



OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

**District of Columbia 2025-26 Pre-K Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Observation
Data Collection and Quality Assurance Protocols: Community-Based Organizations
Frequently Asked Questions**

Questions About Qualifying for CLASS Observations

Which child care facilities are required to be included in CLASS observations?

Answer: Child care facilities with pre-K classrooms (defined as classrooms with a majority of students age 36 months and older as of Jan. 1, 2026) that participate in one or more of the following programs are required to receive CLASS observations:

- a) DC Child Care Subsidy Program (meaning that the facility has entered and maintains the Provider Agreement for Subsidized Child Care Services with OSSE);
- b) Capital Quality, DC's quality rating and improvement system; and/or
- c) The Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund.

Please note that if your facility participates in one of the above programs and has a classroom or classrooms with a majority of students ages 36 months to 5 years, refusing to be observed for CLASS results in a violation of your agreement (i.e., the Provider Agreement for Subsidized Child Care Services and/or the Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund agreement) with OSSE.

Facilities that participate in one of the above programs but do not have classrooms with a majority of students ages 36 months to 5 years are not required to participate in CLASS observations but are required to complete the scheduling survey if licensed for those age groups. (See Section (I) Parts (A) and (B).) Back-up or emergency child care facilities that have fluctuating enrollment on a day-to-day basis are not required to participate in CLASS observations but are required to complete the scheduling survey if licensed for those age groups. (See Section (I) Part (D).)

How many children need to be older than age 36 months for a classroom to qualify for CLASS observations?

Answer: If a classroom includes 51 percent or more of children who are 36 months to 5 years as of Jan. 1, 2026, then the classroom is eligible for CLASS observations. For example, if there are four children who are 36 months to 5 years in a classroom with seven total children, a CLASS observation is required. If there are no children or only one to three children who are 36 months to 5 years in a classroom with seven total children, no CLASS observation is required. If there are four children who are 36 months to 5 years in a classroom with eight total children, then no CLASS observation is required. (See Section (I) Parts (A) and (B).)

What is the cut-off date by which children need to turn 36 months in order to qualify for a CLASS observation?

Answer: Jan. 1, 2026 (See Section (I) Parts (A) and (B).)

Questions About Preparing for CLASS Observations

What do I do when I receive my two-week notification for the CLASS observation?

Answer: Confirm receipt of the two-week notification with the vendor. Let the vendor know about any planned changes in availability for observation during the two-week window provided, due to either site-wide reasons (e.g., field trips, professional learning days, etc.) or teacher-specific reasons (e.g., planned teacher absences). (See Section (I) Part (G).)

What do I do when I receive my one-week notification for the CLASS observation?

Answer: Confirm receipt of the one-week notification with the vendor. Let the vendor know about any unplanned changes in availability as soon as possible, due to either site-wide reasons (e.g., weather delays, power outages, etc.) or teacher-specific reasons (e.g., teacher illness). Inform teachers and staff members about the upcoming observation, as appropriate. (See Section (1) Part (H).)

Questions About Conducting CLASS Observations

How many observation cycles are needed for the CLASS observation to count?

Answer: Six observation cycles are needed for a CLASS observation to be counted. If fewer than six observation cycles are obtained, the CLASS observation will be rescheduled. (See Section (II) Part (D).)

What happens if a lead teacher or an assistant teacher is not there on the day of observation?

Answer: The classroom's normal lead teacher or assistant teacher does not need to be present on the day of observation, as long as there is a long-term substitute teacher who has been in place for at least two consecutive weeks prior to the observation. If the classroom's lead teacher plans to return at least three weeks before the CLASS observation window closes on May 31, 2026, the observation can be rescheduled so that the lead teacher is observed. (See Section (II) Part (K).)

If the lead teacher is sick or has an otherwise unplanned absence on the day of the observation, the vendor may pivot to observe an alternate classroom provided that the alternate classroom has received its one-week notification of a CLASS observation and the site director provides approval for the switch. (See Section (I) Part (J).)

What happens if the lead teacher has a leave of absence and there is no long-term substitute in place?

Answer: If no long-term substitute is in place at least three weeks before the CLASS observation window closes on May 31, 2026, no CLASS observation will take place. (See Section (II) Part (K).)

What happens if the lead teacher is present, but the assistant teacher has recently changed?

Answer: The CLASS observation will continue as scheduled. Although all teachers are observed, the CLASS observation primarily focuses on the lead teacher’s interactions with children. (See Section (II) Part (J).)

What happens if the lead teacher is present for only part of the CLASS observation?

Answer: The lead teacher is not required to be present for the entire CLASS observation (i.e., all six cycles). The observation will continue as normal and will still be counted. (See Section (II) Part (K).)

What happens if an observer arrives on site and the facility turns them away?

Answer: If an observer arrives on site and the facility is not available to be observed or turns away the observer for any planned reason not previously shared with Teachstone, including a field trip, professional learning day, or planned teacher absence, this is considered a “day-of site refusal.” After two day-of site refusals, the facility will be removed from the observation list for the cycle and will not be observed. **Please notify the vendor of planned changes to availability when the two-week notification is sent**, prior to an observer being sent out to the site. (See Section (I) Part (H).)

Further Questions and Contact Information

Who do I contact if I have questions?

Answer: If you have questions about CLASS observation scheduling, please email Teachstone at OSSE_Scheduling@teachstone.com. If you have any other question about CLASS, please reach out to Charmaine Llagas-Mulhern, education research analyst for the Quality Initiatives unit in the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) Division of Early Learning (DEL), at Charmaine.Llagas-Mulhern@dc.gov.