

Texas Rising Star
Optional Use of the CLASS Assessment Tool to Measure Teacher-Child Interactions
Discussion Paper

1 Background

2 The Texas Rising Star standards include a category for teacher-child interactions. During the last
3 revision of the standards, the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) modified the weight for this
4 category, increasing its overall weight in the program’s overall score from 20 percent to 40
5 percent. This was done in recognition of the evidence that high-quality teacher-child interactions
6 are associated with measurable positive impacts on child development.

7 The Texas Rising Star standards contain a set of measures associated with the teacher-child
8 interactions. These dimensions of caregiving reflect processes that occur between adults and
9 children on a moment-by-moment basis. The extent to which these aspects of high-quality
10 behaviors are evident and consistent—across activities, times of the day, and children—define a
11 high quality environment. The TWC-funded [“Strengthening Texas Rising Star Implementation
12 Study”](#) established validity and reliability for the Texas Rising Star measures within this
13 category.

14 Issue

15 In addition to Texas Rising Star, there are other nationally available tools which also measure
16 teacher-child interactions. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services uses the
17 [Classroom Assessment Scoring System \(CLASS\)](#) observational tool within their Head Start
18 programs. CLASS includes three domains or categories of teacher-child interactions that support
19 children's learning and development: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and
20 Instructional Support.

21 CLASS is an evidence-based assessment tool. Information on research studies of the CLASS
22 tool are available on their [website](#). And in the [CLASS Implementation Guide](#), which was
23 prepared in collaboration with the University of Virginia and several other entities, they
24 summarize CLASS research findings (page 16 of 69), noting that “Research using the CLASS
25 provides compelling evidence about the nature of teacher-child interactions in ECE settings and
26 the ways in which these interactions promote children’s social and academic development.” The
27 University of Virginia also published a [research brief](#), “Measuring and Improving Teacher-
28 Student Interactions in PK-12 Settings to Enhance Students’ Learning,” which notes that
29 “Consistent evidence suggests that to improve students’ academic achievement and social skill
30 development, we need to focus on the nature and quality of teacher-student interactions” and that
31 “The Classroom Assessment Scoring System™ (CLASS) provides a reliable, valid assessment of
32 these interactions.”

33 Other state’s Quality Rating Improvement Systems also measure teacher-child interactions.
34 While TWC has developed our own measures to evaluate this category, several other states use
35 the CLASS tool, including Louisiana, Florida, Oregon, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Virginia,
36 Illinois, Nevada, Arizona, and Minnesota.

37 In addition, several Texas Independent School Districts also use CLASS to measure teacher-
38 child interactions, including some that participate in prekindergarten partnerships with Texas
39 Rising Star child care programs. Through the RECESS initiative, TWC has provided funding to
40 the Texas Education Agency (TEA), and TEA awarded grants to several local entities which are

1 using the CLASS tool in prekindergarten programs, including child care pre-kindergarten
2 partnerships.

3 In Board Contract Year (BCY) 2019, four Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards)
4 reported using CLASS. And in BCY 2020, this expanded to eight Boards who reported using
5 CLASS or plans to begin CLASS. Below are some examples of Boards use of CLASS:

- 6 • One Board reported success with CLASS with both Texas Rising Star certified providers
7 and non-certified providers to provide actionable feedback and professional development
8 to programs. The CLASS observers also conducted pre- and post-Texas Rising Star
9 certification observations to compare how scores might change after a program was
10 mentored. In both situations, they saw a significant rise in Category 2 measure scores.
11 The Board also used CLASS with the TRS-certified providers for visits 6 months prior to
12 the site's TRS visit, to prepare them and offer mentoring prior to the visit.
- 13 • A second Board reported implementing CLASS in partnerships with other entities.
14 CLASS observations were offered to all programs, both Texas Rising Star and non-Texas
15 Rising Star. The mentors were all trained and certified in CLASS and trained how to
16 coach CLASS participants. The Board also saw success in the participating programs,
17 with many programs' scores for measure in Category 2 improving.
- 18 • A third Board recognized that the largest area of weakness for their programs is teacher-
19 child interactions. The Board has one mentor and one assessor who are certified in
20 CLASS. This Board uses it as a training tool and technical assistance aid to Texas Rising
21 Star certified programs. After reviewing Category two scores, they create trainings based
22 on the CLASS dimensions.

23 The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Head Start has posted [FAQs](#) ,
24 including information on how they score CLASS and what those scores mean:

- 25 • Scores of 1-2 mean the quality of teacher-child interactions is low. Classrooms in which
26 there is poor management of behavior, teaching that is purely rote, or that lack interaction
27 between teachers and children would receive low scores.
- 28 • Scores of 3-5, the mid-range, are given when classrooms show a mix of effective
29 interactions with periods when interactions are not effective or are absent.
- 30 • Scores of 6-7 mean that effective teacher-child interactions are consistently observed
31 throughout the observation period.

32 While the CLASS Assessment tool does not measure the identical teacher-child interactions that
33 Texas Rising Star measures, it is an evidence-based tool that examines substantially similar
34 items. Because CLASS is already in use in several local communities throughout Texas, TWC
35 may wish to consider allowing the CLASS Assessment to stand-in and demonstrate a provider's
36 competency in meeting the Texas Rising Star teacher-child interactions requirements. If
37 approved, Boards should note that the 87th Texas Legislature is considering legislation which
38 would centralize all Texas Rising Star Assessors under a TWC-procured entity. This entity will
39 not administer the CLASS assessment instrument. However, if a provider has received a CLASS
40 assessment, the results of that assessment may be considered in the rating the provider receives
41 for Teacher-Child Interactions.

1 **Decision Point**

2 Staff seeks direction from the TWC’s three-member Commission (Commission) on recognizing

3 CLASS-scored teacher child interactions towards Texas Rising Star as follows:

CLASS Scoring	Texas Rising Star Score for Category 2
LOW – score of 1-2	LOW – score of 0-1
MID – score of 3-5	MID – score of 2
HIGH – score of 6-7	HIGH – score of 3