teachstone Inc. <http://www.teachstone.org/about-the-class/>

## **CLASS and Program Evaluation**

APS conducts CLASS observations for all program evaluation reports, starting in the 2010-11 school year. In the fall of 2010, the Office of Planning and Evaluation recruited retired teachers and administrators to become certified CLASS observers. Certification is managed by the University of Virginia. Trainees undergo in-depth training to help them use the tool effectively in the field. An assessment is used to ensure that the observers have demonstrated reliability with the CLASS tool.

Each observation lasts approximately 30 minutes and observers are instructed to view either the beginning or end of a class. Ten additional minutes are provided for coding of the observation. Self-contained classrooms that serve ESOL/HILT students or students with a disability, as well as mainstream classrooms with ESOL/HILT students or students with a disability, are included.

### **CLASS Scores**

CLASS dimensions are scored on a 7-point scale consisting of Low (1, 2), Mid (3, 4, 5), and High (6, 7) ranges. A score in the low range indicates an absence or lack of the behaviors associated with a given dimension, while a score in the high range indicates a high presence of such behaviors. Scores in the high range are desirable for all dimensions except for Negative Climate. With this dimension, the goal is a low score, or an absence of negativity.

### **Research Foundations of CLASS**

The CLASS framework is derived from developmental theory and research suggesting that interactions between students and adults are the primary mechanism of child development and learning.

#### **Elementary CLASS**

Research provides evidence about the types of teacher-student interactions that promote positive social and academic development. The Classroom Assessment Scoring System™ (CLASS) provides a reliable, valid assessment of these interactions<sup>2</sup>

Selected studies demonstrate:

- Higher levels of instructional support are related to preschoolers' gains in pre-reading and math skills.<sup>3</sup>
- High levels of emotional support contribute to preschoolers' social competence in the kindergarten year.<sup>4</sup>
- High levels of emotional support are associated with growth in reading and math achievement from kindergarten through fifth grade.<sup>5</sup>
- High levels of classroom organization are associated with gains in first graders' literacy.<sup>6</sup>
- Kindergarten children are more engaged and exhibit greater self-control in classrooms offering more effective teacher-child interactions.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Karen LaParo, Robert Pianta, and Meghan Stuhlman, "Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS): Findings from the Pre-K Year," *Elementary School Journal*, 104:5, pages 409-426.

<sup>3</sup> Mashburn, Pianta, Hamre, Downer et al., *Child Development*, 79, pages 732-749.

<sup>4</sup> Timothy Curby, Jennifer Locasale-Crouch, Timothy Konold, Robert Pianta, Carollee Howes, Margaret Burchinal et al., "The Relations of Observed Pre-K Classrooms Quality Profiles to Children's Academic Achievement and Social Competence," *Early Education and Development*, 19, pages 643-666.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Pianta, Jay Belsky, Nathan Vandergrift, Renee Houts, Fred Morrison, and NICHD-ECCRN, "Classroom Effects on Children's Achievement Trajectories in Elementary School," *American Education Research Journal*, 49, pages 365-397.

<sup>6</sup> Claire Cameron Ponitz, Sara Rimm-Kaufman, Laura Brock, and Lori Nathanson, "Contributions of gender, early school adjustment, and classroom organizational climate to first grade outcomes," *Elementary School Journal*, 110, 142-162.

## Appendix B1

- First-grade children at risk for school failure perform on par with peers, both socially and academically, when exposed to classrooms with effective teacher-student interactions.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, studies conducted in over 6,000 classrooms provide evidence that students in PK–5 classrooms with higher CLASS ratings realize greater gains in achievement and social skill development.<sup>9</sup>

### Secondary CLASS

Research using the more recently developed secondary CLASS tool has shown that teachers' skills in establishing a positive emotional climate, their sensitivity to student needs, and their structuring of their classroom and lessons in ways that recognize adolescents' needs for a sense of autonomy and control, for an active role in their learning, and for opportunities for peer interaction were all associated with higher relative student gains in achievement.<sup>10</sup>

## Alignment with APS Initiatives

### Differentiation

The four domains measured by the CLASS are essential in effectively differentiated classrooms. In addition, dimensions such as teacher sensitivity, regard for student/adolescent perspectives, and instructional learning formats specifically address behaviors necessary for effective differentiation.

### Teacher Evaluation (Danielson)

The CLASS tool is heavily aligned with Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching<sup>11</sup>, which sets forth standards for teaching behaviors in the areas of planning, instruction, classroom environment, and professional responsibility. Danielson's Levels of Performance rubrics are the foundation for all T-Scale staff evaluation in APS.

### Cultural Competence

There is strong alignment between Gay's Exemplars of Culturally Responsive Behaviors<sup>12</sup> and classroom behaviors identified in the CLASS tool. The APS Council for Cultural Competence was established in 2003 to develop the framework for permanent, systemwide cultural competence activities including ongoing cultural competence training for all staff. Cultural competence is a set of attitudes, skills, behaviors, and policies that enable organizations and staff to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.

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<sup>7</sup> Sara Rimm-Kaufman, Timothy Curby, Kevin Grimm, Lori Nathanson and Laura Brock, "The Contribution of Children's Self-Regulation and Classroom Quality to Children's Adaptive Behavior in Kindergarten," *Developmental Psychology*, in-press. See also NICHD ECCRN, "A Day in Third Grade: A Large- Scale Study of Classroom Quality and Teacher and Student Behavior," *Elementary School Journal*, 105, pages 305-323.

<sup>8</sup> Bridget Hamre and Robert Pianta, "Can Instructional and Emotional Support in First Grade Classrooms Make a Difference for Children At Risk of School Failure?" *Child Development*, 76, pages 949-967.

<sup>9</sup> Website [http://curry.virginia.edu/uploads/resourceLibrary/CLASS-MTP\\_PK-12\\_brief.pdf](http://curry.virginia.edu/uploads/resourceLibrary/CLASS-MTP_PK-12_brief.pdf) Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning Charlottesville, Virginia, **Measuring and Improving Teacher-Student Interactions in PK-12 Settings to Enhance Students' Learning**

<sup>10</sup> Joseph P. Allen, Anne Gregory, Amori Mikami, Janetta Lun, Bridget Hamre, and Robert C. Pianta, "Observations of Effective Teaching in Secondary School Classrooms: Predicting Student Achievement with the CLASS-S." Submitted.

<sup>11</sup> Charlotte Danielson (2007), *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching*, Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

<sup>12</sup> Geneva Gay (2000). *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, & Practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

## SIOP

Many of the dimensions of the CLASS are aligned with components of the Sheltered instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP)<sup>13</sup>, an approach to teaching that promotes content-area learning and language development for English language learners. SIOP encourages teachers to adapt grade-level content lessons to the students' levels of English proficiency, while focusing on English language development to help students increase their proficiency in academic English.

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<sup>13</sup> Website <http://siop.pearson.com/about-siop>