

# **Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Program Assessment Requirements Handbook**

**Identified Tool for Assessments:** Teachstone CLASS®

**Purpose:** To provide clear and intentional assessment guidelines and provide quality assurance for CLASS® observations.

## **Provider Registration Process**

### Requirements

- A provider must notify the Early Learning Coalition (coalition) of their desire to provide VPK services in the upcoming year and meet the requirements to be a VPK provider.
- The provider shall register their current classrooms, including the VPK director and instructional personnel, i.e., teachers with the exception of substitutes and those who fill in for teacher breaks, assigned to each classroom in the Provider Portal.
- Nightly data transfer will occur from the Provider Portal to Web-based Early Learning System (WELS) updating all VPK program information.

## **Observer Requirements**

### Reliability and Certification

To validate observer quality and reliability, all observers shall have a current certification achieved by completing and passing all trainings and assessments required by Teachstone to conduct a CLASS® observation with validity and fidelity. Only coalition staff, FDOE-approved vendors or coalition designees may conduct CLASS observations.

### Staffing Considerations:

- Observers shall have the ability to speak, understand, and write in the language of the classrooms they are observing.
- Observers shall not conduct an observation of classrooms in which the observer:
  - Is employed by the school or center in which the observer works.
  - Is an immediate family member of the teacher being observed.
  - Is an immediate family member of an individual who supervises or provides training or technical assistance to the teacher being observed.
  - Has direct financial interest in the site where the classroom observation is taking place.
  - Has children currently enrolled or enrolled in other classrooms at the site.
  - Certified observers may not observe in the school or center in which they work.

## Expectations for Observations

### Observation Norms:

- A CLASS® observation is an observation of a classroom using the appropriate PreK CLASS® tool.
- A cycle involves observing and recording behavioral notes followed by scoring each dimension.
- An observer with reliability certification on the tool appropriate for the room conducts four cycles of observation.
- Teachstone CLASS guidelines require observers to watch, without interruption, activities in the classroom and/or outside:
  - Four 20-minute cycles for PreK observations.
- All observations must be conducted in accordance with the requirements of Teachstone, LLC guidance.
- The observation must be completed during the VPK instructional hours and the lead VPK instructor must be present.
- At least 1 enrolled VPK student must be present. Best practice is for at least 2 enrolled students present.
- Multi-class groups shall have 1 classroom observation completed, and the resulting classroom observation score shall be duplicated for each classroom in the Composite Program Assessment Score calculation. A Multi-class group is defined as a private provider or public school may instruct two or more VPK classes as one. A VPK class within a multi-class group may not exceed the maximum class size described in subsection (3).

The ELC identified observer shall:

- Conduct classroom observations no earlier than 15 instructional days after the VPK school- year program start date and no earlier than 5 instructional days after the summer program start date.
- Notify providers via email of upcoming program assessment at least 2 weeks prior to the scheduled program assessment date.
- Complete during observation the CLASS observation score sheet.
- Complete the observation using the CLASS manual and this observation protocol.
- Bring additional materials necessary such as clipboard, pen/pencil, timer/watch, identification badge, CLASS certification card, driver's license.

### Recording Observations in the FDOE-Approved Vendor System:

- Observers shall enter and save all dimension scores and notes into FDOE-approved vendor system within 3 business days of conducting the classroom observation.
- The ELC must approve the rating and generate a composite in the FDOE-approved vendor system within 3 business days of entering the final observation required to generate a composite score.
- The observation data entered in the FDOE-approved vendor system must match the classroom listed in the Provider Portal **exactly**.
- The number of children will be averaged across 4 cycles, and the number of teachers rounded up and listed.
- **Notes are required for all CLASS dimensions.** The notes must fully support the score given, with use of examples and quotations from the observation (in the original language used in the classroom when possible). Sentence fragments and easily understood abbreviations are permitted.
- Observations conducted in VPK classrooms during participation in the School Readiness Program Assessment in accordance with Rule 6M-4.740, F.A.C, that meet requirements as defined in Section 1002.68 (2), F.S., may be used for meeting the contract minimum threshold requirements, provided the observation was conducted in compliance with Rule 6M-8.621, F.A.C.

### Data Correction

#### Processes:

- Observers may not edit electronically reported observation data once it has been entered in the FDOE-approved vendor system, unless a request for editing is received and approved by the Division.
- The Division may request additional documentation to support the validity of the changes.

#### Rationale:

- Requests for data correction will only be approved for the following reasons:
  - Class observation results have been reported incorrectly.
  - Class observation results were not reported.

### Second Assessments

#### Processes:

- A second assessment must be requested from the coalitions in writing within 30 days of receipt of the Composite Program Assessment Score.
- Providers must coordinate second assessment requests through their affiliated coalition and provide payment prior to the assessment being conducted.
- Second assessments must be completed before the scheduled program end date.

- A single classroom will be observed, and its score will replace the previous score to calculate a new Composite Program Assessment Score if the VPK instructor previously observed is still actively teaching in the classroom being observed.
- If the previously observed instructor is not active in the classroom and the newly assigned instructor is hired after the previous program assessment was completed, the single classroom will be observed, and its score will replace the previous score to calculate a new Composite Program Assessment Score.

## VPK PROGRAM ASSESSMENT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### VPK PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

#### General

1. **What is Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)?** CLASS is an observational tool that focuses on the effectiveness of classroom interactions among teachers and children. CLASS categorizes the interactions in three domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization and Instructional Organization.
2. **Is program assessment required for VPK Providers?** In accordance with s. 1002.68(2), F.S., each VPK classroom is **required** to participate in a program assessment. The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) is the identified tool for VPK program assessment.

#### Scheduling

3. **How soon in the program year can the observation take place?** Observations can begin no earlier than fifteen (15) instructional days after the start date for school year programs and no earlier than five (5) instructional days for summer programs.
4. **When will providers learn of their observation date?** The Early Learning Coalition or its designee shall provide notification via email to private and public school providers of upcoming program assessments at least two (2) weeks prior to the scheduled observations.
5. **What if we have teacher absences on the scheduled CLASS observation day?** If a teacher has an extenuating circumstance which causes her absence from a classroom on the day it is scheduled to be observed, the observer shall reschedule the program assessment within two (2) weeks of the original program assessment date. A provider should notify the observer as soon as the provider is aware of any circumstance which would cause an instructor to be absent from a VPK classroom that the instructor is scheduled to be in for an observation.
6. **Who needs to be present at the time of observation?** The Early Learning Coalition approved lead instructor must be present at the time of the observation. At least one VPK enrolled student must be present.

#### Rescheduling observations

7. **What if the program experiences a temporary closure on the scheduled observation date?** If the provider experiences a closure as defined in Rule 6M-8.204, F.A.C., on the day it is scheduled to be observed, the provider shall request to reschedule the program assessment within two (2) weeks of the original program assessment.

- 8. What if the lead teacher is absent on the scheduled observation date?** The lead teacher on record must be present at the observation. Providers should contact their coalition to reschedule when a lead teacher is absent. This communication is especially important when a provider knows a substitute will instruct a VPK classroom for a lengthy period.

### Observation

- 9. What qualifications do the CLASS observers possess?** All observers shall be certified by completing all required training. Only coalition staff, FDOE vendors, or coalition designees may conduct observations.
- 10. Are there other observer considerations?** Observers shall have the ability to speak, understand, and write in the language of the classrooms they are observing. Certified observers may not observe in the school or center in which they work.

Observers shall not conduct an observation of a classroom in which the observer:

- Is an immediate family member of the teacher being observed.
  - Is an immediate family member of an individual who supervises or provides training or technical assistance to the teacher being observed.
  - Has direct financial interest in the site where the classroom observation is taking place.
  - Has children currently enrolled in other classrooms at the site.
- 11. How is a CLASS observation conducted?** Observers complete four, 20-minute observation cycles with up to a 10-minute scoring and coding break in between. The total time it takes to complete an observation is about 2 hours.
- 12. What interactions are the observers looking for during an observation?** Observers will look at interactions between the adults and students in the classroom.
- 13. What are the criteria for the assessment/components?** Classrooms will be observed on these 10 dimensions:
- Positive Climate – reflects the emotional connection between the teacher and students and among students and the warmth, respect, and enjoyment communicated by verbal and nonverbal interactions
  - Negative Climate – reflects the overall level of expressed negativity in the classroom; the frequency, quality, and intensity of teacher and peer negativity are key to this scale
  - Teacher Sensitivity – Encompasses the teacher’s awareness of and responsiveness to students’ academic and emotional needs; high levels of sensitivity facilitate students’ ability to actively explore and learn because the teacher consistently provides comfort, reassurance, and encouragement
  - Student Perspective – captures the degree to which the teacher’s interactions with student and classroom activities place an emphasis on student’s interest, motivations, and points of view and encourage student responsibility and autonomy

- Behavior Management -encompasses the teacher's ability to provide clear behavioral expectations and use effective methods to prevent and redirect misbehavior
- Productivity – considers how well the teacher manages instructional time and routines and provides activities for students so that they have the opportunity to be involved in learning activities
- Instructional Learning Formats – focuses on the ways in which the teacher maximizes students interested, engagement, and ability to learn from lessons and activities
- Concept Development – measures the teacher's use of instructional discussions and activities to promote student' higher-order thinking skills and cognition and the teacher's focus on understanding rather than on rote instruction
- Quality of Feedback – assesses the degree to which the teacher provides feedback that expands learning and understanding and encourages continued participation
- Language Modeling – captures the quality and amount of the teacher's use of language-stimulation and language-facilitation techniques

## Scoring

- 14. What is a passing CLASS composite score?** In accordance with Rule 6M-8.621, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), the Contract Minimum Threshold is 4.00.
- 15. What does the CLASS Program Assessment Composite Score mean for my program?** The Program Assessment Composite Score is the average score of all VPK classrooms. The Program Assessment Composite Score must be 4.00 or above to participate in the VPK Program the following program year. Eligibility for school year and summer VPK programs are considered separately. Private and public school VPK providers' programs that score below the Contract Minimum Threshold of 4.00 may not participate in the VPK Education Program beginning in the consecutive program year and thereafter until the private or public school provider meets the Contract Minimum Threshold.
- 16. How and when will the CLASS composite score be communicated?** FDOE shall notify providers via the Provider Portal of their score for each VPK classroom within 14 calendar days after observations are entered into the Web-based Early Learning System (WELS).
- 17. How will multi-class groups be scored?** VPK classrooms organized as a multi-class group shall have one classroom observation completed with the resulting classroom observation score duplicated for each classroom in the Composite Program Assessment Score calculation.
- 18. When will the dimension scores be entered into the vendor system?** Observers shall enter and save all dimension scores and notes into WELS within three (3) business days of conducting the classroom observations.
- 19. How are classroom scores calculated?** CLASS assessment observations result in a set of scores for each classroom representing the quality of interactions observed on each dimension during each observation cycle. These scores can be averaged across cycles and consolidated to create domain scores.

- 20. How is the composite score calculated?** All active VPK classrooms registered in the Provider Portal for each private and public school provider must be observed to calculate the Composite Program Assessment Score. The Composite Program Assessment Score shall be calculated using the combined average of the dimension scores, excluding negative climate scores, from each VPK classroom's observation and will be rounded to two (2) decimal places.
- 21. What is the difference between the classroom score and the composite score?** The classroom score is based on the classroom observation. The program score is a combined average of the classroom dimension scores, excluding negative climate score, from each classroom in your program.
- 22. If my program has more than one program assessment composite score, which will be used for contracting purposes?** Should a program have more than one program assessment composite score for the same program year and type, the most recent score will be used for contracting purposes.

### **Second Observation**

- 23. My composite score is not what I was hoping. Can I request a second observation?** Providers must coordinate second assessment requests through their affiliated coalition and provide payment prior to the assessment being conducted. It is the provider's responsibility to pay for a second assessment. A second program assessment must be requested from the coalition within thirty (30) days of receipt of the Composite Program Assessment Score. The second assessment must be completed in the same program year and type.
- 24. What is the cost associated with the second assessment?** Contact your Early Learning Coalition to request information regarding second assessments.
- 25. Who will be observed in the second observation?** If the VPK instructor previously assessed is still actively teaching in the classroom being observed, a single classroom will be observed and its classroom score will replace the previous classroom score to calculate a new Composite Program Assessment Score. If the previously observed instructor is not active in the classroom and the newly assigned instructor is hired after the previous program assessment was completed, the single classroom will be observed, and its classroom score will replace the previous classroom score to calculate a new Composite Program Assessment Score.

### **Failure to Meet Contract Minimum Threshold**

- 26. What happens if my program does not meet the contract minimum threshold?** Programs not meeting the contract minimum threshold may not participate in the VPK Education Program beginning in the consecutive program year and thereafter until the private or public-school provider meets the contract minimum threshold. Providers will be able to complete the current VPK program year.



## **Programs with VPK and School Readiness**

**27. What are the criteria for observing mixed SR and VPK classrooms?** Observations conducted in VPK classrooms during participation in School Readiness Program Assessment in accordance with Rule 6M-4.740, F.A.C., that meet requirements as defined in s. 1002.68, F.S., may be used in calculating the composite score, provided the program assessment meets all criteria specified in Rule 6M-8.621.

## **Change in Ownership**

**28. How does change of ownership affect the program score?** In the event of a change of ownership, sale, sale of assets, conveyance of ownership or other transfer of ownership interest that requires a private or public provider to execute a new VPK Provider Contract per Rule 6M-8.301(9), F.A.C., the provider may request to retain the existing Composite Program Assessment Score if at least 50% of VPK classrooms and their assigned instructors who were previously assessed remain the same. If the provider elects not to retain the existing score, the provider is required to obtain a program assessment. If 30% or fewer of the VPK program hours remain at the time of ownership change, a program assessment is not required until the consecutive program year.

## **Learn More about CLASS**

**29. Where can I go to learn more about CLASS?** You can learn more about the CLASS observational tool by visiting [www.teachstone.com](http://www.teachstone.com). Providers can contact their ELCs for FREE access to courses.

**Questions? Email [vpkclass@oel.myflorida.com](mailto:vpkclass@oel.myflorida.com) or call 1-866-447-1159.**