



LOCAL CLASS.[®] OBSERVATIONS BEST PRACTICES GUIDEBOOK

For VQB5 Practice
Year 2 (2022-2023)

To ensure more children enter school prepared for success, Virginia is measuring and strengthening teacher-child interactions and instruction across birth-to-five classrooms in family day homes, child care, Head Start and school-based classrooms.

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Purpose:

The purpose of this document is to provide Ready Regions and local CLASS observers with guidance, protocols, answers to FAQs, and links to resources for conducting local CLASS observations and feedback sessions in the Unified Virginia Quality Birth to Five System (VQB5) during the 2022-2023 Practice Year. This information is based on the VQB5 Guidelines for Practice Year 2, which were approved by the Virginia Board of Education on June 15, 2022.

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Questions about Local CLASS Observations in VQB5 should be sent to vqb5@doe.virginia.gov

LOCAL CLASS® OBSERVATIONS

The quality of interactions between teachers and children will be measured in Virginia’s Unified VQB5 System using the nationally recognized CLASS tool. CLASS stands for CLassroom Assessment Scoring System. The CLASS is a tool for observing and assessing the quality of interactions among teachers and children in classrooms.

The CLASS tool was chosen for use in VQB5 because it provides a rigorous and consistent approach to observing and measuring teacher-child interactions during critical developmental periods, while still providing a context-specific and developmentally sensitive metric for each age group. In addition,

- Over 200 studies show that children in classrooms with more effective teacher-child interactions, as measured by CLASS®, have better academic and social outcomes. (For more information see [CLASS research summary](#))
- Improvements in teacher-child interactions are associated with improvements in children’s outcomes.
- All children, including those from diverse settings, dual language learners (DLLs) and children with special needs, benefit socially and academically from classrooms with high quality teacher-child interactions as measured by CLASS.
- Virginia has used CLASS to measure and improve the quality of teacher-child interactions in early care and education settings for 10+ years.

VQB5 will provide multiple CLASS observations to every classroom each year to support continuous quality improvement in all birth to five programs.

Types of CLASS Observations in VQB5

There are two types of CLASS observations conducted in VQB5; local and external observations. These observations have different purposes and frequencies during the annual measurement and improvement cycle as described below.

VQB5	LOCAL OBSERVATIONS	EXTERNAL OBSERVATIONS
Purpose	Primary method for gathering classroom level information through Ready Regions, about the quality of teacher-child interactions and providing feedback in VQB5.	Secondary method to gather information for the State, about the accuracy and consistency of local observations across the Ready Regions and to provide additional feedback in VQB5.
Definition	Coordinated and scheduled at the local level through Ready Regions, with results recorded in LinkB5. Conducted by locally identified reliable observers.	Coordinated, scheduled, and recorded statewide by Teachstone’s external observation team. Conducted by externally identified reliable observers.
Annual Cycle	In VQB5, all birth-to-five classrooms will get two local observations each year through their Ready Region. One in the fall and one in the spring.	In VQB5, only some birth-to-five classrooms across the state will get an external observation. All sites will receive an external observation in at least one of their classrooms.

Benefits of Local Observations through Ready Regions

Teachers benefit from frequent and specific feedback, along with individualized supports provided through CLASS observations conducted at the local level.

- With local observations, teachers are observed more often, and the results are more likely to be used by local and regional instructional leaders to inform ongoing professional development and assess growth in teacher-child interactions over time.
- Since local observers are typically people who work in the community and are familiar with local program norms, structures and values, they are often best suited to provide an individualized and supportive approach to the observation and feedback process.

Statewide External Observations: External CLASS observations are less frequent, provide a statewide quality assurance check and reinforce the information gained through local observations. For VQB5, external observations are provided through the Teachstone External Observation Team, which is supported by a contract with the VDOE. (see Appendix for additional information about statewide external observations in VQB5)

Through both local and external observations, early childhood educators are better prepared to support child learning and development.



[View CLASS Panel Webinar to hear early childhood leaders from childcare centers, family day homes, VPI and Head Start programs in Virginia discuss how they are using CLASS to support their teachers and improve children's early learning experiences.](#)

Local CLASS Observations Timeline & Expectations

The annual observation cycle in VQB5 includes two local CLASS observations for every infant, toddler and preschool classroom, including family day homes, using whichever CLASS tool is age-appropriate based on VDOE guidance. For **Practice Year 2**, the fall and spring observation windows will occur during the following timeframes:

- The fall observation window is from **August 22rd, 2022 - December 23, 2022**
- The spring observation window is from **January 23, 2023 - June 9, 2023**

During the practice years there are no stakes or consequences for CLASS scores from local observations. CLASS scores are used to provide teachers with direct feedback about their actual classroom practices, as well as to guide professional development at the local level for ongoing quality improvement support. To assist with planning, educators can use the scoring guidance in the CLASS manuals and information from the [Dimension Guides](#) to target and prioritize improvement supports. *(Additional information about using CLASS to guide improvement is provided in the Supporting Improvement and Resources sections of this document.)*

Using CLASS in All Early Learning Settings

Using CLASS provides opportunities for every educator to improve their practice, regardless of background, educational preparation or setting in which they work. The CLASS has been used in classrooms and family day homes with diverse populations: Dual Language Learners (DLL), children from migrant families, tribal communities, children with special needs and children from diverse cultural backgrounds. Below is a summary of research and recommendations from Teachstone related to Virginia's population and needs. .

- **Classroom settings with Dual Language Learners (DLL)** - All children benefit socially, emotionally, and academically from classrooms with high-quality teacher-child interactions, as measured by the Classroom Assessment Scoring System. Children who are Dual Language Learners benefit from additional scaffolding and individual support to get the full benefit of high-quality teacher-child interactions.
 - [CLASS recommends](#) that there is a linguistic match between the observer and the primary language of instruction in birth to five settings with dual language learners.

- **Classrooms serving children with special needs** - The types of teacher-child interactions measured by the CLASS are critical for all children and are fundamental aspects of special education. However, the interactions may look somewhat different based on each child's individual needs and method of communicating, as well as the nature of the child's individual education plan. Because behavioral cues often differ from child to child, observers must closely watch to see how teachers interpret and respond to children.
 - [CLASS recommends](#) that an observer who is collecting data in a classroom that serves children with special needs have a background in special education in order to understand the context in which the interactions take place [in special education \(SPED\) settings - birth to five](#).
- **Family Day Homes** - All CLASS age levels are based on the assumption that there is continuity in effective teacher child-interactions across age levels. While specific examples may vary based on children's ages, there is an underlying similarity in the kinds of interactions that promote growth and development. The dimensions used in CLASS to define and assess effective teacher-child interactions are similar across the infant, toddler, and preschool periods. This allows for the use of CLASS in mixed-age settings, such as family day homes serving infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.
 - [CLASS recommends](#) that an observer who is collecting data in a family day home have a background in working with family day home providers in order to understand the context in which the interactions take place.

Role of the Ready Regions

During Practice Year 2, [Ready Regions](#) will coordinate local CLASS observations and will be responsible for the following activities related to conducting local CLASS observations to strengthen quality in VQB5:

- Ensure that all teachers and leaders who are new to CLASS are provided with foundational CLASS training prior to being observed.
- Assess and inventory local CLASS observers within the region.
- Create a written schedule to ensure all birth-to-five classrooms receive two local CLASS observations and feedback, once in the fall and once in the spring.
- Develop regional policies and practices to support observer consistency and effectiveness of resulting feedback, as well as policies and practices that reduce opportunities for perceived observer bias.
- Coordinate the implementation of training and coaching activities with existing professional development providers to support ongoing improvement.

Additional information about Ready Regions goals and activities can be found in the [Ready Regions FAQ document](#).

PREPARING FOR LOCAL CLASS OBSERVATIONS

Foundational CLASS Training for Educators

Before classroom observations are conducted, teachers and program leaders need to understand what is being measured and why. During foundational training, teachers and program leaders will view videos from real classrooms to view effective teaching practices in action in alignment with the domains and dimensions in CLASS. Foundational CLASS training also provides information about what teachers can expect when an observer comes to their classroom as well as an overview of the types of information they'll receive after an observation.

- Foundational CLASS training for teachers focuses on the CLASS tool that covers the age level of the children in their classroom, including how the CLASS tool organizes interactions by domains and dimensions, for a specific age level.

- Foundational CLASS training for program leaders focuses on CLASS tools for different age levels in the program. Foundational CLASS training for leaders is different from reliable observer training in that it is much shorter and accessible via online and in-person options.

To learn about opportunities for Foundational CLASS training and materials available to VQB5 programs, contact the Ready Region lead agency in your area.



[Get to Know the CLASS® - View Summaries of the Infant, Toddler and PreK CLASS tools in English and Spanish, along with Birth to Five Alignment Summaries.](#)

Requirements for Local CLASS Observers

In a local CLASS observation, certified observers from the local community (such as principals, site directors, early childhood coordinators or instructional specialists) conduct observations of the early childhood classrooms within their community. During Practice Year 2, Ready Regions will have discretion on who can perform local observations. Local observers may have working relationships with the sites and/or teachers they are observing, however Ready Regions are encouraged to not allow observers to observe teachers that they have a direct personal relationship with, such as a spouse or other relative. **(During Practice Year 2, local observers cannot serve as external observers within the same geographic region)**

In order to complete a local CLASS observation, an individual must be a Certified CLASS Observer. A Certified CLASS Observer is a person who has completed a [CLASS Observation Training](#) and passed the CLASS Reliability Test within the past year. A Certified CLASS Observer has demonstrated a solid understanding of the CLASS tool and is qualified to code classrooms using the CLASS observation tool.

Individual local observers must obtain certification for each version of the tool they observe with (Infant, Toddler and PreK).

Certifications must be kept up-to-date by taking an online recertification test each year. If more than a year has lapsed, observers need to take the CLASS Observer Training and certification again.

Coordinating and Scheduling Local Observations

During Practice Year 2, Ready Regions are responsible for coordinating and scheduling all local CLASS observations. Ready Regions must create a written schedule to ensure all classrooms will be observed at least twice a year within the fall and spring observation windows.

- Fall CLASS observations should not be scheduled during the first two weeks of school, to give teachers and children an opportunity to adjust to the classroom setting.
- If a new lead teacher is assigned to a classroom during the fall or spring observation window, they should not be observed during their first 2 weeks to give them time to adjust to their new teaching assignment.

When building a plan to train and schedule local CLASS observations, Ready Regions are expected to keep the following assurances from their Ready Region contract in mind:

- Develop a deep bench of CLASS trainers and observers, with emphasis on building a diverse group of trainers and observers across all three relevant age groups: infant, toddler, and Pre-K.
- Be mindful of experience needed to observe certain program environments, such as inclusive settings or children with special needs and Family Child Care.
- Ensure a linguistic match between the observer and the primary language of instruction in the classroom.

- Develop regional policies and practices to support observer consistency and effectiveness of resulting feedback, such as establishing calibration and double-coding protocols and providing training/support group meetings for local observers to review observation and feedback protocols with their peers.
- Establish regional policies and practices that reduce opportunities for perceived bias, including processes for reviewing and identifying any concerning trends, as well as any state established policies regarding personal relationships that are not allowed for observers (e.g., family member observing another family member).

PROTOCOLS FOR LOCAL CLASS OBSERVATIONS

The following procedures are to be followed for all local CLASS observations.

BEFORE THE OBSERVATION

Determining Which Tool to Use	<p>Local observations will be conducted in all infant, toddler and preschool classrooms in programs participating in VQB5 Practice Year 2 using the following developmentally appropriate tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infant CLASS should be used to observe classrooms/programs that serve birth-18 months • Toddler CLASS should be used to observe classrooms/programs that serve 15-36 months • Pre-K CLASS should be used to observe classrooms/programs that serve 3-5 year olds. <p>For observations in mixed-age classrooms and family day homes, the following guidelines are to be used to determine the appropriate age-group tool.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the classroom contains a mix of infants, toddlers, and Pre-K aged children, use the tool that matches the majority of the children. (For instance, if a classroom includes 1 infant, 1 toddler, and 5 Pre-K children, use the Pre-K CLASS tool). <p>If there are an equal number of children across age groups, use the Toddler tool. For instance, if a classroom includes 3 toddlers and 3 Pre-K children, use the Toddler CLASS tool.</p>
Guidance for Diverse Settings	<p>In addition to selecting the appropriate age-level CLASS manual, observers must review guidance provided by Teachstone for conducting observations in the following settings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classrooms with Dual Language Learners - Observing in Settings Serving Dual Language Learners, Birth to Five • Family Day Homes - Observing in Family Child Care Settings • Early Childhood Special Education - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recommendations for Using the CLASS in Inclusive Early Childhood Programs, Birth-Age 8 and; <p>Observation Guidance for Observing in Settings Serving Special Needs - Birth to Five</p>
Scheduling Observations	<p>Ready Regions must create a written schedule to ensure all classrooms are observed at least twice a year during the following designated fall and spring observation windows.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The fall observation window will be from August 22, 2022 to Dec. 23, 2022 <p>The spring observation window will be from January 23, 2023 - June 9, 2023</p>
Notifying Teachers	<p>Ready Regions have full discretion to determine their policy of notifying teachers about local observations. Ready Regions may provide teachers with a predetermined window of time during which unannounced observations may take place (or) they may decide to tell teachers the exact date.</p>
Health & Safety Procedures	<p>Local setting (e.g., school-based, community-based) procedures and requirements for volunteers and visitors should always be followed (e.g., health & safety; background check, identification presented). Observers should ask about these procedures prior to the observation.</p> <p>Observers must also follow all health and safety guidelines in place at each site, including COVID-19 protocols and procedures.</p>

DURING THE OBSERVATION

<p>Length of Observations</p>	<p>Pre-K and Toddler Observations must include four 20-minute observation cycles with a 10-minute coding session following each cycle (approximately 2 hours total).</p> <p>Infant CLASS observations include four 15-minute cycles with a 10-minute coding session following each cycle.</p> <p>There are a few circumstances where it is allowable for a cycle to be less than 20 minutes, such as a fire drill or sudden illness of the teacher that occurs in the middle of an observation cycle. In these situations CLASS codes can still be assigned provided that at least 10 minutes of observation have occurred. Local observers should use the guidance in Chapter 2 of each age-level CLASS manual, in the section on "<i>Rules for What to Observe and Terminating a Cycle</i>".</p> <p>All four observation cycles must occur on the same day. If for some reason that is not possible, then a new observation should be started at the next scheduled possibility. The data collected for the incomplete observation will not count towards the VQB5 local observation requirement.</p>
<p>Activities to Observe</p>	<p>Observers should ask about the typical classroom schedule prior to the observation to ensure that both structured and unstructured times of the day can be observed.</p> <p>Activities, transitions and routines, including snacks and meals, in the morning or afternoon may be observed (mornings are typically preferred).</p> <p>Observers should not observe when the whole group leaves the classroom for "specials" which are taught by a different teacher (such as PE, music, art).</p> <p>Observation of outdoor activities varies by age-level. Observers should follow the guidance in each age-level manual to determine whether or not outdoor activities should be included in the observation cycle.</p>
<p>Note-taking</p>	<p>Detailed notes with concrete examples must be taken for each dimension during every observation cycle. All notes and scores should be recorded on the official CLASS score sheets.</p>
<p>Adults to Observe</p>	<p>The lead teacher should be present. Short-term substitutes for the lead teacher should not be observed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Long-term substitutes may be observed (e.g., typically any lead teacher present in the classroom for at least 10 consecutive days). ● A director or floater teacher who has led instruction for 10 <u>non-consecutive</u> days within the fall or spring observation window, can also be observed. <p>CLASS observations provide a classroom-level score that includes overall teacher-child interactions including children's interactions with the lead teacher and any other adults (e.g., instructional assistant). Observers should follow the CLASS manual, which states that observers watch children's interactions with all teachers/adults in the room/area.</p>
<p>Observer Interactions</p>	<p>Observers should use a gaze that appears to float over the teacher, child or group rather than directly staring at individuals for long periods of time.</p> <p>If children approach the observer, observers should only acknowledge their presence with a warm smile or a nod. More engagement than this may cause the observer to distract from classroom processes being observed, and potentially disrupt the classroom and observation results.</p>
<p>Scoring Cycles</p>	<p>Scores are to be recorded for four observation cycles. For the 10-minute coding sessions following each observation cycle, observers may select to remain in the classroom or leave the classroom to complete coding.</p> <p>Observers do not conduct observations during the 10-minute coding sessions. Observers do not conduct more than four cycles of observations.</p>

AFTER THE OBSERVATION

Calculating Scores	When determining CLASS scores, observers need to follow the guidelines on the CLASS Scoring Summary Sheet and appropriate pages of the age-level CLASS manual.
Submitting Scores in LinkB5	Local observation scores are entered into the LinkB5 data portal following the CLASS observer procedures outlined in the LinkB5 CLASS Score Entry Instructions . Observers are encouraged to enter scores in LinkB5 within 10 business days of the observation. NOTE regarding Negative Climate - Scores for Toddler and PreK Negative Climate should be entered in LinkB5 as the raw score (not reversed). For example, if the observer scored Negative Climate as a 1, the score should be entered into LinkB5 as a 1.
Record Keeping	Scoresheets with notes from local observations must be saved as back-up documentation for at least two years after the observation. After the observation and feedback form has been completed, observers send their CLASS score sheets to the Ready Region lead agency. It is also acceptable for scoresheets to be stored securely by the observer as long as they are easily accessible if requested for an audit by the Ready Region Lead and/or the state.
Feedback	The observer (or assigned feedback provider, in the case that a local observer is not in a position to provide the teacher feedback) should schedule a time to meet with each teacher or teaching team within 2 weeks of the observation. Observers should use either the feedback templates provided by VDOE or another similar template provided by Ready Regions to share not only scores/ranges, but notes on what was observed (including positive examples). <i>See additional guidance for providing effective feedback in the Supporting Improvement and Resources sections.</i>

Additional Observation Guidance

Observation Guidance due to COVID-19	Observers are to use the following dimension level COVID-19 guidance provided by Teachstone when conducting in-person observations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-K COVID in-person observation guidance • Toddler COVID in-person observation guidance • Infant COVID in-person observation guidance
Recorded Video and Remote-Live Observations	Recorded Video Observations are those in which the teacher and children are recorded via video tape while they are physically together in a classroom, and then scored at a later time by a CLASS certified observer. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance for Recording and Coding Video Observations Remote-live observations are those in which the teacher and children are physically together in a classroom, but the observer joins via Zoom or another video conferencing platform that allows the observer to watch the classroom in real time. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance for Conducting Remote-Live Observations
Observation Concerns	In the unusual circumstance of any suspected abuse or neglect observed at the time of the observation, the observer must report the observed behaviors to Child Protective Services as mandated by law. For other issues that significantly impact the health and safety of the children in care, observers can report concerns to the VDOE .
Observation Questions	Questions about local CLASS observation protocols can be sent to vqb5@doe.virginia.gov

ENSURING OBSERVER CONSISTENCY

Reliability and Annual Recertification

Reliable CLASS observers must participate in routine practice to maintain accuracy in their scoring. Required annual recertification through Teachstone helps ensure continued accurate use of the CLASS observational measure.

Reliability is a crucial element of the CLASS tool. CLASS observers are trained to make standardized, evidence-based judgments about interactions in a classroom, and the ability to do so accurately and reliably is what allows confidence in CLASS data. In VQB5, accuracy and consistency on the CLASS is essential for this work to have an impact.

Observers can find helpful resources to assist with annual recertification on the [Reliability Support Resources website](#).

Strategies for Maintaining Consistency and Accuracy

No matter how well CLASS observers perform on their initial reliability test or how experienced observers are, it's nearly impossible to avoid some amount of "[coding drift](#)" in observation skills over time. Drift is what happens when observers conduct several observations in the field, on their own, with no feedback.

In addition to the required annual recertification, there are other important strategies that should be employed to maintain consistency and accuracy:

- Double coding, also referred to as shadow scoring, occurs when two reliable CLASS observers conduct a CLASS observation at the same time to compare scores and practice their skills. (Observations conducted for double-coding practice would not be used for the official fall or spring Practice Year 2 observations.)
 - Double-coding can also be a powerful tool for challenging implicit bias and promoting observer growth. Guidance for [using double-coding to address implicit bias](#) is available from Teachstone.
- Online CLASS [calibrations](#) provide an avenue for observers to check themselves between annual recertification tests. Participants practice coding classroom videos online and receive immediate feedback on their scoring.

During Practice Year 2, Ready Regions will develop and implement plans for supporting local observers to maintain accuracy and increase consistency. Regional plans should include the use of double coding and/or calibrations for new observers, as well as a selection of experienced observers, at least every 6 months.

SUPPORTING IMPROVEMENT

Results from local observations administered twice a year will be used by instructional leaders to inform ongoing professional development and assess growth in teacher-child interactions over time. Increasing capacity and knowledge of quality interactions at the local level promotes shared understandings of the strong principles of high-quality teaching in early childhood settings that are highlighted in the CLASS tool. Having program or school leaders trained to reliability in CLASS enables them to bring the CLASS lens to every aspect of their work.

Providing Effective Feedback

Providing teachers with quality feedback regarding their local CLASS observation is a critical component of the improvement practice. One of the largest benefits of local CLASS observations is that teachers can receive more frequent feedback on their practice, often from a local individual who already supports their practice (such as when the observer is a site leader or instructional coach).

The following guidance should be used to prepare for and guide effective feedback sessions, which include:

- Starting with a general conversation and work to make the teachers feel comfortable.
- Orienting the teachers to the structure of the local feedback form.
- Reviewing domain and dimension level scores, calling attention to trends and/or previous CLASS scores for comparison.
- Highlighting areas of strength (focus on the positive) and then one area for growth by domain, including specific examples.
- Working with the teachers to determine a dimension or one aspect of a dimension to be an area of focus.
- Discussing how the teacher can focus on this area of interactions in the coming weeks in their daily classroom interactions with children.
- Identifying specific strategies or action steps so that the teachers can practice teacher interactions in a targeted manner.



[View Tools and Resources for Providing Feedback that Enhances Teacher Knowledge and Supports Growth](#)

Ongoing Support

Feedback providers and other professional development (PD) providers must ensure that teachers receive ongoing support to grow in areas of need through individualized professional development. The following features of effective professional development are important to keep in mind when planning PD:

- **Practice-focused** professional development actively engages teachers in the PD process and intentionally builds on their skills in order to improve their practice. This involves teachers [knowing, seeing, and doing](#), and can be incorporated in PD through a variety of formats:
 - Role playing with peers (in pairs during a group PD session)
 - Watching/analyzing videos of themselves or others (in group sessions, coaching, or independent study)
 - Action planning (in coaching, peer-learning communities, or group sessions)
 - Feedback and analysis loops with colleagues (coach/admin/peer teachers)
 - Reflecting on and analyzing practices (independently, with a colleague or group): what was tried, what worked, and how to incrementally improve.
- **Data-Driven** professional development involves using data to plan relevant PD to each teacher's/ classroom's needs and then tracking intended outcomes of PD. Three key strategies to try:
 - Access local observation results via the [LinkB5 CLASS export reports](#), which are available to site-administrators. Each CLASS report provides site leaders and teachers with specific, detailed information about what children experience in their classrooms. This information can drive teachers to be more aware and reflective of their daily practices, to strengthen certain aspects of interactions, and to strive for higher quality relationships with children.
 - Use CLASS data alongside other data sources (curriculum use, environmental checklists, and/or child assessments) for [continuous quality improvement](#). Research suggests that children benefit the most when interactions and instruction, guided by a strong curriculum, are maximized.
 - Provide ongoing support through the use of [informal](#) “walk-throughs” or “focused short-observations” which are targeted to specific action plan areas (e.g., one CLASS dimension). This type of targeted support allows teachers an opportunity to focus on improving one practice at a time and receive frequent feedback on that practice.

Targeted Supports for Interactions

All programs in VQB5 will benefit from support related to teacher-child interactions. Training on the behaviors reflected in the CLASS tool will be an essential focus of professional development. This includes both foundational training on the importance of teacher-child interactions as well as ongoing targeted professional development and coaching to improve teacher practice in specific domains and/or dimensions of the CLASS tools.

In Practice Year 2, some possible examples of targeted supports related to interactions may include:

- Training aligned with the CLASS tool, including foundational CLASS and other specific training on identified domains and dimensions (such as those available on the [Head Start In-Service Suites](#))
- Financial assistance in obtaining CLASS materials, such as Dimension Guides, CLASS manuals, and online courses. (Most CLASS materials are also available in [Spanish](#))
- Coaching on CLASS domains and dimensions (using [Practice Based Coaching](#) or similar coaching model) through new and existing coaching programs
- Tools to support self-assessment and action planning based on feedback from CLASS observations, facilitated by local supports
- Expanded local observer training, calibrations, and peer-support for recertification
- Professional Peer-Learning Communities on CLASS facilitated by site-leaders or other PD providers. (see sample [CLASS Learning Community](#) guidance)

During Practice Year 2, Ready Regions will work with existing improvement partners, such as Infant Toddler Specialist Network ([ITSN](#)), Advancing Effective Instruction and Interactions ([AEII](#)), Virginia Quality ([VQ](#)), and Virginia's Training and Technical Assistance Centers ([TTAC](#)), among others, to coordinate the implementation of interactions support activities.



[View the Toolkit for Strengthening Quality to access a variety of resources to help birth-to-five program leaders and partners with planning and implementing PD focused on teacher-child interactions.](#)

CLASS and Curriculum Connection

VQB5 measures program quality in two nationally recognized indicators; Interactions and Curriculum. These two important elements are measured because of their complementary roles in promoting positive outcomes for young children.

- [Infant/Toddler CLASS and Curriculum Connections](#)
- [PreK CLASS and Curriculum Connections](#)

The CLASS framework encourages teachers to use curriculum more effectively by calling for specific practices to strengthen relationships with children, engage them in learning activities and promote learning in a dynamic, age-appropriate manner.

A high-quality curriculum supports effective interactions between teachers and children by providing structure, guidance, materials, and activities which enable teachers to create opportunities for supportive interactions that promote children's development and learning.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FAQs - Selecting and Training Local Observers

1. How many reliable CLASS observers should a region have in place per classroom?
 - This is a regional decision based on the roles and responsibilities of staff/contractors selected to be observers. To make this decision Ready Regions will want to consider a few different factors:
 - Consider the number and age-level of the classrooms that need to be observed in the region.
 - Consider the diversity of program needs, such as settings that serve dual language learners, children with disabilities and family day homes. Observers assigned to classrooms should have experience working with and/or observing in these types of settings.
 - Consider the availability local observers have to conduct CLASS observations, along with the location of the participating programs. For context, the **estimated time per observation** is
 - 2 hours observing in a classroom
 - 30 minutes for feedback report development
 - 30 minutes for sharing feedback with the teacher/site leader
 - Additional travel time to/from observations may also need to be considered.
2. Will VDOE provide the training for local CLASS observers to become trained and reliable for local observations?
 - During Practice Year 2, VDOE is offering monthly observer training opportunities in partnership with Teachstone to build local observer capacity for childcare centers and family day homes VQB5. Details and registration information can be found [here](#).
 - Ready Regions are also funded by VDOE to support ongoing CLASS training for VQB5, both to train reliable observers and to provide foundational CLASS knowledge to teachers.
 - VPI Programs may also support CLASS trainings with VPI funding.
 - The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) maintains a list of qualified Certified Affiliate CLASS trainers who are able to conduct Introduction to CLASS and CLASS Observer training for VQB5. For a list of current VECF Affiliate CLASS trainers in your locality, please email gris@vecf.org
 - The VDOE will continue to seek opportunities to support Ready Regions and school divisions in building capacity with the CLASS tool.
3. Where can I find a list of certified CLASS observers in Virginia?
 - There are two types of Observer Directories available from Teachstone. Both directories provide an opportunity to search for certified observers by location, age level tool, and language.
 - The [Public Directory](#) includes a list of Certified CLASS Observers that are interested in being hired by organizations. (CLASS observers have to opt-in to be listed in the public directory.)
 - The [Private Directory](#) is available to anyone who has a Teachstone website account, and lists all certified observers within the online community forum.
 - Ready Regions also maintain lists of local CLASS observers, by age-level, for their region.

FAQs : General Observation Procedures

1. How detailed should CLASS observation notes be?

- Observation notes form the foundation for the coding process, and good notes increase the chances that the code assigned is a true representation of the classroom. Taking good notes includes being objective, using short-hand or abbreviations, including direct quotes and specific examples about CLASS dimension indicators.
- Chapter 2 in each age-level CLASS manual provides information about note-taking as well as a sample score sheet with notes.
- Additional tips and strategies for taking notes during CLASS observations can be found [HERE](#).

2. Can observers code during breakfast or lunch if it's being served in the cafeteria?

- Since breakfast and lunch are routine activities in which children engage on a daily basis, this can be observed. However, because the structure of cafeteria time for PreK children can vary greatly, deciding whether or not to observe meals served in a school cafeteria should be a local level decision.
- Ready Regions and local observers should consider whether or not the classroom teacher/s are present during cafeteria meals as well as how cafeteria time fits into the overall daily schedule to ensure that both structured and unstructured time periods are included in the CLASS observation.
- Additional guidance, along with suggestions for addressing common challenges in the cafeteria can be found [HERE](#).

3. What if a program is temporarily not allowing visitors, or is limiting visitors due to COVID or other health/safety issues. Will the classroom still be required to have a CLASS observation?

- **Yes.** Ready Regions will work with site administrators to understand each program's specific visitor health and safety protocols. If it is determined that local CLASS observers are not allowed in classrooms at the initially scheduled observation time, Ready Regions will either reschedule the observation for a later date or will use other observation modalities, including remote-live (Zoom) observations or video-recorded observations.
- Programs with internal staff who are reliable in CLASS, should use their own staff members to conduct local CLASS observations, if outside visitors are not allowed in classrooms.

FAQs - Other Program CLASS Observation requirements

1. What are the local CLASS observation requirements for VPI programs?

- All VPI classrooms, regardless of participation in VQB5, must receive two local CLASS observations in 2022-2023.
 - For VPI Programs participating in VQB5 Practice Year 2, the local CLASS observations coordinated in partnership with Ready Regions for VQB5 **meet** the VPI CLASS observation requirement. CLASS scores and curriculum information are entered in LinkB5. Opportunities for CLASS training and support are provided through Ready Regions.
 - If a VPI program decides to **NOT** participate in VQB5 Practice Year 2 (the final chance to practice) that program must still meet this local observation requirement on their own with no coordination support from Ready Regions. Scores must be kept on file and available upon request by VDOE.
- Please refer to the [VPI Guidelines 2022-2023](#) for additional information about VPI and CLASS observation requirements.

2. Can CLASS observations conducted as a part of the Federal Office of Head Start (OHS) Monitoring Protocol be used for the VQB5 local observation requirement?

- No. [OHS CLASS reviews](#) are conducted for the purpose of obtaining a *recipient* level score rather than classroom or site-level score, and follow different protocols and procedures.
- Head Start/Early Head Start (HS/EHS) programs are encouraged to use the results from VQB5 Local CLASS observations to identify classroom level strengths and needs. This information will help HS/EHS recipients prepare for OHS CLASS reviews.
- HS/EHS recipients should notify their Ready Region lead ahead of time if they are scheduled for an OHS review in the fall or the spring to assist with the coordination and scheduling of local CLASS observations in EHS/HS classrooms.

FAQs – CLASS 2nd Edition

1. How will the release of the CLASS 2nd Edition impact local CLASS observations in VQB5?

- For purposes of VQB5, **Virginia** will continue to use the CLASS 1st edition (original) version of the tool for Practice Year 2 (2022-2023) in all age groups. Virginia has demonstrated a strong investment in this original version of the CLASS tool, and the VQB5 system is well prepared to support its use statewide for this second and final practice year.
- VDOE will use Practice Year 2 as an opportunity to learn about the 2nd edition enhancements to CLASS and gather feedback from the field.

Additional questions about Local CLASS Observations in VQB5 can be sent to vqb5@doe.virginia.gov

RESOURCE LINKS TO SUPPORT LOCAL CLASS OBSERVATIONS

Using CLASS in VQB5:

- [VDOE Quality Measurement and Improvement \(VQB5\)](#)
- [Ready Regions Information](#)
- [LinkB5 Resources](#)
- [Teachstone's Virginia Support Page](#)

General Info about CLASS:

- [Why CLASS? \(e-book\)](#)
- [CLASS Research Summary](#)
- [Tips & Resources for Teachers](#)

Using CLASS in Diverse Settings:

- [Family Child Care & CLASS](#)
- [CLASS Spanish Suite](#)
- [Using CLASS in Inclusive Early Childhood Programs](#)
- [Using CLASS with Dual Language Learners](#)

Observer Resources:

- [Tips to Prepare for Conducting Observations](#)
- [Note-taking Tips and Strategies](#)
- [Coding Reflective Questions](#)
- [Observer FAQ's](#)

Tools for Feedback:

- [Sample Feedback Templates from VDOE](#)
- [AELL Providing Observation Feedback](#)
- [CLASS Feedback - Teachstone Webinar](#)

Coaching Resources:

- [Coaching Fundamentals \(e-book\)](#)
- [Informal Observation Form for Coaches](#)
- [Practice Based Coaching](#)

COVID Related Guidance:

- [Teachstone's COVID Resources for Educators](#)
- [Guidance for Observing Virtual PreK Instruction](#)

Professional Development Tools:

- [Strengthening Quality Toolkit \(Birth-to-Five\)](#)
- [Teachstone Resource Library](#)
- [Use of CLASS for Quality Improvement \(Head Start\)](#)
- Curriculum & CLASS Connections - [for Infant/Toddlers](#) and [for PreK](#)

APPENDIX:

Overview of the Statewide External CLASS Observations for Practice Year 2 (Coordinated by Teachstone)

External classroom observations are conducted by a certified CLASS observer who is not employed by the program and has no relationship to the school, program or classroom. This reduces the risk of actual or perceived observer bias. In addition, external observers participate in regular training to maintain their observation skills. These requirements ensure external classroom observations are conducted reliably and consistently statewide for compatibility.

During Practice Year 2, all External Observations will be coordinated by Teachstone's External Observation Team. Approximately 50% of classrooms participating in VQB5 Practice Year 2 will receive an external observation (a total of ~4,500 external observations). Every site participating in Practice Year 2 of VQB5 will receive at least one external observation. The external observations will be in addition to the local observations coordinated by Ready Regions.

Responsibilities of the Teachstone External Observation Team

As the external observation vendor, Teachstone is responsible for the following:

- Recruiting and training sufficient reliable infant, toddler and PreK observers to conduct external observations statewide. (**During Practice Year 2, local observers cannot serve as external observers within the same geographic region**).
- Developing a conflict of interest policy to assure that there is no direct or perceived conflict of interest between the external observer and any provider the observer is scheduled to observe.
- Conducting ongoing reliability checks for external observers (i.e. double coding and calibrations) to ensure continued reliability to CLASS, including setting rigorous internal standards for reliability, inter-rater reliability and calibration.
- Conducting external CLASS observations within the annual designated fall and spring observation windows.
- Reporting all external CLASS observation scores to VDOE and to site administrators.
- Providing feedback summarizing observation results by dimension to every site administrator receiving an external CLASS within 10 business days of the observation.

Use of External Observations in Practice Years

Information gathered from external observations during the practice years is used to support local observers, so that educators receive consistent observations and additional feedback. Local and external observation alignment data will be used by Ready Regions to develop and implement plans for supporting their local observers. This data will also be used by the state to guide the development of future guidelines and protocols for CLASS observation quality.

- During Practice Year 2, scores from external CLASS observations will not count towards the practice year ratings.

Questions regarding the statewide external observations in VQB5 can be directed to vqb5@doe.virginia.gov



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