



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

EDUCATION

**District of Columbia 2018-2019 Pre-K Quality Observation
Data Collection and Quality Assurance Protocols**

The District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) has contracted with an external vendor, Teachstone, to conduct observations in all center-based programs with pre-K classrooms that 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, using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System® (CLASS®) Pre-K measure for the 2018-19 program year. Teachstone will also observe non-subsidized center-based programs with pre-K classrooms that elect to participate in Capital Quality, DC's redesigned Quality Rating and Improvement System.

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) A scheduling system;
- (II) Observations conducted in programs;
- (III) Training, certification and ensured reliability of observers (also known as data collectors);
- (IV) Data confidentiality and integrity; and
- (V) Established guidelines for mandated reporting.

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) Scheduling Observations

Observations are scheduled in accordance with the following:

- (A) Programs are sent a survey requesting they share 'do not visit' dates, along with lists of all pre-K teachers who will be observed as a part of the observation.
- (B) The vendor receives a list of participating programs from OSSE that identifies an administrator who will serve as the primary contact person for the observation.
- (C) CLASS® observations are scheduled randomly using an automated generator and are conducted for each program within a two-week observation window. Programs receive email notification of their observation window at least two weeks before the first business day of the observation window.
- (D) The exact date of the observation is sent to programs via email at least one week before the scheduled observation. It is the responsibility of the program administrator to make other staff members aware of the observation.
- (E) Observations are cancelled on days with weather-related delays and are rescheduled as close to the original date as possible.



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

EDUCATION

(II) Conducting Observations

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

- (A) Only classrooms in which a majority (51 percent or more) of the children are 3 or 4 years old are observed. If the observer arrives in a classroom and it is confirmed that the majority of the children are not in this age range, the observation is cancelled.
- (B) Observers aim to arrive at the start of the program day, but begin the observation when a majority of the children arrive in the classroom. Regardless of start time, the CLASS® has been shown to be stable across times/dates if at least four to six coding cycles are conducted during the observation.
- (C) 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.
- (D) The CLASS® observation usually takes between three and four hours to complete.
- (E) Classrooms will be observed for four to six cycles during each observation. Observations are cancelled and rescheduled if an unexpected circumstances prevent the observer from completing at least four cycles.
- (E) Nearly all of the activities 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. When necessary, data collectors may follow the students and teacher(s) outside to code an activity (e.g., for a walk or science discovery lesson).
- (F) Observers will not conduct observations during meals in a cafeteria when students are allowed to sit with peers from different classrooms and are not supervised by one of their lead teachers.
- (G) 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).
- (H) Observers will not formally observe and/or code CLASS® cycles during foreign language instruction unless the observer has been deemed proficient in that language.
- (I) 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.
- (J) Observations focus primarily on the lead teacher identified by the program. However, CLASS® observations include interactions of all adults in the room as they interact with the children during the day, so the coding/scoring should reflect the experiences of the typical or average child in the classroom during a given observation cycle.
- (K) In all cases, attempts will be made to observe the lead teacher. If the lead teacher is on extended medical leave during the scheduled observation, and:



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

EDUCATION

- **The teacher has plans to return to the classroom three weeks before the observation window closes for child development facilities:** 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 child development facilities 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.
- **The teacher will not return three weeks before the observation window closes for child development facilities 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, have a current negative tuberculosis screening 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 on-going 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 CLASS® domain, there are several dimensions (10 total). Each observer must demonstrate on-going reliability by meeting the 80% threshold. This requires that observers score within one point of the master codes for the calibration video on at least eight of the ten 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 he/she has met the requirements for demonstrating on-going reliability to the CLASS® measure (i.e., by scoring at 80% or higher on the calibration assessment). Observers who fail to demonstrate on-going reliability will be required to participate in training and coaching prior to retaking the calibration assessment to be eligible to rejoin the observation team.



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

EDUCATION

- (E) Each observer is screened for fidelity (by the vendor) to the data collection protocol (e.g., time of arrival, etc.) 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 observations.
- (F) In addition, a random sample of 10% of all pre-K classrooms are double-coded throughout the entire data collection window to ensure ongoing inter-rater reliability between observers for the CLASS® measure. Both classrooms and observers are randomly selected for these observations. Observers must score within 80% of one another across all dimensions (i.e., as described above, in Part D). Observers who fail to meet this threshold will be required to participate in recalibration activities (as described above in Part D) and will be removed from the observation team until the observer demonstrates—via a subsequent calibration assessment (as described above in Part D)—that he/she has met the requirements for demonstrating on-going reliability to the CLASS® measure (i.e., by scoring at 80% or higher on the calibration assessment). CLASS® observations that were obtained during double-coded observations that do not meet the required threshold for inter-rater reliability will be voided and new observations will be scheduled.

(IV) Data Confidentiality and Integrity

- (A) During the data collection window, data collected by observers meeting the 80% calibration threshold referenced above will be reviewed by Teachstone in an on-going 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.
- (B) Each observer signs a confidentiality agreement and a 'conflict of interest' document listing any programs or community-based organizations where they have had a previous relationship (including, but not limited to previous employment), to ensure that they will not be scheduled to observe at any of these locations.
- (C) All CLASS® observation notes are recorded on hard copy score sheets during the observation.
- (D) After each observation, observers enter all scores (and notes) into a secure online database. Observers are required to deliver their hard copies to the vendor. Observers are prohibited from making any copies.
- (E) A data coordinator hired by 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.
- (G) Scores are reviewed by the vendor for a second time during data analysis to ensure the highest level of data accuracy.



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

EDUCATION

(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 the program administrator 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 program administrator and OSSE within 24 hours of the incident being reported.

(VI) Appeals Process

Programs 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, programs 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 program is appealing; the section of the Data Collection and Quality Assurance Protocol of the program believes was not followed; and documentation to support the program's position. The appeal can be submitted to Appeals.OSSE@dc.gov within 10 days of the observation, but no more than 10 days after the date the program level report was sent.
 - (2) Appeals should be directly related to a suspected inconsistency in the process. Please note that changes that occurred in the program after the observation date cannot be considered in the appeals process.
- (B) Upon receiving your appeal, OSSE will review the program's observation documents (e.g., observer notes and report 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 school-level report with the new scores.
 - (2) If a second observation is not scheduled, the observation and subsequent score will be rendered void and removed from the program-level report.