

Local CLASS Observation Guidance for VQB5 Practice Year 1

August 18, 2021

Welcome!

Poll #1

1. Which of the following applies to you? (select all that apply) (Multiple Choice) *

- ☐ I am a Certified CLASS observer
- ☐ I will be conducting local CLASS observations for VQB5 this year
- ☐ I am a PDG Community Leader
- ☐ I am a site director/assistant director
- ☐ I am a principal/assistant principal
- ☐ I am a lead teacher/assistant teacher
- ☐ I am a family day home provider
- ☐ I provide professional development support to programs
- ☐ I work at or with programs that will be participating in VQB5 this year

Objectives and Agenda

During today's webinar, participants will:

- Increase their understanding of Virginia's unified measurement and improvement system (VQB5);
- Understand the procedures and protocols for conducting local CLASS observations in VQB5 during Practice Year 1
- Learn how VQB5 and local observers can support equity using CLASS.

Agenda

- VQB5 Overview
- Measuring Interactions with CLASS
- Using CLASS to Support Equity
- Protocols and Procedures for Local CLASS Observations
- Supporting Improvement
- FAQs and Resources

Why is Virginia building a unified measurement and improvement system?

Virginia's New Early Childhood System

Virginia's current system does not offer every child equitable opportunity.

- Quality early childhood experiences prepare children for success but families and children lack equitable access to these experiences.
- Our system too often fails to prepare children who are Black, Hispanic, speak a language other than English at home, or have a diagnosed disability or developmental delay.

Virginia's early childhood system must ensure that all children have access to quality teaching and learning experiences that meet their unique needs. Together, we will:

UNIFY around shared and equitable expectations for quality.

MEASURE and strengthen teacher-child interactions and curriculum use in all publicly-funded birth to five programs.

IMPROVE supports for educators, prioritizing those who need it most.

A New Unified Measurement and Improvement System - VQB5

A new Unified Measurement and Improvement System, called VQB5, has been developed and approved by the VDOE Board of Education.

- The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) worked with a variety of stakeholders and communities to develop the new system.
- This new system includes 2 years of practice through the [Preschool Development Grant \(PDG\) communities](#).
- In 2021-2022, all sites participating in PDG will be a part of Practice Year 1 for VQB5.
- By fall 2023, all publicly-funded programs will be required to participate in VQB5. Programs that do not receive public funds will have the option to participate.

Information and past webinars about VQB5 are available on the [Building a Unified Early Childhood System website](#).

What is Measured in VQB5?

The Unified Measurement and Improvement System - VQB5

VQB5 will measure the quality of infant, toddler and preschool teaching and learning based on two nationally-recognized quality indicators.

Interactions	Curriculum
Measure teacher-child interactions and instruction in a developmentally-appropriate way using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)	Measure the use of approved curricula that are aligned with Virginia’s Early Learning and Development Standards
Research shows that stimulating and supportive interactions between teachers and children and effective use of quality curricula promote children’s holistic learning and development, <i>resulting in improved and more equitable school readiness.</i>	

Why Measure Interactions using CLASS?

- ✓ Responsive and effective teacher-child interactions form the foundation for all social and cognitive learning, improving school readiness for all children.
- ✓ Over 200 studies show that children in classrooms with more effective teacher-child interactions, as measured by *CLASS*®, have better academic and social outcomes.
- ✓ 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 the *CLASS* to measure and improve the quality of teacher-child interactions in early care and education settings for 10+ years.

[Proving CLASS Effectiveness - A Research Summary; Research Validating CLASS with Child Outcomes across Diverse Populations of Children.](#)

Measuring Interactions in VQB5

Local CLASS Observations Guidebook 2021-2022

The guidebook is for Local Observers and PDG Community Leaders. It includes:

- Protocols and procedures for local CLASS observations in VQB5
- Guidance for PDG Communities for coordinating and scheduling observations
- FAQs about Local Observations
- Helpful Resources for CLASS

The guidebook is available on the **Advancing Effective Interactions and Instruction website (aeiionline.org)**, under the Tools and Resources tab for conducting CLASS observations.

LOCAL CLASS® OBSERVATIONS BEST PRACTICES GUIDEBOOK

For VQB5 Practice Year 1 2021-2022



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.

Types of CLASS Observations in VQB5

VQB5	LOCAL OBSERVATIONS	EXTERNAL OBSERVATIONS
Purpose	Primary method for gathering classroom level information about the quality of teacher child interactions.	Secondary method to gather information about the accuracy and consistency of local observations and to provide additional feedback.
Definition	Coordinated and scheduled at the local level, with results recorded in LinkB5. Conducted by locally identified reliable observers.	Coordinated, scheduled, and recorded by an external organization. Conducted by externally identified reliable observers.
Annual Cycle	All birth-to-five classrooms will get two local observations each year. One in the fall and one in the spring.	Only some birth-to-five classrooms will get an external observation.
Practice Year 1	PDG Communities are responsible for coordinating and scheduling local CLASS observations.	AEI is responsible for coordinating and scheduling external CLASS observations.



Benefits of Local CLASS Observations

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 instructional leaders to inform ongoing professional development and assess growth in teacher-child interactions over time.
- As people who work in the community and are familiar with local program norms, structures and values, local observers are well suited to provide an individualized and supportive approach to the observation and feedback process.

External CLASS observations provide a quality assurance check and reinforce the information gained through local observations.

Local CLASS Observations Practice Year 1 Timeline

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 1, fall and spring observations must be completed during the following timeframes:

- The fall observation window is from August 23rd, 2021 - December 17, 2021
 - CLASS Data entry in LinkB5 opens on Oct. 4th
- The spring observation and CLASS data entry window is from January 17, 2022 - June 10, 2022

During Practice Year 1, PDG communities are responsible for coordinating and scheduling local CLASS observations for VQB5 in the fall and spring.

Requirements for Local Observers

In order to conduct a local CLASS observation, an individual must be a Certified CLASS Observer.

- A Certified CLASS Observer is a person who has attended a CLASS Observation Training and has passed a CLASS Reliability Test within the past year.
- Individual 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.)

Why is certification (and recertification) so important?

Reliability is a crucial element of the CLASS tool. The effectiveness of the CLASS tool relies heavily on the accuracy and consistency of its users.

- Initial certification ensures CLASS observers are trained to make standardized, evidence-based judgements about interactions in a classroom.
- Recertification ensures that Certified CLASS Observers remain reliable on the CLASS tool.

Observing and coding reliably with the CLASS tool is more like learning a new language than learning how to ride a bike—it takes ongoing practice and training to retain the skill.

Resources for maintaining and strengthening observation skills are available on Teachstone's Reliability Support Page and Observer Village

Poll #2

Which early childhood CLASS tool/s are you currently certified in? (select all that apply)

- Infant CLASS
- Toddler CLASS
- PreK CLASS
- N/A (I'm not a certified observer)

Using CLASS to Promote Equity

Using CLASS to Promote Equity

Working together, we can help ensure that CLASS is used intentionally to strengthen interactions in classrooms and family day homes with diverse populations: Dual Language Learners, children from migrant families, tribal communities, children with special needs and children from diverse cultural backgrounds.

- Studies suggest that CLASS can reliably assess the quality of teacher-child interactions in a wide variety of settings serving diverse populations of children.
- Using CLASS provides equitable opportunities for educators to improve their practice, regardless of background, educational preparation or setting in which they work.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Settings

Researchers found that the CLASS applies equally well across preschool classrooms with different Latinx and multilingual learner compositions.

- Warm, sensitive, well-organized, and cognitively stimulating interactions are a set of core practices that early childhood teachers can use to support the positive development of culturally and linguistically diverse children.

Teachstone recommends that CLASS observers must be able to understand the languages being spoken in the classroom, in order to be able to interpret and code the interactions accurately.

Refer to additional Teachstone guidance in [The CLASS Tool and Dual Language Learners](#). Several CLASS materials are also [available in Spanish](#).

Classrooms Serving Children with Special Needs

The CLASS has been successfully used in inclusive early childhood classrooms nationwide and provides important, comparable information on teacher-child interactions in inclusive classrooms.

- The types of teacher-child interactions measured by the CLASS are critical for all children.
- The CLASS describes what effective special education teachers routinely do in their classrooms.

Teachstone recommends that an observer who is collecting data in a classroom that serves a large percentage of children with disabilities have a background in special education in order to understand the context in which the interactions take place.

Refer to Teachstone's [Recommendations for Using the CLASS in Inclusive Early Childhood Programs](#)

Family Day Homes

All CLASS age level tools are based on the assumption that there is continuity in effective teacher child-interactions across age levels.

- 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.

Teachstone 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.

Refer to Teachstone's [Guidance for Observing in Family Day Homes](#)

Evaluating Equity Implications

The State will support local partners as we seek to increase equity using CLASS.

VDOE, UVA, VECF, and Teachstone held a series of listening sessions for educators in the field to share their experiences related to using the CLASS tool.

Recommendations from these listening sessions, along with other stakeholder feedback are being used to....

- Develop tools and resources to support local observers in understanding implicit bias and observing in different types of settings
- Gather better data to understand and address inequities

During Practice Year 1, VDOE will continue to work closely with Teachstone and other partners to engage educators to fully analyze how the CLASS tool is used in Virginia to foster strong partnerships and to ensure that any concerns about disparate treatment or inequities are addressed.

Protocols for Local CLASS Observations

BEFORE the OBSERVATION	
Determining which Tool to Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infant CLASS is used to observe classrooms that serve birth-18 months • Toddler CLASS is used to observe classrooms that serve 15-36 months • Pre-K CLASS is used to observe classrooms that serve 3-5 year olds. • Mixed-Age Settings use the tool that matches the majority of the children served. (If there are equal numbers, use the Toddler CLASS)
Guidance for Diverse Settings	In addition to the CLASS manual for each age-level, observers should review all additional guidance documents for observing in different settings. <i>(See Guidebook for list of additional guidance documents)</i>
Notifying Teachers	PDG communities 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.
Health and Safety	Local setting (e.g., school-based, community-based) procedures and requirements for volunteers and visitors must always be followed (e.g., health & safety; background check, identification presented). Observers must ask about these procedures prior to the observation.

DURING the OBSERVATION	
Length of Observation	<p>VQB5 Local Observations must include four cycles, with a 10-minute coding session following each cycle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-K and Toddler Observations include four 20-minute cycles • Infant CLASS observations include four 15-minute cycles
Activities to Observe	<p>Activities, transitions and routines in the morning or afternoon may be observed (mornings are typically preferred).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time periods that should not be observed include: when the whole group leaves the classroom for “specials” taught by a different teacher, or when the whole group visits the restroom. • Observation of outdoor activities varies by age-level (refer to CLASS manual)
Note-taking	<p>All notes and scores should be recorded on the official Teachstone CLASS score sheets. Notes must be taken for each dimension during every observation cycle.</p>
Teacher and Assistants (Observing in classrooms with more than one adult)	<p>The lead teacher should be present. Short-term substitutes for the lead teacher should not be observed. Long-term substitutes may be observed (e.g., typically any lead teacher present in the classroom for at least two weeks).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observers should follow the CLASS manual, which states that observers watch children’s interactions with all teachers/adults in the room/area.
Scoring Cycles	<p>For the 10-minute coding sessions following each 20-minute observation cycle, observers may select to remain in the classroom or leave the classroom to complete coding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observers do not conduct observations during the 10-minute coding sessions. • Observers do not conduct more than four cycles of observations.

AFTER the OBSERVATION	
Calculating Scores	When calculating CLASS scores, observers follow the guidelines on the CLASS Scoring Summary Sheet and appropriate pages of the CLASS manual.
Submitting Scores	Local observation scores are entered into the LinkB5 data portal following the CLASS observer procedures outlined in the LinkB5 User Manual. <i>(Updated LinkB5 instructions for observers will be available soon via the LinkB5 Resources page)</i>
Record Keeping	<p>After the observation and feedback form has been completed, observers send their CLASS score sheets to the PDG community lead agency.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PDG lead agencies should keep score sheets on file as back-up documentation for at least 2 years.
Feedback	<p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observers should use either the feedback template provided by VDOE or another chosen template to share not only scores/ranges, but notes on what was observed (including positive examples).

Additional Guidance due to COVID

Before the Observation

- Observers need to verify the date and time of the observation and learn what procedures the program has in place to mitigate the impact of COVID
- Observers need to understand additional health and safety COVID requirements for being onsite and obtain appropriate personal protective equipment.
- Observers need to follow all required local health and safety procedures upon entering the classroom and maintain the suggested or required physical distance from others, both adults and children, at all times.

During the Observation

Follow the dimension level COVID guidance provided by Teachstone when conducting in-person observations:

- [PreK COVID in-person observation guidance](#)
- [Toddler COVID in-person observation guidance](#)
- [Infant COVID in-person observation guidance](#)

After the Observation

Feedback can be provided in-person as long as all health & safety COVID guidelines are followed. Feedback may also be provided via a phone call or an online meeting.

Ensuring Accuracy

Reliable CLASS observers must participate in routine practice to maintain accuracy in their scoring. PDG communities are responsible for assisting the selected local CLASS observers in maintaining accuracy.

There are several important strategies that may be used to maintain accuracy:

- Annual recertification
- Double-Coding
- Calibrations

Focus on Equity - In addition to the strategies listed above, it is also important for local observers to engage in professional development on implicit bias in early childhood education.

Poll #3

In addition to reviewing the CLASS manual and annual recertification, which of the following have you used to maintain and/or strengthen your CLASS observation skills? (select all that apply)

- Double Coding
- Calibration
- Implicit Bias Training
- Reliability Support Page
- Observer Village Resources
- N/A (I'm not an observer)

Supporting Improvement

Supporting Improvement in Every Classroom



Supporting Educators with Foundational Training before Local CLASS Observations

Before local CLASS 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.

Additional guidance about providing foundational training is provided in the PDG Mini-Module

Supporting Educators with Feedback after Local CLASS Observations

Giving feedback after each local CLASS observation is an essential part of supporting teacher practice growth.

- Effective feedback does more than just provide the teacher an outsider's perspective on where they are “good/bad” or “needs to improve”
- An effective feedback session (or series of sessions over time) provides the following:
 - Enhances (or reinforces) teacher's knowledge of effective interactions
 - Promotes teacher reflection, including enhanced awareness (self-evaluation) of strengths as well as areas to grow
 - Enhances teacher motivation toward growth, including taking steps to implement something back in the classroom

Additional feedback guidance and examples provided in the PDG Mini-Module

Providing Educators with Targeted Supports to Improve Interactions

All programs in the Unified VQB5 system 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 ongoing targeted professional development and coaching to improve teacher practice in specific domains and/or dimensions of the CLASS tools.

During Practice Year 1, PDG communities will work with existing improvement partners to coordinate the implementation of interactions support activities.

FAQs and Resources

Will VDOE provide training for local CLASS observers to become trained and reliable for VQB5?

During Practice Year 1, VDOE is offering monthly observer training opportunities in partnership with Teachstone for PDG participants and School Division staff.

- Contact your PDG Community lead for more information about these observation trainings.

As a general practice, localities should consider using existing professional development funds to support ongoing CLASS training, both to train reliable observers and to provide foundational CLASS knowledge to teachers.

- The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) maintains a list of Affiliate CLASS trainers who are able to conduct Introduction and 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 local communities and school divisions in building capacity with the CLASS tool.

What CLASS observations should school-based preschool programs expect in 2021-2022?

School-Based Preschool	Participating in Practice Year 1 (PDG participants)*	NOT Participating in Practice Year 1 (Non-PDG)
VPI*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All programs: Two required local CLASS observations coordinated as part of PDG(fall and spring). Scores entered in Link B5. PDG Community lead and school division programs work together to schedule and ensure scores are recorded in LinkB5. Some programs may receive an external CLASS observation coordinated by AEII. 	Two required local CLASS observations coordinated by the division (fall and spring). Divisions must keep a record of local observations completed.
ECSE		Two local CLASS observations encouraged.
Head Start in a public school		Two local CLASS observations encouraged.

**Both PDG and VPI are responsible for ensuring adequate local observer coverage based on program funding agreements. During Practice Year 1, it will be important that there is a shared effort between PDG communities and school divisions to make sure local observations are completed.*

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 grantee level score rather than classroom or site-level score, and follow different protocols and procedures.

- Head Start grantees are encouraged to use the results from VQB5 Local CLASS observations to identify classroom level strengths and needs. This information will help HS grantees prepare for OHS CLASS reviews.

Can a CLASS observation conducted for a Virginia Quality rating be used for the VQB5 local CLASS observation requirement?

Yes. During Practice Year 1, CLASS observations conducted for Virginia Quality level 4-5 ratings may be used in VQB5 for either the fall or spring local observation requirement as long as the observation is scheduled in coordination with the local PDG Community and Virginia Quality Regional lead agency.

- CLASS scores would be entered in LinkB5 and the Virginia Quality Access website.

NOTE - The 2021-2022 year is the last year for current Virginia Quality programs to apply for Level 4 and 5. (As of July 2022 all Virginia Quality ratings will be 'frozen' in preparation for the transition to the new Unified VQB5 system).

Local CLASS Observation Resources

On the last page of the Local CLASS Observation Guidebook, several helpful links are provided to help you access resources for the following categories:

- Using CLASS in VQB5
- General Info about CLASS
- Using CLASS in Diverse Environments
- Observer Resources
- Tools for Feedback
- Coaching Resources
- COVID Related Guidance
- Professional Development Tools

RESOURCE LINKS TO SUPPORT LOCAL CLASS OBSERVATIONS

Using CLASS in VQB5:

- VDOE Building a Unified Early Childhood System Website - [LINK](#)
- Preschool Development Grant (PDG) Information - [LINK](#)
- LinkB5 User Login - [LINK](#)
- Teachstone's Virginia Support Page - [LINK](#)

General Info about CLASS:

- Why CLASS? (e-book) - [LINK](#)
- CLASS Outcome Studies - [LINK](#)
- Tips & Resources for Teachers - [LINK](#)

Using CLASS in Diverse Environments:

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

Observer Resources:

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

Tools for Feedback:

- Sample Feedback Template from VDOE - [LINK](#)
- AEII Providing Observation Feedback - [LINK](#)
- CLASS Feedback - Teachstone Webinar - [LINK](#)

Coaching Resources:

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

COVID Related Guidance:

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

Professional Development Tools:

- AEII Tools and Resources Page - [LINK](#)
- Teachstone Resource Library - [LINK](#)
- Use of CLASS in Head Start - [LINK](#)
- Curriculum & Accreditation CLASS Crosswalks - [LINK](#)
- GetReadyVA Resources & Tools - [LINK](#)

Questions about Local CLASS Observations in VQB5 can be sent to bris.meyers@doe.virginia.gov

16 July 2021

Next Steps

The Fall Local Observation Window opens on August 23rd

- PDG Communities will coordinate and schedule local observations for VQB5.
- Local Observers should review the guidebook in detail, along with the CLASS manual prior to conducting fall observations.

LinkB5 CLASS data entry opens October 4th

- Local CLASS observers should contact their PDG Community lead for information about how to set up their LinkB5 observer account.
- LinkB5 CLASS data entry instructions will be available soon via the [LinkB5 Resources](#) page).

All fall local CLASS observations and CLASS data entry needs to be completed by December 17th

Share your thoughts and feedback! [WEBINAR SURVEY](#)

Questions?

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