

### Spring 2021 Local Observation Protocol Guidance for Early Childhood Community Networks

**Statutory and Policy Requirements:** The Louisiana [Early Childhood Education Act \(Act 3\)](#) of the 2012 Legislative session requires that the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) establishes and carries out a statewide accountability system used to measure the quality of all publicly-funded early childhood programs. To achieve that statutory requirement, [Bulletin 140 §503](#) requires community networks to develop a plan and process to coordinate and conduct local observations reliably and without conflict of interest. The Department requires all community networks to adopt a written local observation protocol that meets the minimum requirements included in column 1 of this document.

“CLASS® observations remain an effective way to understand the quality of interactions and support educators during the pandemic. During these stressful times, children need supportive interactions more than ever, and teachers will benefit greatly from helpful feedback around those interactions. If children are attending school in person, Teachstone recommends the continued use of CLASS® to understand the quality of classroom interactions and to support educators in their professional development (Teachstone, 2020).”

**Developing a Coordinated Observation Plan:** Community networks must develop a Coordinated Observation Plan by **September 30** and have a schedule for completing local observations for each observation period. For the 2020-2021 school year, this plan should also be sensitive to the impacts of COVID-19 and include protocols for conducting observations following OPH and LDOE guidelines. If you have questions or need assistance, contact [amy.poirier@la.gov](mailto:amy.poirier@la.gov) or [michael.bock@la.gov](mailto:michael.bock@la.gov).

A [template](#) for this plan has been developed to assist community networks as they develop observation protocols for the 2020-2021 year. Given the unique nature of the 2020-2021 academic year, the Department has updated guidance for the Spring 2020 semester and lead agencies may update their Coordinated Observation Plans when appropriate.

#### COVID-19 Considerations

**Essential Visitors:** Per the [School Reopening Guidelines](#) approved by the Office of Public Health, essential visitors are allowed to enter schools and centers to carry out essential functions that support the implementation of state/federal law or BESE policy.

	PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3
<b>Essential Visitors to School and Center Facilities</b>	<p><b>Essential visitors are individuals who must enter schools or early learning centers in order to conduct visits in accordance with Louisiana law or policy.</b> Essential visitors include, but are not limited to, individuals who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● conduct CLASS® observations</li> <li>● observe teacher candidates as part of the teacher preparation quality rating system</li> <li>● provide essential supports and services including, but not limited to, early intervention services, special education services, or mental health consultation</li> </ul>		

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## Public Health Considerations

**Public Health Considerations for In-Person Observations:** The Department recognizes that the ability for early childhood lead agencies to conduct in-person observations will be affected by COVID-19 related factors within each community network. In partnership with the Office of Public Health, the Department has established the following criteria that should be used when determining whether in-person observations can safely be conducted by external observers:

Consideration Types	When to Stop In-Person Observations	When to Resume In-Person Observations
<b>Community-wide considerations</b>	Based on data from <a href="https://ldh.la.gov/Coronavirus/">https://ldh.la.gov/Coronavirus/</a> , if the “Community Risk” reported by the Louisiana Department of Health is in the “higher” or “highest” risk categories, in person observations conducted by external observers should stop.  Lead agencies are encouraged to coordinate with their <a href="#">local public health unit</a> on decision making as appropriate.	Based on data from <a href="https://ldh.la.gov/Coronavirus/">https://ldh.la.gov/Coronavirus/</a> , if the “Community Risk” reported by the Louisiana Department of Health is in the “lower” or “moderate” categories, in person observations conducted by external observers may resume.  Lead agencies are encouraged to coordinate with their <a href="#">local public health unit</a> on decision making as appropriate.
<b>Site-level considerations</b>	If there are any <b>documented cases of COVID-19 at the site (inclusive of staff, children and parents)</b> or any evidence of community spread within the site, <b>in-person observations at that site should stop immediately.</b>	In-person observations at that site may resume <b>14 days after the individual(s) with a documented case of COVID-19 has been isolated.</b>  (Guidance on how sites should isolate children and staff who become sick is found in the <a href="#">OPH Guidelines for Child Care</a> and the <a href="#">OPH School Isolation/Quarantine Recommendations</a> ).
<b>Observer-level considerations</b>	If an observer exhibits symptoms of COVID-19 or tests positive for COVID-19, they should stop conducting in-person observations immediately.	The observer may resume conducting in-person observations after: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 3 days with no fever without use of fever-reducing medication <b>AND</b></li> <li>● Respiratory symptoms have improved (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) <b>AND</b></li> <li>● at least 10 days since symptoms first appeared.</li> </ul>
<b>Observer-level considerations</b>	If an observer resides with a household member exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 or who tested positive for COVID-19, they should stop conducting in-person observations immediately.	The observer may resume conducting in-person observations 14 days after household member with COVID-19 has been: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● without fever without use of fever-reducing medications <b>AND</b></li> <li>● respiratory symptoms have improved (e.g. cough, shortness of breath) <b>AND</b></li> <li>● at least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.</li> </ul>
<b>Observer-level considerations</b>	If an observer is exposed to COVID-19 through close contact with someone confirmed to have COVID-19 other than a household member, but the observer is not exhibiting symptoms and has not tested positive, they should stop conducting in-person observations immediately.  (NOTE: A close contact occurs when a person is within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes starting from 48 hours before illness onset until the time the infected patient is isolated.)	The observer may resume conducting in-person observations 14 days after last known close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19.  In some situations, it may be appropriate to use the <a href="#">shortened quarantine procedures</a> outlined by the Department of Health, including the published <a href="#">flowchart</a> .
<b>Observer-level considerations</b>	If an observer is sick with an illness other than COVID-19, they should stop conducting in-person observations immediately.	The observer may resume conducting in-person observations when recovered from their illness.



### Observation Protocol Updates

**Observation Protocol Updates:** In addition to these considerations (page 2) for whether in-person observations can be conducted safely, the Department has also provided additional COVID-19 minimum requirements and protocols that lead agencies and observers should implement when conducting in-person observations. Lead agencies also have the option to conduct teleconference or videotaped observations (guidance provided in Column 3). Lead agencies should consider the minimum requirements and protocols in all columns below when conducting observation visits of any type during the Spring2020 observation period.

For in-person observations conducted during COVID-19, lead agencies should refer to protocols in both Column 1: Local Protocol Requirements and Column 2: Additional COVID-19 protocol requirements. For live video conference (e.g. Zoom or another live video conferencing platform) or recorded video observations, lead agencies should refer to all applicable protocols in Column 1: Local Protocol Requirements, Column 2: Additional COVID-19 protocol requirements, and Column 3: Additional Live Video Conference & Recorded Video Protocol Requirements.

### Conducting 2020-2021 Observations Before the Observation Begins

	Column 1 Local Protocol Requirements	Column 2 Additional COVID-19 Protocol Requirements	Column 3 Additional Live Video Conference & Recorded Video Protocol Requirements
<b>Minimum Observer Qualifications</b>	<p>Local observers must meet the following minimum qualifications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Be certified by Teachstone as a reliable observer (certificate on file with lead agency);</li> <li>● Participate in on-going calibration exercises at least once per observation period; and</li> <li>● Have a valid Child Care Criminal Background Check (CCCBC) that is on file with the lead agency.</li> </ul>	<p>Community networks should develop protocols to ensure that observers are aware of and follow COVID-19 health and safety protocols and procedures, inclusive of the following minimum requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Observers should request and comply with, the health and safety procedures required by each site, inclusive of participating in any required health screenings that the site conducts upon entry to the facility prior to each observation visit;</li> <li>● Observers should have access to and utilize required personal protective equipment needed for each observation visit; and</li> <li>● Observers should understand that they are to report if they are exposed to, or diagnosed with, COVID-19 to the lead agency.</li> </ul>	<p>Community networks should develop protocols to ensure that live video conference or recorded video observations are conducted in a manner that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Aligns with Louisiana children’s privacy laws and best practices ensuring that schools and centers provide parental notification and obtain parental consent or the opportunity to opt-out if school board policy allows before capturing footage from classrooms that may include children’s images or audio (Lead agencies can refer to this guidance and <a href="#">sample</a> notification/consent);</li> <li>● Considers individual sites’ live video conference and video recording policies and capacity; and</li> <li>● Establishes best practices for capturing and ensuring video quality, audio quality, and minimally invasive capturing techniques.</li> </ul> <p>Teachstone (2020) recommends that a “neutral individual”, e.g. administrator, film the classroom to ensure capture of footage during transitions and movement throughout the classroom.”</p>

			<p>Live video conference observers and recorded video observers (also known as coders) must meet all of the same minimum qualifications as local observers.</p> <p>In accordance with local policies around video storage, it may be helpful for lead agencies to develop protocols for the safe storage and disposal of recorded video footage.</p> <p>Lead agencies should refer to <a href="#">Teachstone’s CLASS Video Observation Guidelines</a> and recommendations for obtaining high-quality video recordings located in Chapter 2 of the CLASS® Manual, Toddler and Pre-K when developing protocols for recorded video observations. This resource also provides recommendations for other aspects of conducting videotaped observations including guidelines for data collection that lead agencies may want to consider.</p>
<p><b>Scheduling Observations</b></p>	<p>Community networks must develop a written plan to ensure they have all sites and the classrooms for each site, with correct age types, entered in the CLASS® system by September 30 and have a schedule for completing local observations for each observation period.</p>	<p>For the 2020-2021 school year, the written plan should also be sensitive to the impacts of COVID-19 and include protocols for conducting observations following OPH and LDOE guidelines. Lead agencies should abide by the public health considerations found on page 2 of this document when determining whether it is safe to conduct in-person observations.</p> <p>Lead agencies may want to consider working closely with sites to schedule their observation visits. For example, working with them to schedule observations when lead teachers are present and when it is anticipated that 50% or more of currently enrolled children will be in attendance.</p>	<p>If utilizing live video conference (e.g. Zoom) or recorded video observations, the written plan should also include protocols outlining how the community network will schedule observations. These protocols should include how the community network will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identify the technology needed to complete live video conference or recorded video observations - ensuring that this technology is suitable for the site being observed (i.e., considers if staff are available to assist with capturing the interactions, if the site has WiFi, etc.);</li> <li>● Work with the site to determine the individual responsible for facilitating the live video conference or videotaping of the observation;</li> <li>● Determine how live video conferencing and videotaping will be conducted in a manner that does not impact the level of supervision and quality of adult-child interactions in the</li> </ul>

			<p>classroom, required ratios and group size, and maximum allowed group size during COVID-19 as outlined in the 2020 Local Observation Protocol Guidance for Early Childhood Community Network; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share protocols with the site that outline methods for ensuring that the web stream of video footage is of good audio and video quality, and adequately captures the visual and auditory information present in classroom interactions from both the teacher and children’s perspectives.</li> </ul> <p>When third party observations are scheduled to be completed virtually, lead agencies may coordinate with Picard to conduct local observations simultaneously during the Picard live-video stream, to cut down on scheduling capacity.</p> <p>Note: Shadow scoring should be completed for live video conference observations whenever possible.</p>
<b>Observer Schedules</b>	<p>Community networks must establish a process to review observer schedules for schedule conflict, <a href="#">conflicts of interest</a>, or other concerns, and make adjustments that are communicated to observers and sites.</p>	<p>Lead agencies should develop protocols to ensure observer schedules reflect up-to-date information for each observation site.</p> <p>The Department has provided a <a href="#">2020 Observation Planning Spreadsheet</a> to assist lead agencies when planning observations during COVID-19.</p>	<p>Community networks should develop protocols to determine which observers will be conducting live video conference observations.</p> <p>If applicable, lead agencies should also develop protocols that establish a timeline for the capture and review of recorded video observations that includes identifying observers who will be responsible for coding these observations.</p>
<b>Site Notification</b>	<p>Community networks must establish a process to contact sites to determine the optimal learning time during which to conduct observations.</p> <p>Community networks must establish a process to require sites to contact the lead agency or the observer with any events that would preclude an observation no later than one week before the scheduled timeframe of the observation.</p>	<p>“Whenever observers are entering a new setting, it can be helpful to speak to the school/program and teachers ahead of time to gather information about the classroom. This is especially true at this time, when enrollment and health and safety practices may be changing from week to week (Teachstone, 2020).”</p> <p>The <a href="#">2020 Observation Planning Spreadsheet</a> can</p>	<p>Community networks should develop protocols to confirm live video conference and recorded video observations and gather up-to-date site information 24 hours in advance, inclusive of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verifying the date and time of the live video conference observation;</li> <li>• Gauging the number of children anticipated to be in attendance during the time of the live video conference observation; and</li> </ul>

		<p>be utilized to record this information and inform planning.</p> <p>Community networks should develop protocols to confirm visits and gather up-to-date site information 24 hours in advance, inclusive of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Verifying the date and time of the observation;</li> <li>● Determining if there have been any confirmed COVID-19 cases at the site or in the classroom scheduled for observation;</li> <li>● Sharing all health and safety protocols being implemented at the network level with sites;</li> <li>● Requesting and reviewing site-specific health and safety protocols in advance of the visit;</li> <li>● Gauging the number of children anticipated to be in attendance during the time of the observation;</li> <li>● Obtaining a list of all adults scheduled to be in their classroom, inclusive of their roles and time employed at the site and in the classroom; and</li> <li>● Informing sites of their responsibilities to report observer exposure to COVID-19.</li> </ul> <p>Community networks should establish a process to require sites to contact the lead agency or the observer with any COVID-19 related events that would preclude an observation as they occur.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Obtaining a list of all adults scheduled to be in their classroom, inclusive of their roles and time employed at the site and in the classroom.</li> </ul> <p>Community networks should establish a process to require sites to contact the lead agency or the observer with any COVID-19 related events that would preclude an observation as they occur.</p>
<b>Rescheduling Observations</b>	<p>Communication between the lead agency, site, and observer must adhere to a local protocol for observations.</p>	<p>Community networks should establish a process to address the rescheduling of visits due to unforeseen closures or considerations of community-wide or site-specific COVID-19 incidence (detailed on page 2).</p> <p>If an observation needs to be cancelled, lead agencies should re-evaluate in two weeks to determine if observation(s) can be safely conducted.</p>	<p>Community networks should establish a process to address the rescheduling of live video conferences or recorded video observations.</p> <p>If an observation needs to be cancelled, lead agencies should re-evaluate in two weeks to determine if observation(s) can be safely conducted.</p>



**The Day of the Observation**

	Column 1 Local Protocol Requirements	Column 2 Additional COVID-19 Protocol Requirements	Column 3 Additional Live Video Conference & Recorded Video Protocol Requirements
<p><b>Observer Demeanor, Attire, and Conduct</b></p>	<p>Observers should be professional in demeanor and attire at all times and never let personal preferences influence scoring.</p> <p>Observers will not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ask teachers to change schedules, move rooms, rearrange children or groups;</li> <li>● Engage in back and forth conversations with children or teachers;</li> <li>● Use their phone during the observation (time must be kept via a clock, watch, or stopwatch)</li> <li>● Conduct observations during the 10-minute break time between cycles;</li> <li>● Conduct more than four cycles of observations; or</li> <li>● Perform more than one observation in a day (exception: as communities build Infant CLASS® capacity, observers may conduct multiple observers per day when the second observation is an Infant CLASS® observation)</li> </ul> <p>At the conclusion of the observation, the observer will confirm with the teacher that the observation is complete.</p>	<p>“While preparation is key to a successful observation at all times, this is even more true during a pandemic. Observers should take time to prepare mentally for how these observations may be different from those in their previous experiences (Teachstone, 2020).”</p> <p>“Observers need to prepare appropriately to ensure they can conduct their observations safely and reliably (Teachstone, 2020).”</p> <p>Observers should follow all required health and safety procedures including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Completing a self-health check the morning of the observation visit and canceling the visit if they are having any symptoms of illness such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, etc.;</li> <li>● Masking prior to entering the site and throughout the visit;</li> <li>● Handwashing upon arrival and as needed throughout the visit;</li> <li>● Maintaining appropriate social distancing throughout the visit; and</li> <li>● Maintaining a static room presence throughout the visit.</li> </ul>	<p>Live Video Conference: Observers conducting live video conference observations should be professional in demeanor and attire at all times during the live video conference observation.</p> <p>Observers should ensure that they position themselves in an area within their environment that is free from outside distractions and noise when conducting the live video conference observation. Observers should remain on mute during the observation and scoring cycles.</p> <p>Recorded Video: Observer demeanor, attire, and conduct are not considerations for video recorded observations. However, video quality is an important consideration. Therefore, lead agencies should work with sites to ensure that the recorded video captured aligns with Teachstone’s Video Quality Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● “The video is viewable on a basic level (no buffering/loading issues, sound and picture are working, etc.);</li> <li>● The coder is able to see and hear the interactions taking place;</li> <li>● The teachers and some students are visible for the majority of the time (consider capturing footage from a side view to see facial expressions); and,</li> <li>● The video is long enough to encompass all required observation cycles (Teachstone, 2020).”</li> </ul> <p>The person conducting the recording should</p>

			complete video quality checks to assure that footage being captured has a high enough audio and visual quality to later be coded by the observer.
<b>Observer Arrival at Site</b>	<p>Upon arrival at the site/school the observer must report to the administration office and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Introduce him or herself to office staff and site administrator (if available);</li> <li>● Present identification and sign-in on appropriate site documentation;</li> <li>● Present a Child Care Criminal Background Check (for licensed centers only);</li> <li>● Verify classroom information with site administrator/director or designee (i.e., classroom locations by age and correct spelling of the teacher’s name);</li> <li>● Receive an updated daily schedule for the classroom being observed; and</li> <li>● Request access to a quiet space for four, 10-minute scoring cycles (PreK only).</li> </ul> <p>If a double coder/shadow scorer is present for the observation, they must follow the same procedures above. The lead observer will select the classroom according to his/her schedule and the double coder will accompany the observer to that classroom.</p> <p>Based upon site reported optimal learning times, the CLASS® observation typically starts at the beginning of the school day and continues throughout the morning for at least 2 hours. The total time the observer is present at the site is dependent upon the daily schedule and extracurricular activities.</p> <p>For infant classrooms - While it is important that observers know the daily schedule of the infant classrooms that they observe, there is more flexibility in scheduling Infant CLASS® observations. Observers should start Infant CLASS® observations at the same time as they</p>	<p>Community networks should establish protocols for observers and sites to share health and safety information.</p> <p>Upon arrival to the site/school the observer must report to the administration office and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide and review the lead agency health and safety protocols with the administrator;</li> <li>● Request to review site health and safety protocols to ensure compliance; and,</li> <li>● Work with administration and/or the teacher to determine the best place to sit or stand during the observation (understanding that observers may need to stay in one place due to social distancing protocols).</li> </ul> <p>Observers are encouraged to share a copy of <a href="#">OPH guidelines for child care centers</a> with sites and teachers that includes the criteria that must be met for the observation to occur.</p> <p>Community networks should establish protocols for observers to follow if the observer is unable to complete the observation due to COVID-19 concerns.</p> <p>The age configuration of classrooms may fluctuate more than usual during the COVID-19 pandemic. If the configuration of the classroom changes, lead agencies should close the original classroom in the CLASS Portal and open a new classroom using the updated age configuration.</p>	<p>Live Video Conference: Community networks should establish protocols for when the live video conference observation should begin.</p> <p>Shadow scoring and double coding can be utilized for live video conference observations during COVID-19 since the presence of additional observers does not impact maximum group size nor does it add to health and safety concerns. If a double coder/shadow scorer participates in the live video conference, they must follow the same procedures as the primary observer.</p> <p>Recorded Video: Not applicable.</p>

	<p>would start toddler and PreK observations as much as possible, however, infant classroom observations may be conducted at different times of the day as appropriate.</p> <p>For mixed infant and toddler classrooms, the Toddler CLASS® tool will be used if the majority or at least half of the children are 15 months or older and the Infant CLASS® tool will be used if half or more of the children are younger than 15 months of age.</p> <p>For mixed toddler and pre-K classrooms, the PreK CLASS® tool will be used if the majority or at least half of the children are 36 months or older, and the Toddler CLASS® will be used if half or more of the children are 15 months up to 36 months of age.</p> <p><i>Note: Use the age of the children on September 30, 2020 to determine the classroom configuration for the school year.</i></p>		
<p><b>Observer Classroom Entry</b></p>	<p>Upon entering the classroom, the observer will introduce herself and request a daily schedule if they have not received one from the office.</p> <p>Based on the daily schedule, the observer will plan for the observation/scoring.</p> <p>The observer may be accompanied by a second observer to shadow score simultaneously. The primary purpose of this shadow score is to ensure inter-rater reliability, which has no reflection of the quality of the site being observed or alters the score.</p> <p>If the classroom is not available or the observer is unable to complete the observation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If it is practical (close enough/time available) and the classroom is likely to become</li> </ul>	<p>Community networks must establish protocols for observers to follow if the classroom is not available or the observer is unable to complete the observation due to COVID-19 concerns.</p> <p>Shadow scoring is not required for in-person observations conducted during Spring 2021.</p>	<p>Live Video Conference: Observers will need to contact sites in advance to introduce themselves, request a daily schedule, share the link for the live video conference meeting, and discuss live video conferencing protocols and procedures.</p> <p>A second observer can be present during a live video conference observation to shadow score simultaneously. The primary purpose of this shadow score is to ensure inter-rater reliability, which has no reflection of the quality of the site being observed or alters the score. It may also be helpful for a second observer to aid in any technology or connectivity issues that may arise.</p> <p>Recorded Video: The lead agency will need to work with sites in</p>

	<p>available for observation, the observer should wait until the observation can begin.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● If the site/school has multiple classrooms with children of the same age as the originally assigned classroom, the observer should contact the lead agency for reassignment.</li> <li>● If the site/school has mixed classes with infants and toddlers or toddlers and preschoolers, contact the lead agency to determine which age type the classroom is classified as in the LDE Early Childhood portal.</li> </ul>		<p>advance to determine when the video observation will occur, how the recorded footage will align with the classroom daily schedule, and who will be videoing the observation cycles.</p> <p>Lead agencies should share Teachstone’s Video Capture Considerations with the site and individual capturing the footage. This can be found in <a href="#">Teachstone’s CLASS Video Observation Guidelines</a> and recommendations for obtaining high-quality video recordings located in Chapter 2 of the CLASS Manual, Toddler and Pre-K when developing protocols for recorded video observations.</p>
<p><b>Teacher and Child Attendance</b></p>	<p>A classroom must have the regularly assigned lead teacher, who has been employed at least 10 work days, present during the observation.</p> <p><i>Exception: Lead substitute teachers are eligible for a CLASS® observation if they have been in the classroom for at least 10 consecutive days.</i></p> <p>If the teacher scheduled is no longer employed by the site or the teacher is in a classroom with a different age type, the observer should contact the lead agency for assistance.</p> <p>At least 50% of children on the classroom roster must be present. Contact the lead agency for assistance.</p> <p>If observers are unsure whether a classroom has been observed by another local observer, they should contact the lead agency before they begin observing.</p>	<p>Teacher and child attendance may fluctuate more than usual during the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>When scheduling and conducting observations, lead agencies should follow the typical teacher and child attendance requirements. In cases where some students attend class virtually while others attend in person, at least 50% of children on the classroom roster must be present.</p> <p>Lead agencies should document attempted observations that were not able to occur based on frequent teacher turnover or low child attendance.</p>	
<p><b>Observer Interactions</b></p>	<p>Observers will not interact with teachers beyond requesting a daily schedule, and will do their best to refrain from and minimize any communications, distractions, or intrusions into the classroom.</p> <p>Observers will not ignore children’s bids for</p>	<p>Observers will maintain appropriate social distancing throughout the observation.</p>	<p>Live Video Conference: Observers conducting live video conference observations will need to work with sites and teachers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Place the device in an area of the classroom where the observer can see the interactions/actions of both the teacher(s)</li> </ul>

	<p>attention or greeting; they will simply state their purpose of being in the classroom (to do their work) and kindly re-direct the children to their activities.</p>		<p>and the children;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Determine the best way to signal that the observation cycle has started and when it has ended; and,</li> <li>● Determine the best way to signal if the device being used to conduct the live video conference needs to be moved to capture the best audio and video quality possible during the observation.</li> </ul> <p>Observers should provide the site/teacher with information on how to contact the observer directly at any point during the observation should technical issues occur.</p> <p>Recorded Video: When capturing recordings, observers should work with sites and teachers to ensure that the device does not intrude on typical classroom activities and confirm that video and audio quality is sufficient.</p>
<p><b>Scoring Cycles</b></p>	<p>The observation will consist of four 20- minute observation cycles each followed by 10-minute scoring cycles (average 120 minutes total time) for pre-K and toddler observations and four 15-minute observation cycles followed by 10-minute scoring cycles (average 100 minutes total time) for infant observations.</p> <p>In pre-K classes, when possible the observer will leave the classroom to complete each 10 minute scoring cycle; however, in order to minimize distraction in infant and toddler classrooms, Teachstone recommends observers remain in the classroom when scoring. In the event that observers remain in the classroom, they will turn their back on the class and quietly complete the scoring.</p>	<p>Observation cycles will remain the same, however, observers may stay in the classroom when scoring. This applies to all CLASS® observation types (infant, toddler, and pre-K).</p> <p>Observers should consider how teacher-child interactions may be changed and in what ways due to the restrictions for health and safety during COVID-19. Although certain behavioral markers may not be present or be more difficult to assess due to COVID-19 related health and safety procedures, Teachstone (2020) states that all CLASS® indicators remain codable.</p>	<p>Live Video Conference: Observers should mute the microphone and remain visible in the camera on the device used for live video conferencing throughout each observation cycle.</p> <p>Observers should turn off their camera while scoring each cycle. They should inform sites/teachers that they will be doing this beforehand so they are aware and do not think that any technical issues are occurring.</p> <p>The general procedures for live coding also apply to coding during live video conferences.</p> <p>Recorded Video: Lead agencies should work sites to ensure the length of the video they are capturing meets the</p>

			<p>length needed for the number of cycles required. At minimum this should be a 10 minute minimum for 20-minute cycles and an 8 minute minimum for 15 minute cycles (Teachstone, 2020).</p> <p>The general procedures for live coding also apply to coding videotape.</p> <p>Teachstone (2020) provides the following best practices for coding recorded video observations. Observers should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use headphones to improve audio quality</li> <li>● Only code what they can see on the video;</li> <li>● Not factor interactions happening off-screen into their scoring</li> <li>● Limit the number of cycles that are coded in one sitting to prevent coder fatigue (It is recommended that coders break after viewing and coding 4 cycles and limit daily coding to 6-8 cycles); and,</li> <li>● Ensure that they have the technology needed to view recordings without interruptions within the video.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Conducting Observations</b></p>	<p>Observers should follow the recommended procedures for using the CLASS tool located within the CLASS Manual.</p> <p>Infant teachers are required to spend time keeping records related to feeding, diapering, etc., which constitutes observable time. How the teacher interacts with the children during those periods of recordkeeping will impact the CLASS score. For example, while a teacher is multi-tasking she may call out to a child, "I'll be right there, Zoe!" This would be noted under the Teacher Sensitivity dimension and impact the score for that dimension.</p>	<p>Lead agencies should incorporate Teachstone's guidance when considering how observations during the pandemic may be different from past observations. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● "Some schools are limiting children's interaction with one another by separating them into set small groups within the classroom. When this is the case, observers may consider the manual's guidance related to coding center time at the high range of Concept Development: <i>There should be clear evidence that the teacher is engaging in these types of interactions with students as he or she moves around the classroom with the assumption that, over time, most students will be exposed to the interactions.</i> (p. 66, Pre-K manual &amp; p. 68, K-3 manual)</li> </ul>	<p>Live Video Conference and Recorded Video: Lead agencies should follow guidance that Teachstone (2020) has provided which outlines how changes in classrooms environments due to COVID-19 may impact the evidence at the indicator level for each CLASS® dimension. This can be found in Teachstone's:</p> <p>Guidance for Conducting CLASS® Observations of In-Person Teaching During COVID-19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <a href="#">Blog Post</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">Guidance Document</a></li> </ul> <p>COVID-19 Impacts on CLASS® Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <a href="#">COVID-19 Impacts on Infant CLASS® Indicators</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">COVID-19 Impacts on Toddler CLASS®</a></li> </ul>

(Teachstone, 2020, p. 5).”

- “Some behavioral markers may be difficult to assess or simply not present due to new health and safety procedures (Teachstone, 2020).” “Observers may need to look for evidence of CLASS indicators outside of the behavioral markers listed in the manual. Observers should remember that the listed behavioral markers are designed to illustrate the kinds of interactions an observer might see, but are not exhaustive. Additional behavioral markers not listed in the manuals can meet the overarching intent of both the indicators and the dimensions.
- Observers will need to pay close attention to body language and other nonverbal communications to determine the intent and efficacy of interactions if the use of masks, social distancing, or video recording during observations makes it more difficult to see or hear.
- In those instances when they cannot hear well, observers should not attempt to intuit what the teacher and children are saying. Rather, observers should note, sort, and score based solely on what they see and hear.
- If observers cannot see or hear teachers or children interacting at all, they must terminate the cycle.
- Observers should review the section on “Remaining Objective” in Chapter 2 of the manual. Observers must avoid adjusting any scores because a teacher is “doing the best she can” in the current environment.
- Some observers may be nervous about how their ability to see and hear will be affected by COVID-related precautions in place in the classroom. Observers should recall that interactions are multi-faceted. The observer does not capture the fullness of everything communicated verbally and nonverbally between teachers and children during the observation period for *any* CLASS

[Indicators](#)

- [COVID-19 Impacts on Pre-K–K-3 CLASS® Indicators](#) (v. 1)
- [COVID-19 Impacts on Pre-K–K-3 CLASS® Indicators](#) (v. 2)

		<p>observation, even one conducted under normal circumstances. The observer is limited by the amount that they can see, hear, and note at once—there is always more happening than can be captured. All observers have been in classrooms where it is difficult to see or hear certain interactions due to the classroom layout, the general level of noise when young children are in a small space, or a particularly soft-spoken teacher. In these cases, observers must focus on what they <i>can</i> see and hear, which is typically sufficient to assess all CLASS dimensions (Teachstone, 2020).”</p> <p>Lead agencies should follow guidance that Teachstone (2020) has provided on how the changes described above may impact the evidence at the indicator level for each CLASS® dimension. This can be found in Teachstone’s:</p> <p>Guidance for Conducting CLASS® Observations of In-Person Teaching During COVID-19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <a href="#">Blog Post</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">Guidance Document</a></li> </ul> <p>COVID-19 Impacts on CLASS® Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <a href="#">COVID-19 Impacts on Infant CLASS® Indicators</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">COVID-19 Impacts on Toddler CLASS® Indicators</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">COVID-19 Impacts on Pre-K–K-3 CLASS® Indicators</a> (v. 1)</li> <li>● <a href="#">COVID-19 Impacts on Pre-K–K-3 CLASS® Indicators</a> (v. 2)</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Extra-Curricular Pull-Out and Special Visiting Teachers</b></p>	<p>The following sessions conducted by extra-curricular pull-out teachers and/or special visiting teachers will not be observed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Physical Education;</li> <li>● Music;</li> </ul>	<p>The observer will remain in the classroom throughout the observation visit and will not observe any activities outside of the classroom.</p>	<p>Live Video Conference: Live video conference observations will only be conducted in the classroom being observed and will not include activities outside of the classroom.</p>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Computer;</li> <li>• Library; and</li> <li>• Art</li> </ul> <p>Cafeteria-based meals and preK toileting will not be observed.</p> <p>Diapering in infant and toddler classrooms is an observable time.</p> <p>Outdoor recess is not included in pre-K observations but is included in toddler and infant observations. However, if pre-k teachers are leading instructional or interactional activities outside, these interactions can be observed.</p> <p><i>Note: When a quiet space is not available at the site, observers may sit outdoors to complete scoring. This is not an opportunity to collect additional data for pre-K observations.</i></p>		<p>Recorded Video: Recorded video observations also have the option of being conducted only in the classroom being observed. However, if the person capturing the video is able to capture observations of outdoor recess for toddler and infant classrooms without affecting COVID-19 health and safety protocols, they should do so. This also includes outdoor observations of pre-k teachers if they are leading instructional or interactional activities outside.</p>
<b>Taking Notes</b>	Notes must be detailed and must provide concrete examples of observations from the classroom. Summary statements for each dimension should address each indicator noting the presence/absence of particular behaviors.		
<b>Observation Concerns</b>	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 the Office of Community Services as mandated by law.	If the observer determines that required health and safety protocols are not being followed at the site, the observer may terminate the visit and contact the lead agency to reschedule the observation.	<p>Live Video Conference: In the event that technical difficulties persist during a live video conference observation to the point that the observer cannot conduct an adequate observation, the observation can be cancelled and rescheduled for a later date.</p> <p>Recorded Video: In the event that the video footage captured is not suitable for coding, the lead agency will need to work with the site to reschedule a time for the observation to be re-recorded.</p>

**Additional Requirements**

	<b>Column 1</b> <b>Local Protocol Requirements</b>	<b>Column 2</b> <b>Additional COVID-19 Protocol Requirements</b>	<b>Column 3</b> <b>Additional Live Video Conference &amp; Recorded Video Protocol Requirements</b>
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<p><b>Providing Observation Feedback</b></p>	<p>Community networks must establish and implement a protocol to ensure that written results and feedback from each local observation are reported to sites within ten business days.</p> <p>Observers should provide high-quality supportive feedback that recognizes teachers’ high-quality practices while focusing on opportunities for growth and skill development.</p>	<p>Teachstone (2020) recommends the continued use of CLASS® to understand the quality of classroom interactions and to support educators in their professional development during the pandemic — stating that teachers will especially benefit from supportive feedback related to high-quality teacher-child interactions during this time.</p> <p>Therefore, community networks should establish and implement a protocol to ensure that written results and feedback from each local observation are reported to sites within ten business days while considering all COVID-19 health and safety protocols and procedures.</p> <p>Lead agencies should work with observers to develop criteria for incorporating feedback that is cognizant of the impact COVID-19 health and safety protocols have on CLASS® observations in addition to the traditional feedback given regarding an observation. Observers should continue to provide high-quality supportive feedback that recognizes teachers’ high-quality practices while focusing on opportunities for growth and skill development.</p>	
<p><b>Reporting Scores</b></p>	<p>CLASS® scores must be entered in the portal within ten days of conducting the observation, or by the end of the observation period, whichever is first.</p> <p>Request corrections for the observation data in the CLASS® System in accordance with the procedures and timelines established by the state.</p> <p>Lead Agencies are responsible for ensuring that all community network observers submit their score sheets in a timely manner, and that they retain these score sheets on file for a period of three years.</p>	<p>Lead agencies should establish protocols for observers to submit their score sheets in a timely manner while considering all COVID-19 health and safety protocols and procedures.</p>	
<p><b>Observer Accuracy and Shadow Scoring</b></p>	<p>Ensure that all local observations entered into the CLASS® System are conducted according to the publisher’s standardized procedures.</p> <p>Develop and implement a written process to monitor and compare the results of all local observers for the purpose of ensuring accurate observations.</p> <p>Identify a process to address concerns regarding reliability of local observers to ensure they can continue to observe for the accountability system.</p> <p><i>NOTE: For local observation scores, high scores,</i></p>	<p>Shadow scoring is not required for in-person observations conducted during Spring 2021. While Louisiana remains in Phase 1, 2, or 3 of its COVID-19 reopening plan, in-person observations should comply with Louisiana Department of Education reopening guidance as well as the guidance of state and local health authorities.</p>	<p>Live Video Conference: The use of shadow scoring is encouraged during live video conference observations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Both observers will need to develop a system to ensure that they start and stop the live video conference observation for each scoring cycle at the same time.</li> </ul> <p>Recorded Video: The use of shadow scoring is encouraged for recorded video observations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Both observers will need to ensure that they are watching and coding the same footage for each cycle.</li> </ul>

	<p><i>low scores, and concerning patterns will trigger additional third party observations to ensure accuracy; and Bulletin 140 §503 requires the state to impose consequences for observers who do not meet accuracy requirements.</i></p> <p>Conduct a minimum of one observation calibration activity each semester and ensure that all observers participate in at least one observation calibration activity each semester. Shadow score each observer at least once, at least 10% of all observations each observation period, and at least one observation in each age group, including infants during the 2019-2020 Infant CLASS® Practice Year.</p>		
<b>Conflict of Interest</b>	Collaborate with all program partners to establish and implement written procedures that minimize potential observer conflict of interest as described in Bulletin 140.		
<b>Record Keeping</b>	<p>Lead agencies must collect and maintain for a period of three years, copies of current certification documents for all observers, copies of the background checks necessary to enter sites for all observers, and original or complete copies of all observation scoring forms in an accountability reporting period for a period.</p>	<p>Lead agencies should document attempted observation visits that were postponed due to COVID-19, instances where protocol was not able to be met, and other issues not properly addressed by this guidance document.</p> <p>This documentation may be used to support waiver requests if lead agencies are not able to conduct observations in 100% of classrooms in their community network.</p> <p>LDOE will provide lead agencies additional guidance on requesting observation waivers prior to the end of the observation period.</p>	<p>Live Video Conference: It may be helpful to develop a protocol for observers to document attempted live video observations, internet connectivity issues, or other audio or video challenges.</p> <p>Recorded Video: In accordance with local policies around video storage, lead agencies should develop protocols for the safe storage and disposal of recorded video footage.</p> <p>Lead agencies should refer to <a href="#">Louisiana’s Data Governance and Student Privacy Handbook</a> for additional information related to student and data privacy.</p> <p>Teachstone also provides recommendations for video security in this <a href="#">guidance</a>.</p> <p>General recommendations for video security include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ensure that only necessary individuals have access to video for observing</li> <li>● Consider a solution that avoids video</li> </ul>

			<p>being stored on the capture devices where possible</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Keep all footage protected by username and password. Ensure video settings do not allow for recorded video to be shared or downloaded.</li> <li>● Ensure Observers have access to a private space for viewing and coding videos and/or that the video is labeled using teacher ID rather than names to ensure anonymity</li> </ul>
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**Implementation of Bulletin 140 Emergency Rule: Classrooms that Score above a 4.50 in the Fall 2020 Observation Period (after third party replacement)**

In December 2020, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) approved a one-time emergency rule for the 2020-2021 academic year relevant to classrooms that score a 4.50 or higher in the Fall 2020 Observation Period after third party replacement. Classrooms that score a 4.50 or higher after third party replacement in the Fall of 2020 are not required to receive an observation by the local lead agency in the Spring 2021 Observation Period.

Some sites with eligible classrooms may prefer to receive a Spring 2021 observation by the local lead agency.

## References & Additional Resources

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