

Across the state of Virginia, schools and early childhood programs are continuing to deal with challenges due to COVID-19, with many localities starting the year with virtual instruction. VDOE recognizes that in these fully virtual situations, in-person local CLASS® observations will not be possible. However, children continue to need supportive interactions, and teachers will benefit greatly from helpful feedback as they navigate this new instructional format.

The VDOE has developed Local Observation Guidance for Virtual Pre-K Instruction, which aligns with the domains and dimensions in the Pre-K CLASS® tool. This observation guidance is meant to be used at the local level to informally collect information and provide teacher feedback during virtual pre-K instruction. Questions about observations of virtual instruction should be directed to earlychildhood@doe.virginia.gov

Who should use this guidance?

This guidance can be used by any Pre-K CLASS certified observer in Virginia to support quality improvement in virtual settings. VPI and PDG programs must use this guidance at least once if classrooms remain fully virtual for 2020–2021. Any program using virtual instruction is encouraged to implement observations more frequently to provide teachers with ongoing feedback.

When in-person instruction resumes, or when in-person instruction is part of a hybrid approach, the official Pre-K CLASS tool should be used following the protocols in the [2020–2021 VDOE Local Observation Guidebook](#).

When should virtual instruction be observed?

Once teachers and children have had time to adjust and establish new online routines, observations of virtual instruction may be conducted for the purpose of providing teachers with supportive feedback and for professional development.

What should we do with the observation results?

The purpose of observing virtual instruction at the local level is to provide supportive feedback to teachers, including strengths and areas for improvement. There will not be any scoring of teacher-child interactions and there is no requirement to report the results to the VDOE or others at this time, however documentation should be kept on file.

What should be observed?

Observers will focus on teacher-child interactions during virtual instruction. This could include group instruction via video chat, or one-on-one interactions via video or phone if necessary. Observers may observe either live synchronous instruction, or a recording of live instruction at a later time. Here are a few tips for localities that opt to observe live instruction:

- Observers should turn on their camera to introduce themselves, but then turn off the camera and mute for the majority of the observation.
- Observers should view instruction in gallery mode to understand both the teacher's actions as well as the children's engagement.

Since the purpose for observing teacher-child interactions during virtual instruction is to support teachers through feedback and professional development, every effort should be made to try to reduce teacher anxiety so that the virtual observation process is as supportive as possible.

Where can we find more information about CLASS and virtual instruction?

Teachstone® has developed the following resources to support program leaders, teachers, and observers with virtual instruction:

- Recorded Webinar for Teachers & Program Leaders—[How to Support Meaningful Interactions in Virtual Classrooms](#)
- For Teachers—[Guidance for Providing Effective Teaching Strategies in Virtual Pre-K Classrooms](#)
- For Observers—[Guidance for Conducting CLASS Observations of Virtual Teaching](#)

OBSERVATION GUIDANCE

The following observation guidance outlines how the move to virtual settings may impact the evidence for each CLASS® domain. It includes some specific example interactions to look for that meet the intent of these domains. Like the indicators and behavioral markers in the CLASS manual, the list provided here is not meant to be exhaustive, but rather, to help observers think about some different types of evidence they might capture in a virtual setting. Although there is no scoring involved, observers should refer to the *Pre-K CLASS Manual* for more detailed descriptions of the domains and dimensions. Due to the unique circumstances of virtual pre-K instruction, it is not expected that observers will see examples from every dimension since the length and structure of virtual classroom activities will vary greatly.

Questions about Virginia's *Local Observation Guidance for Virtual Pre-K Instruction* should be directed to earlychildhood@doe.virginia.gov

PROGRAM NAME:

OBSERVER'S NAME:

TEACHER NAME(S):

DATE OF OBSERVATION:

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Note: In the fall, teachers will likely need to spend a significant amount of time providing Emotional Support and establishing Classroom Organization, and less time on Instructional Support. Therefore, observations conducted in the fall should focus on the CLASS domains and dimensions that support social and emotional development.

INDICATORS OF EFFECTIVE EMOTIONAL SUPPORT	EXAMPLE VIRTUAL INSTRUCTION BEHAVIORS TO LOOK FOR RELATED TO EMOTIONAL SUPPORT	OBSERVATION NOTES OF STRENGTHS AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive teacher-child and peer relationships are supported virtually • There are built-in opportunities for social conversation or ways for teachers to interact with children to share affection and connection • Teachers are aware of and responsive to individual needs and there are opportunities for individualized support • Teachers anticipate where individual children might need modifications or flexibility • Activities include provision for choice and invitations for children’s input and opinions • Children experience opportunities to lead their own learning • Children have freedom of movement during activities—expectations are not rigid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Teachers greet all children by name as they enter the session » Teachers provide opportunities for relationship building and social conversations, such having children introduce a pet, sibling, or favorite toy from home or setting up time for virtual playdates » Teachers and children share in virtual activities—for example, singing songs together » Teachers and children use thumbs-ups, air fives, clapping, and other celebratory gestures » Teachers and children use air hugs, finger hearts, “I love you” signs, and other affectionate gestures » Teachers look directly at the camera to create the sense of eye contact with children » The teacher anticipates problems and plans appropriately by recognizing that younger children aren’t used to sitting for long periods of time and building in wiggle breaks » The teacher notices lack of understanding and/or difficulties by paying attention to cues of disengagement, such as looking away from the screen and not responding » The teacher provides individualized support by setting up a time to meet individually or in small groups outside of the whole group session » Teachers are flexible about webcam use—children are not required to have webcams on » The teacher provides comfort and assistance by offering children strategies for self-soothing, such as deep breathing or self-hugs » Children seek support and guidance related to navigating the online platform » Children take risks by showing themselves on camera or volunteering when the teacher asks the class for someone to help with a lesson or activity » Children have a choice in which books the teacher will read during virtual story times » Children lead songs and other virtual routines, such as taking attendance » Children have freedom to move as needed during virtual activities, such as being able to stand or sit down during a virtual lesson 	

CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION

Note: In the fall, teachers will likely need to spend a significant amount of time providing Emotional Support and establishing Classroom Organization, and less time on Instructional Support. Therefore, observations conducted in the fall should focus on the CLASS domains and dimensions that support social and emotional development.

INDICATORS OF EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION	EXAMPLE VIRTUAL INSTRUCTION BEHAVIORS TO LOOK FOR RELATED TO CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION	OBSERVATION NOTES OF STRENGTHS AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers provide clear behavior expectations • Teachers use proactive and redirection strategies to prevent problems from developing • There are few, if any, instances of misbehavior • Learning time is maximized • There are clear routines • Transitions are brief and efficient • Teachers are fully prepared for activities and lessons • Teachers actively facilitate children’s engagement in lessons and activities • Teachers use a variety of modalities and materials • Children are interested and involved in activities • Teachers clarify learning objectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The teacher provides clear expectations and/or rules for all virtual sessions » The teacher asks a question about the activity, or calmly says a child’s name to redirect off-task behavior » Teachers provide alternate online activities for children who finish their work ahead of others » Teachers ensure few disruptions by quickly addressing distractions that appear on camera—for example, someone’s dog wandering into the frame » Children know what to do during the session, as evidenced by their use of conventions established by the teacher—for instance, raising their hands » Little wandering is observed, with children not frequently moving away from the computer/camera » Children show that they are listening by looking at the screen, responding to the teacher, and nodding in agreement with classmates » Teachers use interesting and creative materials to engage children such as short video clips, auditory props, or online whiteboards » Teachers provide a variety of ways for children to actively participate in virtual lessons, such as finger plays, scavenger hunts, thumbs-ups, response cards, learning apps, or responding verbally 	

INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT

Note: Shortened class sessions, audio lags, and children’s lack of familiarity with technology may limit the frequency, duration, and depth of Instructional Support strategies focused on understanding and language development in virtual settings. Observing teachers as they work closely with small groups or individual children virtually, in addition to whole group time, may provide more opportunities to observe teachers and children having deeper exchanges.

INDICATORS OF EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT	EXAMPLE VIRTUAL INSTRUCTION BEHAVIORS TO LOOK FOR RELATED TO INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT	OBSERVATION NOTES OF STRENGTHS AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers use discussions and activities that encourage analysis and reasoning • Teachers provide opportunities for children to be creative • Teachers link concepts and make connections to the real world • Teachers provide feedback to expand learning and understanding • Teachers encourage continued participation and persistence • There are opportunities for teacher-child and peer conversations • Teachers ask open-ended questions • Teachers use repetition and extension • Teachers use self- and parallel talk • Teachers use advanced vocabulary with children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Virtual lessons include the use of strategies that focus on critical thinking, such as sequencing, comparing and contrasting, problem solving, and predicting » Teachers ask open-ended questions, during live sessions or on a learning platform, that encourage children to think creatively » Teachers encourage children to brainstorm ideas and generate their own products during live sessions or during independent work time » Teachers link concepts by choosing virtual lessons/activities that have a similar conceptual focus » Teachers make connections to children’s lives at home during virtual lessons and activities, such as asking children to find something blue at home when doing a lesson on colors » Teachers provide opportunities for independent practice and feedback within or outside of the virtual session » Teachers allot time for online discussions » Teachers encourage children to take part in conversations during virtual sessions. » Teachers narrate what they are doing (“I am pulling up the story on my screen”) or what they see children doing (“Alisha is giving us a thumbs-up”). 	