

- CLASS DOMAINS

The following discussion elaborates on the major domains of classroom experience assessed by the CLASS. A more complete discussion of the theoretical and empirical basis for the CLASS is available elsewhere (Hamre & Pianta, 2007, La Paro, Pianta, & Stuhlman, 2004).

Emotional Support

Children's social and emotional functioning in the classroom is increasingly recognized as an indicator of school readiness (Blair, 2002; Denham & Weissberg, 2004; Raver, 2004), a potential target for intervention (Greenberg, Weissberg, & O'Brien, 2003; Zins, Bloodworth,

Weissberg, & Walberg, 2004), and even a student outcome that might be governed by a set of standards similar to those for academic achievement (Illinois State Board of Education, 2004). Children who are motivated and connected to others in the early years of schooling are much more likely to establish positive trajectories of development in both social and academic domains (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Ladd, Birch, & Buhs, 1999; Pianta, Steinberg, & Rollins, 1995; Silver, Measelle, Essex, & Armstrong, 2005). Teachers' abilities to support social and emotional functioning in the classroom are therefore central to any conceptualization of effective classroom practice. The dimensions included in the Emotional Support domain on the CLASS include the following:

- Positive Climate: The emotional connection, respect, and enjoyment demonstrated between teachers and students and among students
- Negative Climate: The level of expressed negativity such as anger, hostility, or aggression exhibited by teachers and/or students in the classroom
- Teacher Sensitivity: Teachers' awareness of and responsivity to students' academic and emotional concerns
- Regard for Student Perspectives: The degree to which teachers' interactions with students and classroom activities place an emphasis on students' interests, motivations, and points of view

These dimensions collectively and separately predict to students' performance on standardized tests of literacy skills in preschool and first grade (NICHD ECCRN, 2003; Pianta, 2003), levels of mother-reported internalizing behaviors in kindergarten and first grade (NICHD ECCRN, 2003), and students' engagement in the classroom across all grade levels (Bryant et al., 2002; NICHD ECCRN 2002, 2005).

Although these processes are important for all students, they may be particularly important for students at risk for school failure. For example, among a group of students who displayed significant behavior and emotional problems in kindergarten, those who were placed in first-grade classrooms offering high levels of emotional support made academic progress at levels similar to their low-risk peers, whereas high-risk students placed in classrooms offering lower levels of emotional support fell further behind their low-risk peers (Hamre & Pianta, 2005). These studies demonstrate that emotional support in the classroom uniquely predicts student outcomes, after adjusting for selection effects and prior student functioning.