

CLASS® Virtual Observations

Planning Phase

1. The Picard Center follows the same observation scheduling and classroom selection process for virtual observations (50% of the total number of classrooms; ensuring at least one infant, toddler, and pre-K classroom is selected at each site) as in-person observations.
2. The Picard Center contacts each site by phone or email prior to the month they will be observed in order to verify site level information:
 - a. Site contact person
 - b. Mailing and physical address
 - c. Phone number
 - d. Email address
3. Physical letters are mailed to the sites with electronic letters emailed to Lead Agency contacts, notifying them of the month window in which the observation(s) will occur.
4. Sites will be contacted by phone/email notifying them of the upcoming virtual observation(s).
 - a. The site will be responsible for selecting and confirming the availability of a Site Designee for all virtual observation(s) in order for observations to take place.
 - b. The sites will be asked to provide information concerning technology capabilities at the site including internet connectivity and potential video/audio device(s) that could be used for streaming video (e.g. iPad, laptop computer, speakers, webcam, or HD cam, etc.). The sites should ensure the Wi-Fi connectivity and streaming device meets the Zoom system requirements (see link below):

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362023-System-requirements-for-Windows-macOS-and-Linux>

Site Preparation

1. The Picard Center will work with the site to identify one individual responsible (Site Designee) for utilizing the technology to stream the classroom for the observation.
2. Using Teachstone's guidance, the Site Designee will be selected as a neutral individual at the site. He/she will be limited to a director, administrator or manager at the site. Other personnel but not limited to such as teachers, aides, and floaters will not be selected as a Site Designee.
3. The sites will provide daily schedules and/or identify the optimal learning time, the observable times within the daily activities (mapping out four, 15-20 minute observation cycles with 10-minutes of coding in-between each cycle). The Site Designee should set up and prepare for the observation by joining the Zoom call 15-20 minutes before the scheduled optimal learning time.
4. The Site Designee will identify several ideal locations within the classroom to set up the video/audio device following Teachstone's video quality considerations (link below):

<https://info.teachstone.com/hubfs/blog-attachments/CLASS%20Video%20Guidance.pdf>

 - Video is viewable on a basic level (good sound and picture quality, no buffering)
 - Observer (coder) can see and hear interactions taking place
 - Lead teacher and some students are visible for the majority of the cycles
 - Streaming device is fully charged and will not go into 'sleep mode'
 - Video orientation is locked and provides wide-angle view

- ‘Do Not Disturb’ mode is selected if applicable to minimize disruptions
 - Be aware of the placement of the capture device away from noisy heaters/air conditioners, loud musical devices, sinks, etc.
5. (Optional) The Site Designee can obtain consent forms from all child or adult participants for their records [see appendix].

Video Capture and Streaming Guidance

1. The Site Designee will follow the third-party protocols for selecting the activities/format to observe including all activities in the classroom such as morning routine, small-group, whole-group and free choice/centers.
2. The following activities, pull-outs, and specials will not be observed:
 - Physical Education, Music, Computer, Library, Art,
 - Cafeteria-based meals,
 - Toileting in pre-K classrooms where the whole group visits the restroom,
 - Outdoor recess is not included in pre-K observations but is included in infant and toddler observations. However, if pre-K teachers are leading instructional or interactional activities outside, these interactions can be observed.
3. The Site Designee will choose the best location for the camera during each cycle. Under some circumstances, the Site Designee will move around the classroom with the camera to capture the interactions between the teacher and children or peer interactions.
4. The Site Designee will use the following guidance for different activities/formats:
 - a. For the whole-group format, the Site Designee will place the camera in the pre-selected location to capture the best angle and sound of teacher(s) and children.
 - b. For center and individual activities/formats, the Site Designee will move around the room to capture teacher-child(ren) or peer interactions, while also following site health and safety protocols for social distancing. The Site Designee will use Teachstone’s guidelines and capture interactions where the majority of the children are interacting with the teacher. If multiple teachers are interacting with children, the Site Designee will move around to capture most of the interactions in the classroom.
 - i. For example, if there are two teachers interacting with children during center time, the Site Designee will spend 10 minutes capturing the lead teacher and 10 minutes capturing the second teacher.
 - c. For small group format, the Site Designee will capture an equal amount of time with each group during the observation cycle. The Site Designee will either use a preselected location in the classroom for each of the small groups or move around the classroom to capture each group.
 - d. For transitions during the cycle, the Site Designee will move around the classroom and capture the interactions.
5. During the observation cycle, the Site Designee will ensure that the camera is focused on the interactions and no visual obstructions occur.

Prior to Observation

1. One week before the 1-3 day observation time frame:
 - a. The Picard Center will contact the site notifying the site of the upcoming observation, the age type (preK, toddler, or infant), and classroom name.
 - b. The Picard Center will verify the classroom enrollment counts. If a daily schedule is available, the 4 observation cycles will be mapped out. If a daily schedule is not provided, the Picard Center will defer to the Site Designee for an optimal learning time.
 - c. Picard staff will provide the Zoom link and password to the observer(s) and Site Designee through email. The Site Designee will perform an internal video quality practice check to ensure the identified locations within the classroom meet Teachstone's video quality considerations.
 - d. Picard staff will verify the exact time for Site Designee and observers to join the Zoom call (15-20 minutes before the scheduled optimal learning time);
 - i. Set-up of all technological items including iPad/computer/camera, microphone, and lighting; and
 - ii. Telephone numbers for trouble-shooting and other issues

Conducting Virtual Observations

1. The Picard Center and site administrator have agreed upon an optimal learning time to begin the virtual observation.
2. Picard staff will act as the Zoom host. The Zoom host will start the Zoom call for the Site Designee and Picard observers ensuring everyone is present.
3. Picard observers will join the virtual Zoom call 15-20 minutes before the scheduled start time to ensure they are ready to begin the observation on-time and to ensure all site personnel are present with at least 50% of the enrolled children in attendance.
4. The Picard observers will ensure the following:
 - a. The microphone on their computers is muted
 - b. They have a timer/stopwatch to time the observation and scoring cycles
 - c. They are following best practices for coding including wearing headphones during the observation (link below):
<https://info.teachstone.com/hubfs/blog-attachments/CLASS%20Video%20Guidance.pdf>
5. The Site Designee will utilize the chat feature on Zoom to notify the observers 2 minutes before the first observation cycle will begin.
6. The Site Designee will countdown from 5 through the video function (using hand signals and/or voice) to start the first cycle of observation.
7. The Picard observers will observe for 15 minutes (infant observations) and 20 minutes (preK and toddler observations). After the 20 observation cycle has ended, the Site Designee and Picard observers will turn off video and mute their sessions. The Picard observers will score independently for 10 minutes.
8. The Site Designee will use the Zoom chat feature to communicate the times for scoring and the start time for the next cycle. For example:
 - a. Scoring Time: 8:30 AM-8:40 AM
 - b. Second Cycle: 8:42 AM

9. The observers will be given 2-3 minutes between back-to-back cycles in order to turn off Zoom video and be ready for Site Designee to signal the start of the next cycle.
10. If the schedule does not allow for back-to-back cycles, the Site Designee will notify the observers with the start time for the next cycle through the chat function. Observers will access Zoom 2-3 minutes before the start of each cycle.
11. All observers will review and use Teachstone's guidance for conducting CLASS® observations during Covid-19 (link below):
<https://info.teachstone.com/blog/guidance-for-conducting-class-observations-during-covid-19>

Troubleshooting/ Potential Problems

1. Effective communication between Picard Staff, Site Designee, and Picard observers is essential throughout the observation. Picard observers will notify Picard staff immediately if connection is lost at any time during any observation cycle. The observation will continue with a minimum of one active observer.
2. The Site Designee will contact the Picard staff immediately (using chat box) if they are experiencing any technical difficulties. The Picard staff will work with the Site Designee to troubleshoot the issue to continue the observation during the next cycle.
3. If the schedule permits, an additional cycle could be observed if connection was lost for any of the participants (observers and Site Designee).
4. The Picard observers will document in their notes any potential issues during the observation including but not limited to:
 - a. Sound quality
 - b. Positioning of camera (if teachers move around the classroom)