



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
 OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF  
**EDUCATION**

**District of Columbia 2018-2019 Pre-K Quality Observation  
 Frequently Asked Questions**

**OVERVIEW OF THE OBSERVATION METRIC**

**Q: What observation metric is being used for these observations?** The observations will use the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) Pre-K. CLASS® is a research-based observational measure that provides a common lens, metric and language to identify and describe the classroom interactions that promote children’s development and learning. CLASS® is an observation measure that provides a common framework applicable in diverse learning environments.

**Q: What does the metric capture?**

The CLASS® Pre-K measures three domains, or categories, of teacher-child interactions that support children’s learning and development: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization and Instructional Support. Within each domain are dimensions that capture more specific aspects of teachers’ interactions with children.

CLASS® Domain	CLASS® Dimensions	Description
<b>Emotional Support</b>	Positive Climate	Relationships, respect and positive affect
	Negative Climate	Irritability, anger and disrespect
	Teacher Sensitivity	Awareness of and responsiveness to students’ needs
	Regard for Student Perspectives	Going along with students’ ideas and encouraging student expression
<b>Classroom Organization</b>	Behavior Management	Effectively monitoring, preventing and redirecting behavior
	Productivity	Maximizing time spent in learning activities
	Instructional Learning Formats	Facilitating activities and providing interesting materials
<b>Instructional Support</b>	Concept Development	Promoting students’ higher-order thinking skills
	Quality of Feedback	Extending students’ learning through teacher responses
	Language Modeling	Facilitating and encouraging growth of students’ language



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF  
**EDUCATION**

**Q: Where can I learn more about it?**

For more information about CLASS<sup>®</sup>, visit [www.teachstone.com](http://www.teachstone.com).

**THE OBSERVATION**

**Q: Why are my classrooms being observed?**

The District of Columbia’s Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) conducts annual observations in all DC’s pre-K classrooms in public schools, public charter schools and center-based child development centers to comply with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (20 USC § 6301 et. seq.) and the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant Reauthorization Act of 2014 (CCDBG Act) (42 USC § 601 et seq.). The annual observations allow OSSE to collect indicators of program quality, as required by the ESSA and CCDBG Act. As such, the annual evaluations are required for all publicly funded pre-K programs as well as child development centers that have entered into and maintained the Provider Agreement for Subsidized Child Care Services with OSSE.

**Q: We have been observed already. Why are we being observed again?**

The CLASS<sup>®</sup> observation is an annual initiative by OSSE. Each school/program serving pre-K age children will be observed each year. In some instances, external evaluators from other organizations may be conducting formal observations for different purposes/evaluations. OSSE attempts to avoid scheduling conflicts by ensuring that the vendor contracted by OSSE contact schools/programs to confirm the observation visit the day before the observers arrive onsite. If the vendor is made aware of a conflict with another scheduled formal evaluation, the vendor will work to reschedule the CLASS<sup>®</sup> observation.

**Q: I am a subsidized Child Development Center but do not have any children eligible to receive subsidy enrolled in my program. Do I still have to participate in the CLASS<sup>®</sup> observation?**

Yes. The annual evaluations are required for all programs that have entered into and maintained the Provider Agreement for Subsidized Child Care Services with OSSE, regardless of whether or not the center has an eligible child enrolled during the time of the observation.

**Q: What aspects of the program/classrooms are observed?**

The CLASS<sup>®</sup> captures activities and interactions that occur during a “typical” day. Nearly all of the activities that take place during a typical day will be observed for coding. This could include specials, such as music and art, meals and snacks, language arts and/or academics, free choice, centers and transition times. Coding during specials is appropriate for the purpose of this evaluation, especially when specials are held regularly and specials teachers are a significant part of the children’s daily experience. When necessary, observers may follow the students and teacher outside to code an activity (e.g., for a walk or science discovery lesson).

Observations will not be conducted during times where the students are free to play and the teachers primarily supervise students, including indoor and outdoor recess. However, organized activities in which the teachers are engaging with the students will be observed (e.g., nature walks or organized playground games).



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

**EDUCATION**

Data collectors will not observe during meals in a cafeteria when students are allowed to sit with peers from different classrooms and therefore may not be supervised by one of their lead teachers. Data collectors will not observe during foreign language instruction unless the observer has been deemed proficient in that language.

**Q: What is considered a “typical” day?**

All observations should take place on a day that is considered “regular” for the children. This means that any activities, events, guests or specials that are planned for the day of the observation are familiar to the children.

**Q: The lead teacher in one of my classroom is on extended medical leave, will you still observe this classroom?**

In all cases, attempts will be made to observe the lead teacher. If the lead teacher is on extended medical leave during the first scheduled observation, and:

- The teacher has plans to return to the classroom three weeks before the observation window closes for each sector (DCPS, public charter schools and child development centers):** Observations will be rescheduled and the lead teacher will be observed. Attempts will be made to observe the lead teacher after he/she has settled back into the classroom for at least two weeks.
- The teacher will not return three weeks before the observation window closes for each sector and has a long-term substitute:** Long-term substitutes who have been providing instruction in the classroom for at least two weeks will be observed. The school administrator should share the context for the observation during the long-term substitute’s orientation to the classroom assignment so he/she is aware and is part of the process.
- The teacher will not return three weeks before the observation window closes for each sector and a long-term substitute has not been identified or has not been in the classroom for at least two weeks:** Observations will not take place.

**Q: Can program leaders or administrators be present in the classroom during the observation?**

Observations are expected to capture the activities and interactions that occur during a “typical” day. If your school’s/program’s typical day does not include having an administrator/program leader present in the classroom, then they should refrain from being present on the day of the observation.

**Q: When will I be notified of my observation date?**

Programs/schools are notified by email of their observation window (i.e., the two-week period randomly scheduled using an automated generator) at least two weeks before the first business day of the observation window. The exact date of the observation is sent to the schools/ programs via email at least one week before the scheduled observation.



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

**EDUCATION**

**What should I expect on the day of the observation?**

- A. The observer will arrive in the morning for the scheduled observation, by approximately 8:30 a.m.
- B. The observer will check-in at the office and ask to be directed to the classroom where he/she is scheduled to observe.
  - For child development centers, the observer will ask for the dates of birth for all the children enrolled in the classroom that is scheduled to be observed to ensure the classroom is eligible for the CLASS® observation
- C. The CLASS® observation usually takes between three and four hours. The observation includes several coding cycles. Once the observation is complete, the observer will check-out at the office and leave the building.

**Q: What can I do to prepare for my visit?**

No preparation is needed for the CLASS® observation. All activities and interactions that happen on a “typical” day should proceed as normal.

For child development centers, observers will need to gather information from the classroom lead teacher on the day of the observation, including the date of birth of the children currently enrolled in the classroom. Having this information prepared ahead of time will help ensure the observation begins on time.

**TRAINING, CERTIFICATION AND RELIABILITY OF OBSERVERS**

**Q: What are the prerequisites to be an observer?**

Observers are required to have a bachelor’s degree and priority of hiring will be given to candidates who have experience in early childhood education. In addition, all observers have passed a background check, have a current negative tuberculosis screening and receive training on their role as mandated reporters for child abuse and neglect.

**Q: What are observers’ training requirements regarding CLASS®?**

Each observer holds a current certificate with Teachstone, which serves as evidence of his or her CLASS® Pre-K certification. In addition to certification, observers are trained on the protocols and professionalism with regard to conducting classroom observations, and in reporting instances of potential child abuse and neglect.

**Q: How do you ensure that observers are reliable?**

Each observer participates in monthly calibration activities to ensure that they demonstrate on-going reliability with the CLASS® measure. To complete calibration exercises, observers code Teachstone calibration videos to demonstrate ongoing reliability (see District of Columbia 2018-2019 Pre-K Quality Observation Data Collection and Quality Assurance Protocols for more details). Observers who fail to demonstrate on-going reliability will be required to participate in ongoing training and coaching before resuming data collection.



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

**EDUCATION**

Additionally, each observer is screened for fidelity to the data collection protocol during an actual observation visit. Observers must pass the fidelity check in order to continue collecting data. Those who do not pass their fidelity check participate in ongoing training and coaching before resuming data collection.

**Q: Why might there be more than one observer during the observation?**

The classroom observation may sometimes be conducted by more than one observer. In some instances, two observers are observing the same activities to document how similarly they are scoring the CLASS®. These visits are randomly selected and are scheduled throughout the observation window. In other instances, the second individual is monitoring the observer to ensure they are following the protocols correctly.

**AFTER THE OBSERVATION**

**Q: How will the scores be used?**

For Pre-k programs in DC Public Schools or public charter schools:

The CLASS® data will be used by OSSE, in partnership with DC Public Schools and the Public Charter School Board, as part of the School Transparency and Reporting (STAR) Framework, which results in a school rating and is included on each school's DC School Report Card. You can visit the DC School Report Card at [DCSchoolReportCard.org](http://DCSchoolReportCard.org).

For Pre-k programs in Child Development Centers

The CLASS® data will be used to 1) calculate a programs' rating for Capital Quality, the District of Columbia's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), 2) identify areas of strength and places for improvement in centers; and 3) inform OSSE's professional development offerings and technical assistance strategies.

**Q: When will I receive my scores?**

Scores will be sent out in three rounds based on the observation window for DCPS, public charter schools and child development centers. All schools/programs will receive a program-level report, to identify areas of strength and places for improvement that can inform professional development opportunities.

**Q: Is there a process to appeal scores?**

Schools/programs have the right to appeal their scores if they believe that the stated process for observations detailed in the District of Columbia Pre-K Quality Observation Data Collection and Quality Assurance Protocols was not followed. Please refer to the [District of Columbia 2018-2019 Pre-K Quality Observation Data Collection and Quality Assurance Protocols](#) for more information.