

Arkansas Department of Education
Office of Early Childhood
The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Pilot FAQ

Background

- **What is CLASS?** CLASS is an observation tool that measures the quality of teacher-child interactions. The tool is correlated to educational outcomes for children and is used in classrooms serving children from birth-3rd grade across the country. These evidence-based, in-depth measures help to inform a consistent definition of early childhood quality, show how well classrooms support children's growth and development, and provide teachers and leaders with actionable information to improve.
- **Why focus on interactions?** The first five years are the most critical in the development of a child's brain. These are the years when children are learning how to learn. While genes are important in the formation of brain circuits, these circuits are reinforced by repeated use. Positive "[serve and return](#)" interactions between adults and children are a major ingredient in the developmental process.
- **Why is Arkansas piloting CLASS?** [LEARNS](#) calls for a "simple, clear, and understandable uniform accountability system... that includes a rating indicative of child outcomes" (pg. 131). As part of fulfilling this call from LEARNS, ADE will pilot use of the CLASS tool in the 2024-2025 school year.
- **How will the CLASS pilot be organized around the state?** The pilot will begin in the counties which are currently served by a [local lead](#). The pilot will include building a pool of observers, providing teachers and leaders with free training and feedback, and collecting information on the current quality of Arkansas ECE classrooms, as measured by CLASS. This will be an opportunity for early childhood leaders and programs in Arkansas to become trained in the tool, practice using the tool, and provide information to ADE on how this tool can work in Arkansas classrooms and for Arkansas children.
- **Why should I participate in the CLASS pilot?** Those who participate in the CLASS pilot will receive free training on the importance of interactions and ways to achieve the highest quality of care in classrooms. Participants will also receive helpful feedback following observations to improve the classroom quality. Further, the pilot class will have the opportunity to offer feedback to ADE and shape the direction of quality initiatives for birth-5 in Arkansas.
- **What age ranges does the CLASS tool cover?** There is an infant, toddler, and prek-3rd grade tool. Each tool comes with unique training and materials to best support the observer, teacher, provider, and children.
- **How will CLASS help me?** The measures, professional development, and data connected with the CLASS tool can help stakeholders at all levels of the system:
 - **Teachers:** Free training and feedback on quality interactions can help teachers improve their practice to provide an emotionally supportive, language-rich environment
 - **Site leaders or principals:** Leaders can use the common vocabulary around quality and the information about their site and classrooms to understand what to look for in an early childhood classroom and how they can help their teachers to improve
 - **Local leaders:** As local leaders make plans for their communities, their efforts can be supported through alignment across programs on what early childhood quality is and looks like, where supports are needed, and what resources can be targeted to the classroom, site, and regional level

Logistics

- **What will a CLASS observation look like in classrooms?** Trained observers take detailed notes during observations, using the tool to score the quality of interactions they see. Those scores are then rolled up to provide actionable feedback for teachers and providers on where quality can be improved. The tool offers consistent language and behaviors that can be observed and improved upon to increase the quality of the child experience. [Observable interactions](#) are organized into specific domains for scoring and feedback.
- **What training will observers receive to ensure consistency in scoring?** To become a certified CLASS observer, participants must take an official CLASS observation training specific to age (infant, toddler, or pre-K–3rd). They must also pass a validity test in which the participant must watch videos and score the classroom interactions accordingly.
- **Will my site's CLASS scores from the pilot year be published?** No. The pilot year of CLASS observations and accompanying scores will not be publicly available.
- **Will this impact my Better Beginnings score?** This pilot does not necessarily imply changes to Better Beginnings, but is a chance for Arkansas to explore a tool that is specifically focused on adult-child interactions. Participants in the CLASS pilot will maintain their most recent Better Beginnings and their current funding levels.
- **If I participate in the CLASS pilot, will I still get an ECERS rating?** No. ECERS scoring will freeze during the CLASS pilot. Providers will maintain their most recent ECERS score as during participation in the pilot.

Help and Other Questions

- **What can I do to prepare?** Explore the [Teachstone](#) website to learn more about the tool and how it has impacted learning across the country. If you have one, speak to your [local lead](#) about CLASS in your county. If your county is not yet covered by a local lead, reach out to ADE with any further questions!
- **Who do we contact for help?** Please contact your [local lead](#) with any questions regarding the CLASS pilot. If your county is not yet covered by a local lead, feel free to reach out to Lori Bridges at Lori.Bridges@ade.arkansas.gov or 501-682-5557 with any questions.