# **District Review Classroom Observations:** **The CLASS System**

As a part of the district review, classrooms across all schools and grade levels will be observed using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) tool by Teachstone. The CLASS protocols were developed by the Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning at the University of Virginia.

CLASS defines teaching quality through the lens of interactions between teachers and their students. Over 200 research studies show that higher CLASS scores correlate with higher social-emotional, cognitive, and academic outcomes for students.

## What happens during a CLASS Observation?

CLASS observers are trained to be non-obtrusive. Typically, one observer will enter a classroom and find a place out of the way of students and educators to sit or stand. The observer may move around the room but usually refrains from directly interacting with students and educators. The observation will last approximately 15-20 minutes. Teachers do not need to prepare anything specific for a CLASS observation.

## Which classrooms are going to be observed?

A sample of classrooms in each school in the district will be observed. Depending on the size of the school and district, some teachers may be observed more than once while teaching different sections of students, and/or some teachers may not be observed at all. School and district leaders will provide the observers with a detailed schedule and map of the school, but will not receive the observation schedule. Observations will not be conducted in classrooms being led by a short-term substitute teacher.

## What are the qualifications of the observers?

Certified CLASS observers attended separate two-day trainings for each of the CLASS protocols. Observers then passed a rigorous certification exam for each protocol to ensure that they can accurately rate the dimensions. Each observer retains their certification by passing an exam on each CLASS protocol annually. The observers work for the American Institutes for Research (AIR), an organization that conducts research and evaluations in the fields of education, workforce, and healthcare. CLASS observers have significant experience observing and rating classroom interactions to support continuous improvement.

## What are the observers looking for?

The K−3 protocol includes 10 classroom dimensions related to three domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support.

Table 1. CLASS PK–3 Domains and Dimensions

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Emotional Support | Classroom Organization | Instructional Support |
| * Positive Climate
* Negative Climate
* Teacher Sensitivity
* Regard for Student Perspectives
 | * Behavior Management
* Productivity
* Instructional Learning Formats
 | * Concept Development
* Quality of Feedback
* Language Modeling
 |

The Upper Elementary & Secondary protocols include 11 classroom dimensions related to the same three domains, plus Student Engagement.

Table 2. CLASS Upper Elementary & Secondary Domains and Dimensions

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Emotional Support | Classroom Organization | Instructional Support | Student Engagement |
| * Positive Climate
* Teacher Sensitivity
* Regard for Student/ Adolescent Perspectives
 | * Behavior Management
* Productivity
* Negative Climate
 | * Instructional Learning Formats
* Content Understanding
* Analysis and Inquiry
* Quality of Feedback
* Instructional Dialogue
 | Student Engagement refers to the extent to which all students in the class are focused and participating in the learning activity that is presented or facilitated by the teacher. |

When conducting an observation, the observer rates each dimension on a scale of 1 to 7. A rating of 1 or 2 (low range) indicates that the dimension was never or rarely evident during the visit. A rating of 3, 4, or 5 (middle range) indicates that the dimension was evident but not exhibited consistently or in a way that included all students. A rating of 6 or 7 (high range) indicates that the dimension was reflected in all or most classroom activities and in a way that included all or most students.

## What will the classroom observation data be used for?

The classroom observation data will be used, alongside other qualitative and quantitative evidence, to identify strengths and areas for growth for each district. All findings in district reviews are triangulated, meaning that DESE will not identify a strength or area for growth based on classroom observations alone.

## Are individual observation results going to be published in the final district review report?

The report will not reflect individual school or teacher performance, and no teacher names, classroom numbers, subjects, or specific grade levels will be reported. The ratings of all classrooms will be aggregated for each domain and dimension in the district review report.

Neither DESE nor the district receives the names of teachers who are observed as part of the district review.

## Will this be used as evidence in teacher or administrator evaluations?

No, CLASS observation data will not in any way inform or affect educator evaluations.

If you have additional questions about the classroom visits or the district review in general, please contact Robert Havdala at robert.j.havdala@mass.gov. Thank you!