

VPI CLASS-PreK Observation FAQ's

1. What is the CLASS and why is Virginia using CLASS?
 - The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) is a validated, reliable observation tool that measures the quality of interactions between teachers and children. Research indicates that children in classrooms with higher CLASS® scores show more learning and development. The CLASS® is used to measure and strengthen interactions in thousands of early childhood classrooms nationwide.
2. How big of a window will there be during which the external observer could come to a VPI classroom?
 - There will be a window of 2 weeks for each classroom observation.
 - Teachers will get an email from their observer approximately a week ahead of time notifying them of the window (coordinators and site leaders will be cc'd on these emails).
3. Which teachers must be present for the observation to take place?
 - The lead teacher (not a short-term substitute) must be present. Any new lead teacher or substitute lead teacher that has been in the classroom for 10 consecutive school days may be observed.
 - Substitute teaching assistants may be observed.
4. In what cases might my observation be rescheduled?
 - In the case of inclement weather.
 - If the lead teacher (or substitute teacher for 10+ days) or >50% of children are absent (see #3 above).
5. What activities may be observed?
 - Activities, transitions and routines in the morning or afternoon may be observed.
6. What kinds of activities will NOT be observed?
 - "Specials" outside of the classroom
 - Physical Education class,
 - Music class,
 - Computer class,
 - Library visit,
 - Art class,
 - Cafeteria-based meals
 - Toileting in pre-k classrooms where the whole group visits the restroom,
 - Recess
7. How long will my observer be present on the observation day?
 - Around 2 hours.
 - 2 hours is needed to collect CLASS data. CLASS data is collected in four 20-minute observations followed by 10-minute coding sessions. (4 x 30-minute cycles = 2 hours)
 - An observer may be present longer than 2 hours if an activity occurs that may not be observed (see #5 above) or additional breaks are needed for the observer.

8. What will my observer do and where will he/she go on the day of the observation?
 - There will typically be one observer per classroom, except in the cases of paired/double coding-- which is used to ensure reliability (see # 12).
 - After checking in at the school/center, observers will enter the classroom and briefly check in with the teacher and then find a place in the classroom to sit where they are able to see and hear without being disruptive.
 - Observers will then move discretely as needed to see and hear teacher-child interactions.
 - Observers will take notes on interactions during their observations. Between observations, they may leave the classroom to review notes and assign codes.
 - After the observation, the observer will let teachers know they are done and will sign out.

9. In what ways will my observer interact with me and my children?
 - Observers will try to minimize their interactions with teachers and children so as to remain focused and objective and minimize any disruptions to the classroom.
 - For instance, if children come up to interact, observers will acknowledge their presence nonverbally (e.g., with a smile or a nod) and if approached further will say something to redirect the child (e.g., "I'm busy writing now, and need to observe," or "I am here to work and I need to do my job now," or "You can go ask your teacher").
 - After the observation, observers will briefly check out with the teacher but will not have conversations with or provide feedback to the teacher on the observation.

10. Which teachers within a classroom will be observed?
 - CLASS observations provide a classroom-level score that includes overall teacher-child interactions including the lead teacher and any other adults (e.g., assistant teacher, paraprofessional). Observers follow the CLASS manual which states that observers watch children's interactions with all teachers/adults in the room/area. Focus on each teacher's interactions are weighed based on the number of students with whom they are working, the amount of time they spend with the students, and their responsibility for the activities.

11. What will happen after the observation?
 - The scores and notes will be compiled into a classroom summary report that will be sent to VPI coordinators within three weeks.
 - CASTL will support the VPI coordinator and any other team leaders who will serve as feedback providers to provide teachers individualized feedback in a meeting within three weeks of leaders receiving the report.
 - Teachers will be asked to share their experiences and any feedback about the CLASS observations and feedback in a brief follow-up survey.

12. Who are the observers and what steps will be taken to ensure objective and reliable data is collected?
 - All observers must hold a current CLASS-PreK certification (having taken a CLASS Observer training and passing a reliability test) and receive additional training in the protocol for Virginia's VPI observations.
 - To ensure reliable coding and fidelity to the protocol: all observers will participate in paired/double coding sessions, complete a calibration test/ review session weekly, and will receive weekly audits and support from a quality assurance team.

Other questions? Contact your CASTL point person --or the broader CASTL team at castl@virginia.edu