

Dallas ISD Early Learning CLASS Observations 2019 - 2020: Frequently Asked Questions

Why am I receiving this information?

Dallas ISD has partnered with SMU's Center on Research and Evaluation (CORE) housed in the Simmons School of Education and Human Development to conduct and report on early childhood classroom observations using CLASS. You will need to know and utilize this information so you can prepare to participate in the Dallas ISD CLASS initiative as either a principal, instructional coach or teacher. This partnership has produced valuable information concerning the environmental quality of early learning classrooms in Dallas ISD.

What is CLASS?

CLASS stands for Classroom Assessment Scoring System. The interactions teachers have with children impact learning, development, and even lifelong achievement. The CLASS framework focuses on the domains of Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support. CLASS is the observation tool developed to assess these interactions: from infant care through 12th grade. CLASS is designed to observe classrooms, not teachers.

Are all Dallas ISD Early Learning classrooms being observed using the CLASS tool?

This is the fifth year Dallas ISD has partnered with the Center on Research and Evaluation (CORE) at Southern Methodist University to ensure that high quality teaching and learning is occurring in DALLAS ISD's early learning classrooms. All Dallas ISD PreK and SRI classrooms and a sample of K-2 classrooms and Montessori classrooms in DALLAS ISD will be observed as part of the CLASS project during the 2019-2020 school year.

Is this a research study for SMU?

This initiative is not a research study. It is a partnership with Dallas ISD and SMU.

Who are the CORE CLASS observers?

Dallas ISD has partnered with SMU's Center on Research and Evaluation (CORE) housed in the Simmons School to conduct and report on early childhood classroom observations using CLASS. SMU CORE has a large team of CLASS observers, including former educators, who have received formal CLASS training. *No SMU CLASS observers are undergraduate students at SMU.* All CORE CLASS observers receive 2 days of training provided by Teachstone and must pass the certification test annually and biannually calibrate to maintain reliability to the CLASS tool. CORE CLASS observers are responsible for collecting un-biased observation data with no interest in the identities of individual schools or classroom teachers. All observers wear Dallas ISD badges at all times while on campus.

What happens to the data that is collected?

CLASS data is returned to CORE where it is uploaded into a secure database and sent to Dallas ISD's Early Learning Department within one week. Scores, in the form of Classroom CLASS Reports, will be made available via email to principals, teachers and instructional specialists working with that teacher. The Classroom Reports will be sent by Dallas ISD Early Learning Department, not SMU. CLASS scores are meant to inform professional development and quality improvement. It is the responsibility of DISD personnel to utilize collected data as it aligns to Dallas ISD's goals and mission.

What should I do if I do not receive my Classroom CLASS Report?

If you do not receive a Classroom CLASS Report, please first check your Spam email folder. If you do not find the report, please contact Connor Eska at CESKA@DallasISD.org in the Dallas ISD Early Learning Department and ask for the report to be sent again.

What will happen during an observation?

Upon arrival at the school, the observer will review your class schedule to determine the best way to schedule the observation. The observer must complete four 30-minute cycles: The observer will take anecdotal notes for 20 minutes followed by 10 minutes to score each dimension using the CLASS Dimensions Overview rubric. During this time, no questions will be asked of the teacher nor will the observer have any interactions with children. The observer may stay in the classroom or step outside to score. If you prefer the observer stay in your classroom or leave the classroom, please let her or him know. The next cycle will begin, and the sequence of events will be repeated until the completion of the whole observation. (Please note: Sometimes cycles will need to be shortened a bit, no less than 10 minutes, depending on the class' daily schedule to ensure four high-quality observation cycles.)

How will I know when a classroom at my school is scheduled to be observed?

Principals, instructional coaches and teachers will receive an email one week prior to each two-week observation cycle. The letter will contain a list of all teachers scheduled to be observed within that two-week cycle. Teachers who missed previously scheduled observations, will be observed as the SMU observation schedule permits.

What can I do to help schedule my observation on a day when I have two hours available for an observation?

It is the responsibility of the teacher to let us know dates and times when he/she will not be available for an observation.

- If there are special events, field trips, computer time, etc. occurring during the window of an assigned observation, email Dawn Levy at DLEVY@SMU.EDU ASAP so that the observation can be rescheduled for an appropriate time.

It is the Instructional Coaches' responsibility to let us know if a teacher has moved to a different classroom or campus.

- Contact Dawn Levy at DLEVY@SMU.EDU with scheduling issues and/or class changes.

When will CLASS observations occur?

Observations will occur between 7:45 – 3:00 Monday – Friday except on district or state testing days. All teachers participating in this partnership will be observed once in the fall and once in the spring. Fall 2019 observations will begin on September 16, 2019, and run for approximately ten weeks. Spring observations will begin January 27, 2020 and run for approximately ten weeks.

- Classrooms will be assigned in random order.
- **Observations will be conducted unless the teacher of record is absent, the whole class is working completely independently on computers, the class is on a field trip or in a special program, or there is district or state testing being conducted.**
- If an observer is turned away from an observation due to one of the reasons listed above, that classroom *will* be observed on another day but a date for that observation will *not* be sent again.

Whom can I contact for more information?

From DALLAS ISD:

Monica Ramirez at MoRamirez@dallasisd.org - General questions about the CLASS® partnership.
Connor Eska at CEska@Dallasisd.org - Data and reporting questions

From SMU:

Dawn Levy at dlevy@smu.edu 214.768-7719 - Scheduling and observation questions
Dylan Farmer dfarmer@smu.edu or 214-768-8465 - General questions about the CLASS® project