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**District of Columbia 2020-2021 Pre-K Quality Observation  
Data Collection and Quality Assurance Protocols: Community-Based Organizations – Remote  
Observation**

The District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) has contracted with an external vendor, Teachstone, to conduct a series of voluntary observations in District of Columbia’s pre-K classrooms using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System® (CLASS®) Pre-K measure for the 2020-2021 program year. Facilities will have the opportunity to opt-in to CLASS observations if they have classrooms that serve a majority—51% or more—of children ages 36 months up to 5 years of age as of Sept 30. In facilities that opt-in to receive CLASS observations and who are serving students in-person, Teachstone will observe every eligible pre-K classroom. It is OSSE’s expectation that Teachstone will complete CLASS observations by July 31, 2021.

OSSE has developed the following protocols to ensure that Teachstone uses comprehensive systems and procedures to implement a valid, reliable and high-quality observation process. The observation process involves:

- (I) An opt-in and scheduling system;
- (II) Observations conducted in facilities;
- (III) Training, certification and ensured reliability of observers (also known as data collectors);
- (IV) Data confidentiality and integrity;
- (V) Established guidelines for mandated reporting; and
- (VI) An appeals process as necessary.

These procedures ensure that the observations are carried out with the highest level of data integrity and the process is open and transparent for all involved. The District of Columbia Pre-K Quality Observation Data Collection and Quality Assurance Protocols are described in more detail below:

**(I) Opt-In Process and Scheduling Observations**

Facilities opt-in and observations are scheduled in accordance with the following:

- (A) OSSE supplies the vendor a list of facilities that are eligible for participation. This list will identify an administrator who will serve as the primary contact person for the observation.
- (B) Facilities are sent a survey in which they can choose to opt-in to these observations and indicate all pre-K teachers who are to be observed. In addition, the facilities have the opportunity to indicate ‘do not observe’ dates, if they want these to be taken into account during the scheduling process.
  - a. ‘Do not observe’ dates are days on which the site does not want observations to occur for reasons including, but not limited to, virtual school days, field trips, professional development days and days on which other observations or testing dates are scheduled.



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- (C) CLASS observations are scheduled randomly, with an automated random number generator. Each facility will initially receive a two-week “observation window” during which all observations at the facility will occur. Facilities will receive email notification of their observation window at least two weeks before the first business day of the observation window. Two-week observation windows may include ‘do not observe’ dates, though actual observations will not be scheduled on ‘do not observe’ dates.
- (D) The exact date of the observation is sent to facilities via email at least one week before the scheduled observation. It is the responsibility of the administrator to make other staff members aware of the observation.
- (E) When observations are cancelled on days with weather-related delays or other unplanned emergencies that impact the typical day experienced by the observed students (e.g., teacher illness), OSSE may authorize a re-scheduled observation. If a re-scheduled observation is authorized, the observation will be scheduled as close to the original date as possible.

## **(II) Conducting Observations**

Once the observation is scheduled, the observation is conducted in accordance with the following:

- (A) Observations will be conducted through remote observation with the use of a video equipment solution. Technicians will deliver a technology kit including video equipment, operating instructions and cleaning protocols. Technicians will make every effort to arrive prior to the arrival of children and will return to collect the technology kit after all children have left for the day. Technicians may enter classrooms as long as they do not exceed the limits of current health and safety guidance. Technicians will follow all current health and safety guidance with regard to the cleaning and sanitization of provided equipment.
  - a. Observers will join the classroom remotely through Zoom at the start of the program day, but will begin the observation when a majority of the children who are expected for the day arrive in the classroom.
- (B) Each cycle consists of a 20-minute classroom observation followed by a 10-minute time period during which the observers complete a score sheet for that cycle’s observation period.
- (C) The CLASS observation usually takes between one and a half and two hours to complete.
- (D) Classrooms will be observed for two to three cycles during each observation. Observations are cancelled and rescheduled if an unexpected circumstance prevents the observer from completing at least two observation cycles.
- (E) Nearly all of the activities led by a lead teacher that take place during a typical day are observed for coding. This includes specials, such as music and art, meals (including breakfast and lunch, see exception below) and snacks, language arts and/or academics, free choice, centers and transition times. Due to use of video equipment, activities outside of the primary classroom or not led by the lead teacher will be unobservable.
  - a. A staff member not engaged in instruction may be required to operate the video equipment in order to capture sufficient activities for coding.



- b. In the event that sufficient activities for coding cannot be captured, OSSE may authorize a maximum of one re-observation.
- (F) Observations will not be conducted during times where the students are free to play and the teachers primarily supervise students, including indoor recess.
- (G) Observers will not formally observe and/or code CLASS cycles during foreign language instruction unless the observer has been deemed proficient in that language.
- (H) For dual language immersion programs, observations will be conducted in the language of instruction by observers who are fluent in both English and the language of instruction, as available.
- (I) Observations focus primarily on the lead teacher identified by the program and aim to capture the experiences of the typical or average child in the classroom during a given observation cycle.
- (J) In all cases, attempts will be made to observe the lead teacher. If the lead teacher is on extended leave during or resigns immediately prior to the scheduled observation, and:
  - a. **The teacher has plans to return to the classroom three weeks before the CLASS observation window closes:** 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.
  - b. **The teacher will not return three weeks before the CLASS observation window closes or 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 program 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.
  - c. **The teacher will not return three weeks before the CLASS observation window closes 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.

### (III) Training and Reliability of Observers

- (A) Observers must have a bachelor's degree, and priority of hiring will be given to candidates who have experience in early childhood education.
- (B) All observers must have passed a background check and receive training on their role as mandated reporters for child abuse and neglect (see additional information about mandated reporting below).
- (C) Each observer must hold a current certificate with Teachstone, which serves as evidence of his or her CLASS Pre-K certification.
- (D) Each observer must participate in monthly calibration activities to ensure that they demonstrate ongoing reliability with the CLASS measure. To complete calibration activities, observers code Teachstone videos used to check for calibration to the CLASS measure. Observers watch videos of classroom interactions and score across all three CLASS Domains (i.e., Emotional Support, Classroom Organization and Instructional Support). Within each



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CLASS Domain, there are several dimensions (10 total). Each observer must demonstrate ongoing reliability by meeting the 80 percent threshold. This requires that observers score within one point of the master codes for the calibration video on at least eight of the 10 dimensions. Observers who do not pass their calibration assessment (as described above) will be removed from the observation team until the observer demonstrates—via a subsequent calibration assessment (as described above)—that they have met the requirements for demonstrating ongoing reliability to the CLASS measure (i.e., by scoring at 80 percent or higher on the calibration assessment). Observers who fail to demonstrate ongoing reliability will be required to participate in training and coaching prior to retaking the calibration assessment to be eligible to rejoin the observation team.

- (E) Each observer receives instruction on operating the video streaming technology and will receive a fidelity check to ensure all protocols are being followed during an actual observation visit. Observers must pass these fidelity checks in order to continue collecting data. Those who do not pass their fidelity check participate in ongoing training and coaching before resuming observations. Fidelity checks are unannounced.

#### **(IV) Data Confidentiality and Integrity**

- (A) Children’s names, if collected in the process of collecting birthdates used for identifying age of children, are separated from the birthdate information and destroyed upon being submitted to the vendor.
- (B) During the data collection window, data collected by observers meeting the 80 percent calibration threshold referenced above will be reviewed by Teachstone in an ongoing manner to monitor for patterns of systematically lower and/or higher scores by the same observers, on average, compared to other observers at the CLASS dimension level. If such patterns are detected, these observers will be identified and provided with additional re-training and coaching to further strengthen the observation process.
- (C) An observation shall not occur where there is a conflict of interest (including, but not limited to previous employment or prior existing relationships) whether known or unknown. Each observer signs a confidentiality agreement and a ‘conflict of interest’ document listing any schools or community-based organizations where they have had a previous relationship, to ensure that they will not be scheduled to observe at any of these locations. In the event that an observation occurred where there was a conflict of interest, the observation will be voided, and a new observation may be scheduled at OSSE’s discretion.
- (D) After each observation, observers enter all scores (and notes) into a secure online database. Observers are required to deliver any hard-copies to the vendor. Observers are prohibited from making any copies.
- (E) The vendor reviews the data weekly to ensure score alignment between CLASS hard-copy score sheets and the database. All errors (if any) are corrected and observers are contacted, if needed. All CLASS score sheets will also be scanned and stored in the database.
- (F) Once the observation window is complete, the CLASS hard-copy score sheets are stored in a secure, locked cabinet and no team member is permitted to remove them from the office. Similarly, all electronic data files (including scanned CLASS score sheets) are stored on a protected computer in a protected space for data analysis.



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- (G) Scores are reviewed by the vendor for a second time during data analysis to ensure the highest level of data accuracy.

#### **(V) Mandated Reporting**

- (A) All observers receive training to identify incidents and signs of child abuse and neglect.
- (B) If an observer witnesses or suspects mistreatment of a child, the observer is required to end the observation cycle and call the vendor's project manager.
- (C) If the child is in imminent danger, the observer will also contact OSSE immediately.
- (D) If the incident meets DC's child abuse and neglect criteria, the observer will also contact the DC Child and Family Services Agency.
- (E) If an incident is reported, the vendor will notify the facility administrator and OSSE within 24 hours of the incident being reported.

#### **(VI) Appeals Process**

Facilities have the right to appeal their scores if they believe that the process for observations detailed above was not followed.

- (A) To request an appeal, facilities must follow the following steps:
  - (1) Submit a detailed written appeal including but not limited to the name of the classroom(s)/teaching team(s) the facility is appealing; the section of the Data Collection and Quality Assurance Protocol the facility believes was not followed; and documentation to support the facility's position. The appeal can be submitted to [Appeals.OSSE@dc.gov](mailto:Appeals.OSSE@dc.gov). Appeals shall be submitted either within 10 business days of the observation or 10 business days after the date the program-level report was sent via a secure link.
  - (2) Appeals should be directly related to a suspected inconsistency in the process. Please note that changes that occurred in the facility after the observation date cannot be considered in the appeals process.
- (B) Upon receiving your appeal, OSSE will review the facility observation documents (e.g., observer notes and report(s) from the day of the visit) and interview the vendor, alongside the CLASS manuals, scoring booklets and observation protocols, to determine if the observation complied with this Protocol.
- (C) If OSSE finds that the initial observation did not comply with this Protocol, OSSE may schedule a second observation.
  - (1) In the case of a second observation, OSSE will require the vendor to send a different observer that has demonstrated reliability within the past 30 days (by the above criteria, as outlined in Part III D) to conduct the second observation and, upon the completion of the second observation, the vendor will issue an updated program-level report with the new scores.
  - (2) If a report is generated prior to a final validation of the data, then the vendor will issue a revised program-level and classroom-level report using only official, valid data.



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