

**LOCAL CLASS®  
OBSERVATIONS  
BEST PRACTICES  
GUIDEBOOK**

2019-2020

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 preschool classrooms.

Virginia Department of Education

## Table of Contents

<b>Why Local CLASS® Observations?</b>	....2
<b>Preparing to Conduct Local CLASS® Observations</b>	....4
Selecting and Training Local CLASS® Observers	
Ensuring CLASS® Observer Accuracy	
Preparing Teachers to be Observed	
<b>Local CLASS® Observations – Recommended Protocol</b>	....7
Before the Observations	
During the Observations	
After the Observations	
<b>Key Points about Feedback</b>	....10
<b>Programmatic Requirements for Local CLASS® Observations in 2019-2020</b>	....12
Early Childhood Quality Grant (ECSE and VPI)	
Local VPI Observations	
Local ECSE Observations	
Local PDG Birth to Five Observations	
<b>Resource Links to Support Local CLASS® Observations</b>	....16

**Purpose:** The purpose of this document is to provide school divisions and communities with protocols, answers to FAQs, and links to resources for conducting local CLASS® observations in the various settings and programs across the state.

## WHY LOCAL CLASS™ OBSERVATIONS?

### Why the focus on teacher-child interactions?

Effective, engaging interactions serve as the foundation for learning in early childhood classrooms. Children who experience high quality teacher-child interactions learn and grow more, even those who may otherwise struggle in the classroom. As such, measuring these interactions consistently and making concerted efforts to improve them lies at the heart of offering high-quality, enriching experiences for all children. Feedback on the quality of teacher-child interactions in early childhood classrooms helps improve the learning environment, which leads to improved outcomes for all children.

### Why are we using the CLASS® tool?

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) is a widely-used and rigorously-validated observational tool. Multiple versions of the CLASS® exist that capture dimensions of teacher-child interactions for children from birth through secondary school, making the CLASS® lens applicable throughout a child's education. To date, dozens of observational studies utilizing CLASS™ across a range of early childhood education programs show that children who experience higher observed teacher-child interactions also show higher levels of social-emotional and pre-academic development (see [CLASS® Outcomes Studies](#)). Because CLASS® offers a valid, reliable window into the critical interactions children experience within classrooms, these assessments are a valuable tool for quality improvement.

### What is the difference between an external and a local CLASS® observation?

A CLASS observation is considered to be *local* if it is coordinated, scheduled, and recorded by the local school division or community. Observers from the local community (such as principals, directors, early childhood coordinators) often conduct local observations. Some communities may select to secure CLASS® observation services with an organization outside of their program to conduct local observations (e.g., Teachstone®, VA Quality).

Typically, CLASS® observations that are required as a part of program compliance or mandated by a governing body and are coordinated, scheduled, and recorded by the Center for the Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (CASTL), Teachstone®, Virginia Quality, or Head Start are not considered to be local observations because they are conducted as a part of by an external group.

### Why are local CLASS® observations being conducted in addition to the external observations?

Though valuable, external observations occur relatively infrequently. Teachers benefit from more specific feedback and individualized supports that can be provided through CLASS® observations conducted at the local level. With local observations, teachers will get observed more often, and the feedback they receive is more likely to be used to inform training and coaching. Local observations

should be conducted at least twice each school year and helps assess growth in teacher-child interactions over time.

Having site/school or school division leaders trained to reliability in CLASS<sup>®</sup> enables them to bring the CLASS<sup>®</sup> lens to every aspect of their work. Obtaining CLASS<sup>®</sup> reliability is an expedient and effective way to ensure site leaders have clear, age-appropriate expectations for classroom interactions and instruction, even if they don't have a formal early childhood background.

### Who needs to conduct local CLASS<sup>®</sup> observations in 2019-2020?

Several early childhood programs are required to complete local CLASS<sup>®</sup> observations in 2019-2020:

- *Early Childhood Quality Grantees*: School divisions that received the Early Childhood Quality Grant are completing local observations twice a year for Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) classrooms.
- *Preschool Development Grant B-5 Pilot Communities*: The ten pilot communities participating in PDG B-5 in 2019 will have local CLASS observations conducted in 2019-2020. Observations for this grant must be completed for classrooms in all publicly-funded programs for infant, toddler, PreK classrooms and family day homes.

All school divisions are encouraged to begin doing local CLASS<sup>®</sup> observations for ECSE and VPI classrooms in 2019-2020.

Important Note: VPI programs will be required to conduct local CLASS<sup>®</sup> observation for all VPI classrooms at least twice a year beginning in 2020-2021. These will be in addition to the external CLASS<sup>®</sup> observations (overseen by UVA-CASTL) conducted in all VPI classrooms once every two years. This is described in detail in [A Plan to Ensure High-Quality Instruction in All VPI Classrooms \(Submitted to the general assembly in November 2018\)](#).

### What are the expectations for CLASS<sup>®</sup> scores?

- As required by the Virginia General Assembly and reported in [A Plan to Ensure High-Quality Instruction in All VPI Classrooms \(Submitted to the general assembly in November 2018\)](#), the VDOE has established VPI thresholds for the three Pre-K CLASS<sup>®</sup> domains.
- To date, dozens of observational studies utilizing CLASS<sup>®</sup> across a range of early childhood education programs show that children who experience higher observed teacher-child interactions also show higher levels of social-emotional and pre-academic development. The thresholds established are associated with positive impacts on children. VA Quality currently uses the same threshold levels for quality improvement efforts in programs across the state.
- There are no implications for programs or classrooms who are not currently meeting the thresholds displayed here, though programs should consider how to select professional development to support improvement.

#### CLASS Thresholds

**Emotional Support = 5**  
**Classroom Organization = 5**  
**Instructional Support = 3.25**

**PREPARING TO CONDUCT LOCAL CLASS® OBSERVATIONS**

**Selecting and Training Local CLASS® Observers**

<b>Who</b>	<p>Local observers will be determined and selected at the local level. Localities may consider selecting principals, assistant principals, center directors, coaches, early childhood coordinators, or others to receive CLASS® observer reliability training, observe and give individualized feedback to teachers. Consider, for your particular program, the pros/cons of having any of these individuals trained. Factors such as their current and desired roles in supervising/coaching teachers, planning/delivering PD and availability for becoming certified and then re-certifying to observe each year should be considered.</p> <p>A school division may decide to additionally train teachers to become observers, but it is not recommended to solely train teachers to complete local observations (considering the potential limits of teachers’ roles and time). There are many other training formats and resources for teachers to build their knowledge and skills with teacher-child interactions, including those domains measured by the CLASS® tool—professional development is offered through <a href="#">Teachstone</a> and others.</p> <p>Local communities should consider what other early childhood programs within the region may also be using the CLASS® observation tool and potentially seek to coordinate observers across programs.</p>
<b>Requirements</b>	<p>All observers must hold a current CLASS™ PreK certification (having taken a CLASS® Observer Training and passed the reliability test), or in the case of infant/toddler observations for PDG B-5, the observer must have the applicable certification.</p> <p>The CLASS® Observer Training is presented over a two-day session followed by an online certification test to be taken within two weeks of completing the training. See <a href="#">Teachstone’s® Reliability Test Taking Tips</a> (with resources and instructions to help you prep). If you need help getting certified, email Teachstone® at <a href="mailto:reliabilitysupport@teachstone.com">reliabilitysupport@teachstone.com</a>.</p> <p>Observers must maintain their certification each year. This is accomplished by purchasing <a href="#">Observer Recertification</a> through Teachstone® and then taking the online re-certification test within one year of last certification. If more than a year has lapsed, observers need to take the CLASS® Observer Training and certification again.</p> <p>Local setting (e.g., school-based, community-based) procedures and requirements for volunteers and visitors should always be followed (e.g., background check, identification presented).</p>

**Selecting and Training Local Observers - FAQs**

1. How many reliable CLASS® observers should a locality have in place per classroom?
  - This is a local decision based on the role and responsibilities of staff selected to be observers and the location of classrooms. One CLASS® observation is estimated to take approximately

- 2 hours for classroom observation, 30 minutes for report development, and 30 minutes for feedback with the teacher.
- Consider training more than one person. This will enable double coding, dividing up classroom caseloads, and protect against gaps of observers in the case of staff turnover.
2. Will the VDOE and CASTL provide the training for local CLASS® observers to become trained and reliable for VPI and ESCE classrooms?
- No, not as a general practice. Limited funding has been provided through the one-time Early Childhood Quality Grant (spring 2019) and CLASS® Observer trainings have been offered throughout the state in fall 2019. However, localities should consider other sources of professional development funds to support ongoing CLASS® training, both to train reliable observers and to provide foundational CLASS® knowledge to teachers.
  - Information regarding CLASS® Observation Training can be found on the [Virginia Planning for CLASS™ Observations website](#), or by contacting [Paloma Panesi](#) from Teachstone®.
  - The VDOE will continue to seek additional opportunities to support divisions in building capacity with the CLASS® tool.

**Ensuring CLASS® Observer Accuracy**

<p><b>Drift</b></p>	<p>All early childhood programs implementing local CLASS observations have the responsibility of ensuring that CLASS scores and the accompanying feedback provided to teachers is always accurate. Even the most experienced CLASS observers need practice to ensure their CLASS® observations remain fair and accurate.</p> <p>It is important for local CLASS® observers to be aware of the possibility of “drift” and to take steps to avoid it. Drift can happen to observers who have passed the CLASS® reliability test, but over time they begin scoring less accurately. Their coding and scoring may “drift” away from CLASS® master coders and the CLASS® manual protocols.</p>
<p><b>Double Coding/Shadow Scoring</b></p>	<p>Double coding, also referred to as shadow scoring, occurs when two reliable CLASS® observers conduct a CLASS® observation at the same time to sharpen their skills. This is an important method for maintaining inter-rater reliability, accuracy, and fidelity to the CLASS tool.</p> <p>During observations being double coded, the two observers begin and end the four observation cycles at the same time. Observers score the first cycle independently. Once scoring is completed for the cycle they review scores for the cycle (outside of the classroom) and discuss any dimension scores that do not align. Observers determine who has the supporting evidence that most closely aligns with the CLASS® manual and come to a consensus on the score for the dimension. This process repeats for all four cycles.</p>
<p><b>Calibration</b></p>	<p>CLASS® calibration provides an avenue for observers to check themselves between annual recertification tests. <a href="#">Teachstone offers an online calibration program</a> for all certified CLASS® observers on a yearly, quarterly, or monthly basis. Participants practice coding classroom video and receive immediate feedback on their scoring.</p>

### Ensuring CLASS® Observer Accuracy - FAQs

1. How often should “double coding” or “shadow scoring” be completed?
  - This practice of “shadow scoring” or “double coding” is encouraged for new observers, as well as for more practiced observers at least once every six months to avoid any drift.
  
2. Is there a possibility that a local observer may have predetermined biases that could impact the CLASS® score?
  - Concerns about bias and conflict of interest can be addressed. Shadow-scoring, calibration sessions and comparing local and external observation results can help local observers become more accurate.

### Preparing Teachers to be Observed – Opportunities for Training

<b>CASTL</b>	<p>When external CLASS® observations for VPI classrooms occur in the school division (once every two years) CASTL will provide VPI leaders and teachers across the state information about the purposes of CLASS®, the importance of implementing quality teacher-child interactions, and what to expect with observations. This will be accomplished through webinar formats and online materials provided to VPI leaders to disseminate to teachers.</p> <p>During the 2019-20 school year CASTL will support division leaders to improve plans for effective PD for teachers and assistants through a series of consultation calls that will include feedback on school divisions’ PD plans and use of CLASS® data to drive PD, especially for VPI classrooms performing lower on two or three CLASS™ domains.</p>
<b>Teachstone</b>	<p><a href="#">Teachstone</a> provides introductory trainings for teachers to familiarize them with the CLASS® methodology. The VDOE currently has a state contract with Teachstone (expires June 30, 2019) for certain services. This contract is for use by Virginia public school divisions and can be requested from Marie Williams, Director of Procurement Office, VDOE at <a href="mailto:Marie.Williams@doe.virginia.gov">Marie.Williams@doe.virginia.gov</a>. Trainings may still be purchased outside of the VDOE contract by other entities.</p>
<b>Head Start</b>	<p>Head Start has a set of 15-minute <a href="#">In-service Suite Modules</a> on engaging interactions and environments include the topics of social emotional support, well-organized classrooms, and instructional interactions. These modules, which include PPT presentations with embedded videos and handouts, are a great resource for teachers/assistants as a part of a professional learning community or coaching.</p>
<b>VPI+ Website</b>	<p>The <a href="#">VPI+ website</a> hosts a video clip directory with a series of video clips that have been carefully vetted and selected by staff from CASTL. Video clips on specific topics can be narrowed down using the categories provided (e.g., instructional interactions, social/emotional, routines/transitions).</p> <p>Note: The materials on this website will be migrated to a new Early Childhood Education website hosted by CASTL in spring 2020.</p>

**LOCAL CLASS® OBSERVATIONS – RECOMMENDED PROTOCOL**

**Before the Observations**

<b>Scheduling</b>	<p>When scheduling a local observation, localities should collect teachers’ daily schedules to avoid times to not code (e.g., recess, “specials,” nap). See the “activities” that should not be observed below.</p> <p>It is recommended that localities create a written schedule to ensure all classrooms will be observed in fall and spring (required beginning 2020-21) to more evenly distribute the time required.</p> <p>Some localities may want to provide teachers with a predetermined window of time during which unannounced observations may take place. Alternatively, localities may tell teachers the exact time and date. Note that external observations happen within an unannounced window, so localities may want to practice this with their own observations as well.</p>
<b>Length</b>	<p>Observations include four 20-minute observation cycles with a 10-minute coding session following each cycle (approximately 2 hours total).</p>
<b>Activities</b>	<p>Activities, transitions and routines in the morning or afternoon may be observed.</p> <p>Time periods that should not be observed include: “specials” outside of the classroom (e.g., music class, physical education class), toileting when the whole group visits the restroom, cafeteria-based meals, and recess.</p>

**Before the Observation - FAQs**

1. What time of year should local observations be conducted?
  - It is recommended that one take place in fall and one in spring, at minimum.
  - Localities choosing to observe more frequently might distribute observations across fall, winter, and spring.

## During the Observations

<p><b>Teacher and Assistant</b></p>	<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 10 consecutive days.)</p> <p>Substitute teaching assistants may be observed regardless of long-term status.</p> <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><b>Observer Interactions</b></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>While observing, it might be helpful for the observer to find a spot to sit or stand that allows him/her to be close enough to hear and see the interactions, but not so close to be in the way. Observers should also be prepared to move around the room discreetly when the teacher and/or children move.</p>
<p><b>Scoring Cycles</b></p>	<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> <p>Observers do not conduct observations during the 10-minute coding sessions.</p> <p>Observers do not conduct more than four cycles of observations.</p>

## During the Observations - FAQs

1. What happens if the observer has to end the CLASS® cycle early?
  - There may be times when you will need to terminate a CLASS® observation due to an uncontrollable disruption such as a fire drill or other emergency. Please note a disruption, such as a child displaying challenging behavior, would not prevent continuing an observation cycle.
  - If you are in the middle of a CLASS® cycle, and a cycle needs to be stopped, you can assign ratings to the CLASS® codes, based on what you have observed up to that point, as long as 10 minutes of the observation have been completed. The ratings will be based upon what you observed during that 10-minute observation time. Note the end time of the cycle on the protocol.
  - All four observation cycles should 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 needs to be discarded.

## After the Observation

<b>Calculating Scores</b>	<p>When calculating CLASS® scores, always follow all guidelines on the CLASS® Scoring Summary Sheet and appropriate pages of the CLASS® manual.</p> <p>As an option, observers may use this Excel <a href="#">CLASS calculator</a> from VDOE (or another system) to enter raw data and get output of tables and graphs. This is an optional tool that may be helpful in computing or double checking scores. It does not take the place of CLASS® score summary sheets or feedback reports.</p>
<b>Professional Development</b>	<p>Teachers should receive ongoing coaching and professional development specifically targeted to their CLASS® scores in an effort to provide the quality of interactions and instruction needed to support young learners.</p> <p>Research points to five elements of effective professional development, including: well-articulated objectives, data-driven focus, specific focus on practices, sufficient intensity/dosage, and feedback loops</p>

## After the Observations - FAQs

1. How are local CLASS® scores and data used?
  - The primary purpose is to provide feedback to teachers/assistants to support continuous improvement efforts and increase learning outcomes for children at the local level.
  - For VPI and ESCE classrooms, the VDOE would like to collect record of any local CLASS® observations completed to collect a baseline for the state. Please see protocols for submitting data in on pages 12-15 of this document.
2. How can CLASS® observation data be used to assist with changing teacher practice?
  - Ensure observation data are translated into a useful feedback form for teachers. For observational data to be useful to teachers, feedback must be understandable, objective, and specific. Teachers benefit from information that includes scores (1-7) and/or a description of the given range for each CLASS® dimension (low/mid/high) as well as clear examples within each area. Further, for this feedback to add meaningfully to a teacher's practice, more regular observations and feedback sessions (at least twice) across the school year are necessary.
  - The feedback form should not be the same template as the CLASS® observation form. Observers should translate this into observation data and notes that are meaningful to the teacher. The VDOE has produced a [sample template](#).

## KEY POINTS ABOUT FEEDBACK

### Providing Feedback

Providing teachers quality feedback regarding their local CLASS® observation is a critical component of the improvement practice.

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 [this fillable template provided by VDOE](#) or another chosen template to share not only scores/ranges, but notes on what was observed (remember to include positive examples!). It's advised to share the written feedback with the teacher/teaching team at least a few days before the scheduled meeting so they can reflect on their practice.

Feedback providers should draw from CASTL's Feedback protocols to guide effective feedback sessions.

- Part 1 – [CLASS Feedback Quickstart Guide](#) explains the steps to take before, during and after a session and provides accompanying tools. For example, there is a Teacher-Child Interactions Self-Assessment for teachers to complete before a feedback session.
- Part 2 – [CLASS Feedback Principles](#) lays out six principles to help feedback providers be mindful of approaches that promote teacher engagement, reflection, and motivation in feedback sessions.

Recommended approaches from the CLASS® feedback protocols above include:

- Start with a general conversation and work to make the teacher feel comfortable.
- Orient the teacher to the structure of the local feedback form.
- Review domain level scores, calling attention to general trends.
- First highlight areas of strength (focus on the positive) and then one area for growth by domain, unpacking specific examples.
- Work with the teacher to determine a dimension or one aspect of a dimension to be an area of focus.
- Discuss how the teacher can focus on this area of interactions in the coming weeks in his/her daily classroom interactions with children.
- Identify specific strategies or action steps so that the teacher can practice teacher interactions in a targeted manner.

If possible, either email or print out a quick summary of your feedback session and the specific action steps for the teacher to put into practice.

<b>Support for Growth</b>	<p>Feedback providers and other PD providers support teachers to grow in areas of need through individualized PD. This may include activities like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Practice-focused PD (in whole/small group PD sessions or online module formats) that introduce key knowledge pieces and then help teachers plan for and practice improvements.</li><li>• Action Planning (in coaching or PLCs) followed by regular feedback/analysis loops with colleagues (coach/admin/peer teachers) where teachers reflect on what worked in their classrooms and how to incrementally improve</li><li>• Informal, “focused” or “walk through” observations targeted to specific Action Plan areas (e.g., one CLASS dimension) so that teachers can focus on improving one practice at a time and receive frequent feedback on that practice.</li><li>• Professional Development (in any of the formats above) primarily focused on curriculum implementation can intentionally embed a focus on aligned interactions. Consider looking at CLASS® data alongside other data sources (curriculum fidelity, child outcomes) to identify common needs. Research suggests that children benefit the most when interactions and instruction, guided by a strong curriculum are maximized.</li></ul>
---------------------------	---

**PROGRAMATIC REQUIREMENTS FOR LOCAL CLASS™ OBSERVATIONS IN 2019-2020**

Additional information on the external and local CLASS observations conducted in 2019-2020, and how these observations can be used to meet programmatic requirements, can be found in [Maximizing CLASS Observations in 2019](#).

**Early Childhood Quality Grant Divisions (ECSE and VPI)**

<b>Ages/Classrooms</b>	VPI PreK and ECSE Classrooms in schools and centers that are part of a division that received the Early Childhood Quality Grant in fall 2019.
<b>Who Observes</b>	Locally determined
<b>Required</b>	All VPI and ECSE classrooms will have local CLASS® observations twice a year in 2019-2020
<b>Data Collection</b>	For 2019-2020, send a scanned copy of each VPI <i>CLASS Scoring Summary Sheet</i> to VDOE at <a href="mailto:earlychildhood@doe.virginia.gov">earlychildhood@doe.virginia.gov</a>

**Early Childhood Quality Grant - FAQs**

1. What is a *CLASS® Scoring Summary Sheet*?
  - The *CLASS® Score Summary Sheet* is in the back of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System booklet produced by Teachstone® and has a table in which to write in scores for the four cycles.
  
2. What needs to be included on each scanned *CLASS® Score Summary Sheet* submitted to the VDOE?
  - First and last name for both teacher and instructional assistant (place both on teacher line).
  - School name (center) and school division name (place both on center/ID line).
  - Observer’s first and last name.
  - Start time (time first cycle began) and end time (time last cycle ended).
  - Cycle-level scores for the classroom.
  
3. When do we send scanned *CLASS® Score Summary Sheets* to the VDOE at [earlychildhood@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:earlychildhood@doe.virginia.gov)?
  - Fall Observations by December 13, 2019
  - Spring Observations by June 12, 2020
  
4. Do we send VDOE the calculator saved in Excel with teachers’ CLASS® scores provided?
  - No, only send scanned *CLASS® Score Summary Sheets*. The excel calculator is an optional tool.

**Local VPI Observations**

<b>Ages/Classrooms</b>	VPI PreK classrooms in schools and centers
<b>Who Observes</b>	Locally determined
<b>Required</b>	<p>2019-2020: All school divisions should build capacity for local CLASS® observations twice a year (optional).</p> <p>2020-2021: All VPI classrooms will be required to conduct local CLASS® observations twice per year. Local observations are in addition to any observations conducted by CASTL or other external parties.</p>
<b>Data Collection</b>	<p>For divisions conducting local observations prior to 2020-2021, please send a scanned copy of each VPI CLASS® <i>Scoring Summary Sheet</i> to VDOE at <a href="mailto:earlychildhood@doe.virginia.gov">earlychildhood@doe.virginia.gov</a>. Please include the following on each <i>Scoring Summary Sheet</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First and last name for both teacher and instructional assistant (place both on teacher line).</li> <li>• School name (center) and school division name (place both on center/ID line).</li> <li>• Observer’s first and last name.</li> <li>• Start time (time first cycle began) and end time (time last cycle ended).</li> <li>• Scores for each of the 4 cycles.</li> </ul> <p>Also, please see the FAQs under the Early Childhood Quality Grant section above for information on submitting CLASS® scores. Additional guidance for sharing observation results with the VDOE for the 2020-2021 school year will be shared in the future.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> School divisions that are participation in PDG B-5 will submit local CLASS observation scores through Link B5, see below for more information.</p>
<b>Professional Development and Planning</b>	<p>All VPI teachers should have access to high-quality professional development, enabling them to provide the quality of interactions and instruction needed to support young learners. Professional development should be based on observation and data, including information gained from local and external CLASS® observations.</p> <p>CASTL will support school division leadership teams, ensuring teachers receive individualized feedback and professional development plans and that the professional development provided adheres to research-informed, best practice standards.</p> <p>CASTL will provide trainings and technical assistance to build local capacity for data use, PD planning, and continuous improvement including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VPI coordinator meetings (March-April 2019)</li> <li>• Regional Leadership Academy trainings (ongoing 2019-2020)</li> <li>• Ongoing consultation calls with CASTL staff</li> <li>• Identifying existing PD that meets best practice standards for divisions to consider.</li> </ul>

	Professional Development Planning resources are available on the <a href="#">Advancing Effective Interactions and Instruction in VPI Classrooms website</a> .
--	---

### Local ECSE Observations

<b>Ages/Classrooms</b>	Self-contained classrooms for children ages 2-5 with Individualized Education Programs in schools and centers that are taught by an Early Childhood Special Education teacher. This also includes a reverse inclusion classroom that also serves non-disabled children from the community.
<b>Who Observes</b>	Locally determined
<b>Required</b>	<p>2019-2020: All school divisions should build capacity for local CLASS® observations twice a year (optional)</p> <p>2020-2021: All school divisions are encouraged to build capacity and to complete local CLASS® observations twice a year (optional).</p>
<b>Data Collection</b>	<p>For divisions conducting local observations prior to 2020-2021, please send a scanned copy of each VPI CLASS® <i>Scoring Summary Sheet</i> to VDOE at <a href="mailto:earlychildhood@doe.virginia.gov">earlychildhood@doe.virginia.gov</a>.</p> <p>Please include the following on each <i>Scoring Summary Sheet</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First and last name for both teacher and instructional assistant (place both on teacher line).</li> <li>• School name (center) and school division name (place both on center/ID line).</li> <li>• Observer’s first and last name.</li> <li>• Start time (time first cycle began) and end time (time last cycle ended).</li> <li>• Scores for each of the 4 cycles.</li> </ul> <p>Also, please see the FAQs under the Early Childhood Quality Grant section above for information on submitting CLASS® scores.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> School divisions that are participation in PDG B-5 will submit local CLASS observation scores through Link B5, see below for more information.</p>

### Local ECSE Observations - FAQs

1. What are the recommendations for observing in classrooms that contain a large percentage of students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)?
  - Many VPI classrooms will include children who have IEPs. In addition, the CLASS® tool is being used in self-contained classrooms in which most, if not all, of the children have an IEP. To obtain valid information about the efficacy of the teacher-child interactions, the observer must follow the protocol outlined in the CLASS® manual and look for evidence of all of the CLASS® dimensions during the observation, regardless of the composition of the classroom. Dimensions or indicators may not be skipped as the types of interactions described by the CLASS® are important for all learners, regardless of ability. Additionally, we provide the following recommendations:
    - Observers should have a background in special education.
    - Observers should briefly talk with the teacher or administrator to learn about any special circumstances they should take in account when coding (e.g., types of

disabilities, alternative or augmentative communication systems in use, behavior intervention plans). These circumstances would not alter CLASS® codes, but rather would provide context to help the observer understand the nuances of the behaviors they observe.

- Use the CLASS® tool that corresponds to the chronological age of the majority of the children in the classroom.

2. Are there resources to support completing observations in classrooms with a large percentage of students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)?

- There are two resources designed to provide recommendations when the CLASS® tool is used to observe in classrooms with children receiving special education services. They are *Recommendations for [Using the CLASS® in Inclusive Early Childhood Programs, Birth-Age 8](#)* and *[Using the CLASS® to Promote Responsive Interactions that Benefit All Children](#)*.

**PDG Birth to Five Local Observations**

<b>Ages/Classrooms</b>	Infant, toddler and PreK classrooms in publicly- funded settings in participating communities
<b>Who Observes</b>	Locally determined
<b>Required</b>	All classrooms in sites participating in PDG B-5 activities should be observed twice during the 2019-2020 school year – once in the fall and once in the spring.
<b>Data Collection</b>	All classrooms should enter their local observation scores into the <a href="#">LinkB5</a> data portal.  Please see the <a href="#">LinkB5</a> User Manual for more guidance on how to enter CLASS® scores into LinkB5. PDG Community Leads should keep and store hard copies of CLASS® Score sheets used for these observations.

**PDG Birth to Five Local Observations – FAQ**

1. Can I count any of my other local observations as PDG Birth to Five local observations?
  - Yes. Local VPI observations or observations conducted as part of the Early Childhood Quality Grant can be counted as Local PDG observations. Other local observations may also be used if they meet the requirements described in the “Preparing to Conduct Local CLASS® Observations” section above (p. 4).
  - If Local VPI or EC Quality Grant observations are used for PDG observations, please send photocopies of the CLASS® Score Summary sheets to the PDG community leads in addition to the reporting requested for those protocols.
  
2. Who should I contact if I’m having difficulties logging into or using the LinkB5 data portal?
  - The LinkB5 User Manual provides a detailed walkthrough of how to enter CLASS® observation scores into the system. However, if you are still having difficulties using LinkB5, you may contact LinkB5 support either via phone (1-833-554-6525) or via email ([linkb5support@virginia.edu](mailto:linkb5support@virginia.edu)).
  
3. How should I provide feedback to teachers after conducting an observation?

- Please check to see if your PDG community lead has a specific feedback form they would like you to use. If not, you may consider using the VDOE template linked in the “Key Points about Feedback” section. *Please note that this template corresponds to the PreK CLASS® tool and will need to be modified for other versions of the CLASS® tool.* For best practices about providing CLASS™ feedback, please reference the “Key Points about Feedback” section of this document.
4. If I’m observing a mixed-age classroom, which CLASS® tool should I use?
- If the classroom contains a mix of infants, toddlers, and preK aged children, please use the tool that matches the majority of the children. For instance, if a classroom includes 1 infant, 1 toddler, and 5 PreK children, use the PreK CLASS® tool. If there are an equal number of children across age groups, please use the Toddler tool. For instance, if a classroom includes 3 toddlers and 3 preK children, use the Toddler CLASS® tool.
  - If you are observing a mixed-age classroom, please contact someone from the site to learn about the classroom composition and choose the CLASS® tool you will use ahead of your observation. Even if the classroom composition differs on the day of the observation from what you had planned, please do not change the tool used.

## RESOURCE LINKS TO SUPPORT LOCAL CLASS™ OBSERVATIONS

### Virginia's Plan for Teacher/Child Interactions

- [CLASS® Outcomes Studies](#)
- [A Plan to Ensure High-Quality Instruction in All VPI Classrooms](#)
- [State VPI Plan FAQ](#)
- [Advancing Effective Interactions and Instruction in VPI Classrooms](#)
- [Maximizing CLASS Observations in 2019](#)

### Local Observation Resources

- [CLASS Calculator](#)
- [Fillable Feedback Template Provided by VDOE](#)
- [Part 1- CLASS Feedback Quickstart Guide](#)
- [Part 2- CLASS Feedback Principles](#)
- [Using the CLASS® in Inclusive Early Childhood Programs, Birth-Age 8](#)
- [Using the CLASS® to Promote Responsive Interactions that Benefit All Children](#)

### CLASS Connections

- [CLASS® Outcomes Studies](#)
- [Teachstone®'s Virginia Planning for CLASS™ Observations Website](#)
- [Teachstone®'s CLASS™ Reliability Test Taking Tips](#)
- Part 1 – [CLASS Feedback Quickstart Guide](#)
- Part 2 – [CLASS Feedback Principles](#)

### PD Resources

- Head Start [15-minute Inservice Suite](#) modules
- [VPI+ Website \(with resources to be migrated to a new Early Childhood Education website hosted by CASTL in Spring 2020\)](#)
- [Professional Development Planning and Resources](#)