

## SECTION 1: TIMELINES & EXPECTATIONS FOR CLASS PILOT, Fall 2024–Spring 2025

### 1a. Timeline

The Office of Early Childhood (OEC) of the Arkansas Department of Education will pilot the use of the CLASS tool in the 2024-2025 school year, with the pilot running through June 2025.

### 1b. Expectations

Early childhood sites eligible for participation must be located in the catchment area of a local early childhood lead organization.

At a minimum, every early childhood site participating in the CLASS Pilot should receive at least one CLASS observation this year in each age setting they serve (i.e., a site that serves infants, toddlers, and preschoolers should have at least one infant observation, one toddler observation, and one Pre-K observation).

However, local leads are encouraged to have every early childhood classroom at participating sites receive a formal observation during the pilot year where possible. Ideally, classrooms would receive two observations in the school year: one in fall semester and one in the spring semester.

Local leads are responsible for communicating directly with OEC if they are concerned about scheduling observations within the pilot time period and/or having sufficient local observers. OEC will collaborate with local leads to come up with a plan for prioritized observations.

## SECTION 2: SITE & TOOL SELECTION

### 2a. Identifying sites

Local leads will select the early childhood sites to participate in the CLASS Pilot based on the prioritized list shared by OEC and interest from the sites. Local leads will submit this list to OEC. All participating sites will be asked to sign a set of assurances agreeing to their participation.

### 2b. Determining tool for each classroom

Local observations will be conducted in all sites using the following developmentally-appropriate tools:

- Infant CLASS should be used to observe classrooms that serve birth-18 months
- Toddler CLASS should be used to observe classrooms that serve 15-36 months
- Pre-K CLASS should be used to observe classrooms that serve 3-5-year-olds

When reporting the list of participating early childhood sites to OEC, local leads will also submit a list of classrooms per site and the tool that will be used to observe each classroom based on the children's ages.

### 2c. Guidance for observing in diverse settings

For observations in mixed-age classrooms, such as child care family homes, the following guidelines are to be used to determine the appropriate age-group tool:

- For mixed infant and toddler classrooms, the Toddler CLASS tool will be used if 50% or more of the children are 15 months or older. The Infant CLASS tool will be used if more than half of the children are younger than 15 months of age.
- If the classroom contains a mix of infants, toddlers, and Pre-K aged children, use the tool that matches the majority of the children. For instance, if a classroom includes 1 infant, 1 toddler, and 5 Pre-K children, use the Pre-K CLASS tool.

- If there are an equal number of children across age groups, use the Toddler tool. For instance, if a classroom includes 3 toddlers and 3 Pre-K children, use the Toddler CLASS tool.

To address the unique needs of learners with special needs or developmental delays, early childhood special education self-contained Pre-K classrooms may be allowed to use the Toddler CLASS based on the children's developmental age and IEP goals.

In addition to using the appropriate age-level CLASS tool, observers must review guidance provided by Teachstone for conducting observations in the following settings:

- Child Care Family Homes - [Guidance for Observing in Child Care Family Homes](#)
- Early Childhood Special Education Classrooms - [Guidance for Using CLASS in Settings that Serve Children with Disabilities](#)
- Classrooms with Dual Language Learners - [Observing in Settings Serving Dual Language Learners, Birth-to-Five](#)

Observers must be able to speak and understand the primary language of instruction used in the classroom.

## **SECTION 3: OBSERVER REQUIREMENTS**

### **3a. Selecting observers**

Local leads have discretion in who may serve as observers. Observers may have working relationships with the sites and/or teachers they are observing, such as site director, program coordinator, or principal. Local observers are not allowed to observe teachers that they have a direct personal relationship with, such as a spouse or other relative.

Additional opportunities for observation training and train-the-trainer will be made known to all local leads to ensure they continue to grow their portfolio of observers.

### **3b. Certification with Teachstone**

All observers must be reliable for each version of the tool with which they observe (Pre-K 2nd edition, Toddler, and/or Infant).

Observers must maintain their certification annually by passing an online recertification test. If more than a year has lapsed in their certification, local observers need to take the CLASS Observer Training and certification again before conducting any CLASS observations.

Local leads should keep all up-to-date CLASS certificates on file for their local observers.

## **SECTION 4: SCHEDULING OBSERVATIONS & NOTIFYING SITES**

### **4a. Scheduling observations**

Local leads are responsible for maintaining an observation schedule with their local observers. Sample observation [scheduling templates](#) will be shared with all local leads to aid them in these logistics. OEC may request a copy of the schedule at any time throughout the CLASS Pilot.

Local leads are responsible for communicating directly with OEC if they are concerned about scheduling observations within the pilot year time period and/or having sufficient local observers. OEC will work directly with local leads to come up with a plan for prioritized observations.

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#### **4b. Notifying sites about observations**

Local leads are responsible for notifying sites at least one week in advance that a CLASS observation will take place, specifying which classroom. In order to create an optimal schedule, local leads must contact sites and request information from them about any conflicts that would interfere with an observation (e.g., closures, special assemblies or celebrations, etc.).

## **SECTION 5: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL – DAY OF, BEFORE OBSERVATION STARTS**

#### **5a. Arriving on site**

Local setting procedures and requirements for volunteers and visitors should always be followed (e.g., health & safety; identification presented). Observers should ask about these procedures prior to the observation.

Upon arrival at the site, the observer must report to the administration office and:

- introduce themselves to office staff and site administrator, if available;
- present identification and sign-in on appropriate site documentation;
- (optional) request a copy or view a roster of children and verify classroom information with site administrator/director or designee (e.g., classroom locations by age and correct spelling of the teacher's name);
- receive an updated daily schedule for the classroom being observed; and
- request access to a quiet space for four, 10-minute scoring cycles.

If observing a child care family home, the observer should be aware that the educator may be the only adult present and it may take a few minutes to answer the door.

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.

#### **5b. Classroom entry**

Upon entering the classroom, the observer will introduce themselves and request a daily schedule if they have not received one from the office. Based on the daily schedule, the observer will plan for the observation/scoring.

The observer may be accompanied by a second observer to shadow score simultaneously. The primary purpose of the shadow scoring is to ensure inter-rater reliability.

#### **5c. Teacher and child attendance**

A classroom must have the regularly assigned lead teacher, who has been employed at least 10 work days, present during the observation. Lead substitute teachers are eligible for a CLASS® observation if they have been in the classroom for at least 10 consecutive days. Paraprofessionals or classroom aides who have taken on responsibility for primary instruction may be observed if they have been in the classroom for at least 10 work days and if children typically receive instruction from this adult.

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 local lead organization for assistance. If observers are unsure whether a classroom has been observed by another local observer, they should contact the local lead organization before they begin observing.

At least 50% of children on the classroom roster must be present. If less than 50% of children are present, contact

the local lead organization for assistance.

#### **5d. New teacher**

If a new lead teacher is assigned to a classroom during the fall or spring observation window, they should not be observed during their first 2 weeks to give them time to adjust to their new teaching assignment.

#### **5e. Observer demeanor, attire, conduct**

Observers should be professional in demeanor and attire at all times and never let personal preferences influence scoring.

Observers will not:

- ask teachers to change schedules, move rooms, rearrange children or groups;
- engage in conversations with children or teachers;
- use their phone during the observation (time must be kept via a clock, watch, or stopwatch)
- conduct observations during the 10-minute break time between cycles;
- conduct more than four cycles of observations; or
- perform more than one observation in a day.

## **SECTION 6: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL – DURING OBSERVATION**

#### **6a. Duration of observation**

Pre-K & Toddler Observations include four 20-minute observation cycles with a 10-minute coding session following each cycle (approximately 2 hours total). Infant CLASS observations include four 15-minute cycles with a 10-minute coding session following each cycle. Observer scheduling should be considerate of these parameters.

#### **6b: Observing teacher and assistant**

CLASS® observations provide a classroom-level score that includes overall teacher-child interactions including children's interactions with the lead teacher and any other adults (e.g., instructional assistant). Observers should follow the CLASS manual, which states that observers watch children's interactions with all teachers/adults in the room/area.

Observers should be prepared to move around the classroom as needed to see and hear what is happening.

#### **6c: Observer interactions**

Observers will not interact with teachers beyond requesting a daily schedule and class roster, and will do their best to refrain from and minimize any communications, distractions, or intrusions into the classroom. Observers will not ignore children's bids for 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.

#### **6d: Note Taking**

All notes and scores should be recorded on the official Teachstone CLASS score sheets. Notes must be detailed and must provide concrete examples of observations from the classroom for each dimension during every observation cycle. Summary statements for each dimension should address each indicator noting the presence/absence of particular behaviors. See Teachstone's guidance for [tips on note taking](#).

#### **6e: Scoring Cycles**

The observation will consist of four 20-minute observation cycles each followed by 10-minute scoring cycles (120 minutes total time) for pre-K and toddler observations, and four 15-minute observation cycles followed by 10-minute scoring cycles (100 minutes total time) for infant observations.

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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 should turn their back on the class and quietly complete the scoring.

### **6f: Conducting Observations during Record Keeping**

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.

### **6g: Activities to Observe**

The following sessions conducted by extra-curricular pull-out teachers and/or special visiting teachers will not be observed:

- Physical Education
- Music
- Computer
- Library
- Art

Cafeteria-based meals and Pre-K toileting will not be observed. Diapering in infant and toddler classrooms is an observable time.

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. 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.

In the case of children napping in infant, toddler, and mixed age classrooms (such as family day homes), only one child needs to be awake in order for the observation to proceed. For preschool classrooms, nap time should not be observed.

### **6h: Mandated Reporting**

In the unusual circumstance of any suspected abuse or neglect observed at the time of the observation, the observer must report the observed behaviors as mandated by law.

## **SECTION 7: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL – AFTER THE OBSERVATION**

### **7a: Calculating Scores**

When calculating CLASS scores, observers should always follow all guidelines on the CLASS Scoring Summary Sheet and appropriate pages of the CLASS manual.

### **7b: Submitting Scores**

CLASS® scores must be entered in the myTeachstone CLASS portal within ten days of conducting the observation, or by the end of the semester observation period, whichever is first. Local leads are responsible for ensuring that all local observers submit their score sheets in a timely manner.

### **7c: Record Keeping**

Local leads must ensure observation score sheets are scanned and uploaded to the myTeachstone portal for each observation. They may also choose to keep the hard copy for record keeping.

## **SECTION 8: PROVIDING FEEDBACK**

The myTeachstone portal provides summary reports after scores have been submitted that may be shared with the site administrator after the observation has taken place.