



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

EDUCATION

DC Pre-K Quality Evaluation 2017-18 Observation Process Frequently Asked Questions

Why are my classrooms being observed?

Observations are conducted in all of DC's pre-k classrooms in public schools, public charter schools and center based child development centers as part of the Office of the State Superintendent of Education's (OSSE) evaluation of the quality of publicly funded pre-K programs in the District of Columbia. In August of 2017 the U.S. Department of Education approved DC's State Education Plan under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (20 USC § 6301 et. seq.). For the first time, DC's State Education Plan establishes a common system of school transparency and reporting across all our schools. Families, educators, and the public will be able to view comparable, consistent information about all public schools in DC. The common accountability system for the District of Columbia uses The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS™) Pre-K as one of the measures of quality for programs serving pre-K-age children.

We have been observed already, why are we being observed again?

The CLASS™ observation is an annual initiative by OSSE. Each school serving pre-k age children will be observed each year. In some instances, external evaluators from different organizations may be conducting formal observations for separate purposes/evaluations. We attempt to avoid scheduling conflicts by contacting the schools to confirm the visits the day before. If we are made aware of a conflict with another already scheduled formal evaluation, we will work to reschedule our observation.

What assessment tool is being used for these observations? Where can I learn more about it?

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS™) pre-K will be used. CLASS™ Pre-K is a research-based observational tool that provides a common lens, metric and language to identify and describe the classroom interactions that promote children's development and learning. It is a reliable observation tool that provides a common framework applicable to diverse learning environments. For more information on the CLASS™, visit www.teachstone.com.

In what areas will classrooms be assessed?

CLASS™ pre-K includes 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 details about teachers' interactions with children.

What is the process for the observations?

Observations take an average of three hours and focus primarily on the lead teacher. However, CLASS™ codes are derived based on the behavior of all of the adults in the room and should reflect the experiences of the typical or average student in the classroom during a given observation cycle.

Nearly all of the activities that take place during a typical day will be observed for coding. This includes 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 traditional recess where the students are free to play and the teachers merely supervise. This includes indoor and outdoor recess. However, organized activities in which the teachers are engaging with the students should be observed. This includes activities such as nature walks and organized playground games. Data collectors will also not observe during meals in a cafeteria when students are allowed to sit with students from different classrooms and are not supervised by one of their lead teachers. Data collectors will not observe during foreign language instruction unless they have been deemed proficient in that language.

What can I expect during the observation?

The purpose of the evaluation is to observe a typical day. There will be no interaction between the observer and the classroom teachers and staff during the observation. The data collector may move around the classroom to observe environment and students in the classroom but will not interfere with classroom activities. Staff are expected to continue normal instruction.

Can program leaders or administrators be present in the classroom during the assessment?

While program leaders are welcome to enter the classroom as part of their normal routine, they should not engage with children when the assessor is observing. Extra adults in the classroom can impact CLASS™ scores.

Why is there sometimes more than one observer?

We have drawn a random sample of classrooms to be double-coded. The purpose of double-coding is to ensure scores are assigned reliably according to the CLASS™ tool, and to ensure synchronicity, or similarity of observations within the same time period.

A double-coded CLASS™ observation requires that two CLASS™ certified observers will independently observe a setting at the same time and day. The scores of the "anchor" data collector (someone who has consistently preformed reliability exercises at 90 percent or above and who has experience collecting data using the CLASS™ tool) are used for the final results.

At times, an evaluation director may also be present during an observation for the purpose of conducting a fidelity check, to ensure the data collectors are following protocols and procedures.

The lead teacher is on extended medical leave, will you still observe?

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 by April 1:* 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 by April 1 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 by April 1 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.

What are the qualifications of the individuals conducting the assessments?

Each data collector holds a current certificate with Teachstone, which serves as evidence of their training and reliability to the CLASS™ pre-K tool. Data collectors participate in monthly calibration activities throughout the year to ensure that the data collected is valid and reliable. Through these calibration exercises, data collectors' understanding of CLASS™ principles is checked to ensure that they are appropriately using the CLASS® tool for classroom observations. In addition to certification and reliability, data collectors are trained on the protocols and professionalism with regard to conducting classroom observations, and in reporting instances of potential child abuse and neglect. Data collectors have also cleared federal background checks and produced proof of a negative tuberculosis screening.

How will the scores be used?

The CLASS™ data will be used by OSSE, in partnership with DC Public Schools and the Public Charter School Board, to rate schools and create performance report cards.

When will I receive my scores?

Scores will be sent out in three time frames based on the dates of your observation. All schools/ programs will receive program level report, for the purpose of informing professional development.