

## **PARENTAL RIGHT TO OBSERVE A CLASSROOM**

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 [As Amended Through P.L. 114-95, Enacted December 10, 2015] provides that a school shall reasonably accommodate a request by a parent/guardian to visit and observe any class their child attends. In addition, ESSA Sec. 1116(d) states that schools are required to provide parents/guardians with reasonable access to staff, opportunities to volunteer and participate in their child's class, and observation of classroom activities. Accordingly, schools shall make a good faith effort to reasonably accommodate such a request after taking into consideration the impact it has on the following:

- School staff and resources.
- Employee working conditions.
- Safety and supervision on school premises and for school activities.
- Efficient allocation of expenditures.
- Educational needs of students.
- Academic and behavioral impacts to the classroom.
- Teacher's workload.
- Assurance of the safe and efficient operation of the school.

## **2. WHO MAY OBSERVE A CLASSROOM**

The right to observe a student's instructional program during class time resides solely with a student's parent, legal guardian, or foster parent. For purposes of this Directive, the term "parent" includes legal guardians and foster parents, and the term "observe" means to visit and observe. The right to observe a student's classroom does not extend to grandparents, relatives, caregivers, or others.

## **3. APPROVAL AND SCHEDULING OF CLASSROOM OBSERVATION**

Requests to observe a classroom should be forwarded to the school principal for approval consistent with the guidelines in this Directive. Together the school principal and classroom teacher shall schedule observations for a time and date convenient to both the parent and the teacher. The observation shall take place within a reasonable time following the initial request. The observation should not take place less than forty-eight (48) hours from the date of the request. Observations may not take place while students are taking a quiz or test. Only one parent may observe a class at a time.

#### **4. FREQUENCY AND DURATION**

To minimize interruptions and distractions during valuable class time, observations must be limited. Because a school's obligation to reasonably accommodate a parent's request may not substantially impact staff and resources, and because it requires the school to balance parental rights against the educational needs of students, the impact on a classroom, and the teacher's workload, it is deemed reasonable to allow one observation per student per grading period. Each observation should last no more than 25 minutes. Under exceptional circumstances, the school principal, in consultation with the teacher, may determine that more frequent or lengthy observations for a particular student are reasonable.

#### **5. PARENTAL CONDUCT DURING CLASSROOM OBSERVATION**

5.1. Parents may enter and exit the classroom only once during each observation. Parents shall remain in the back of the classroom or otherwise out of the way and may not interact with students or the teacher unless the teacher initiates the interaction. Parents must refrain from making unnecessary noise or movement.

5.2. Parents may not bring other adults or children, including siblings of the student, to the school when coming for a classroom observation. If a parent arrives for an observation with other children or adults, the observation will be rescheduled. If a parent requests an observation by a professional such as a psychologist or therapist who is not employed by the District, the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team or 504 team must determine whether the observation is required under the applicable law and should address the request through the applicable IEP or 504 procedures.

5.3. Concerns or complaints by the parent may not be addressed during class time, even following the observation. Such matters may be addressed separately with the school principal or after regular school hours with the classroom teacher.

5.4. In order to protect the privacy of all students in attendance, parents shall not be permitted to take any photographs or make any audio or video recordings during class time. Electronic devices should not be visible during the observation.

S.S. In certain situations, the school principal or his/her designee may also be in the classroom during the observation in order to protect the learning environment for all students.

5.6. All parents should be presented with and sign the Classroom Observation Agreement. The original signed Agreement should be kept with the applicable student's education records, and a copy of the Agreement may be provided to the parent. Parents must comply with the rules and procedures set forth in the Agreement. The Agreement form is attached to this Directive.

## **6. VIOLATION OF CLASSROOM OBSERVATION RULES**

6.1. A parent's right to observe their child's instructional program during class time can only be achieved through adherence to and respect for the classroom observation rules. If a parent's presence or conduct causes a disruption or interferes with the instructional program, the teacher should privately remind the parent of the observation rules. If the disruption persists, the teacher may ask the parent to leave the classroom. However, the teacher's interaction with the parent must not in turn cause a greater disruption, and it may be less disruptive for the teacher to simply wait until the observation ends and then report the parent's behavior to the principal.

6.2. Violation of the rules contained in this Directive or any other site-specific classroom observation rules should be resolved by private counseling between the parent and the principal and/or teacher. If violations persist, the principal may temporarily prohibit a parent from observing their child's classroom during regular school hours. Serious or persistent violations of classroom observation rules may require a communication protocol or trespass notice and should be referred to the Legal Department.

## **7. CONFIDENTIALITY**

District employees may not discuss confidential information of other children, families, personnel, or volunteers in the presence of parents or students. Because parents who observe a classroom may inadvertently be exposed to confidential information, principals and teachers should instruct parents to respect the privacy and confidentiality rights of every student and employee. Parents must be especially careful to respect the privacy rights of special education students as even the classification of a student as a special education student or the presence of a student in a special education class is confidential. Student education records and other sensitive or confidential documentation, including a student's grades, attendance, behavior, IEP, Section 504 plan, etc. should be kept off computer screens or in a locked drawer or file cabinet and not be visible during parent observations. Parents who violate the privacy rights of students or employees may be prohibited from observing classes.

## **CLASSROOM VISITATION/OBSERVATION AGREEMENT**

The administration and faculty of the Wakulla School District welcome you to our schools and we thank you for your interest in the instructional programs that we offer for our students. We hope that your visit is a rewarding experience, one that provides you with a greater insight into the skill, professionalism, and dedication of our school staff. Our desire is to ensure that the instructional process is not disturbed for either the teacher or the students. Accordingly, we request that all visitors agree to and comply with the following terms during their time in the classroom:

- Parent observations are by appointment only. Please contact the school principal or classroom teacher to schedule an observation. Observations will not be scheduled less than forty-eight (48) hours in advance. This advanced notice will allow the teacher to prepare a seating arrangement and additional copies of any instructional materials if needed.
- Observations may not take place during tests or quizzes.
- Guests and other children, including siblings of the student you are observing, may not accompany you to an observation. If you arrive with other people, you will be asked to reschedule.
- Parent observations are generally limited to one observation per student per grading period. If exceptional circumstances exist, you may request more frequent observations from the school principal.
- Upon arrival at school, you must check in at the main office and obtain a visitor pass. You will be asked to show identification, and the office staff will verify your appointment with your child's teacher.
- If possible, please arrive and leave between learning activities to minimize the disruption. Observations should not last longer than 25 minutes, and we ask that you not leave and re-enter the classroom during your observation.
- Upon arrival, please sit where the teacher directs. You will likely be in the back of the room or otherwise out of the way rather than next to or among the students.
- If you bring a mobile phones or other electronic device, it must be turned off and kept out of sight. Audio or video recording of the teacher or students once you are inside the school is strictly prohibited.
- We ask that you be a silent observer while in the classroom. The teacher has the responsibility for all students, so you will not be able to discuss matters concerning your child or the classroom observation immediately before, during, or after the visit. A future phone call or in-person conference date and time can be scheduled with the teacher or through the school office staff. You may not talk to or interact with any student nor make comments during the observation.
- If you become aware of any confidential information regarding students, including a student's presence in a special education classroom, you must keep the information confidential. Parents who disclose confidential information obtained during an observation may be prohibited from future observations.
- You may be asked to leave if your presence in the classroom is disruptive or if you fail to abide by any of the terms of this agreement.
- After the completion of your classroom observation, you are asked to return to the school's office to sign out.

