

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 observations in order for observations to be scheduled and conducted.
 - 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 High Definition camera, 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>
 - c. The Picard Center can conduct a Practice Zoom prior to the scheduled virtual observation date to test the technology capabilities if 1) Sites new to virtual observations express concern about the process or their site capabilities to participate in a virtual observation or 2) Sites, who experienced virtual video/audio issues in the past, but have made adjustments to accommodate a virtual observation (e.g. new device, updated internet connection) and would like to see if the issues have improved.

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 children 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 (as per Teachstone© guidelines).
3. 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.
4. 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. 1-5 days prior to the observation:
 - a. The Picard Center will contact the site notifying the site of the upcoming observation date and the age type (preK, toddler, or infant).
 - 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 Center will confirm the site has the following in order to stream the live video via Zoom on the schedule observation date:
 - i. Site Designee capacity and verify email address to send Zoom link and details
 - ii. Streaming device (e.g. tablet, computer, phone) with Zoom application downloaded and software up-to-date
 - iii. Internet connectivity
2. 1-3 days prior to the observation:
 - a. Picard staff will provide the Zoom link and password to the observer(s) and Site Designee through email with the selected classroom name. The Site Designee will perform an internal video quality practice check to ensure the identified locations within the selected classroom meet Teachstone's video quality considerations. If the selected classroom cannot be observed the morning of the scheduled observation the Picard Center will select an alternate classroom to observe.

Conducting Virtual Observations

1. The Picard Center and site administrator have agreed upon an optimal learning time to begin the virtual observation.
1. Picard staff will act as the Zoom host. The Zoom host will start the Zoom call for the Site Designee and Picard observer(s) ensuring everyone is present.
2. Picard observer(s) 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.
3. Picard observer(s) will ask the Site Designee for an alternate phone number in order to text or call when technical difficulties arise and the chat function is unavailable.
4. During the observation, the Picard observer(s) will ensure the following:
 - a. The microphone on their computers is muted
 - b. Their video is turned off with their name visible on the black screen
 - c. They have a timer/stopwatch to time the observation and scoring cycles
 - d. 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 and Picard observer(s) will determine who will take the lead on the cycle start and end times.

6. The selected lead will utilize the chat feature on Zoom to prepare the start of the first observation cycle- approximately 2 minutes before the intended start time.
7. The lead will countdown 5-4-3-2-1 through the video function (using hand signals and/or voice) to start the first cycle of observation.
8. The Picard observer(s) will observe for 15 minutes (infant observations) and 20 minutes (preK and toddler observations). After the 15-20 minute observation cycle has ended, the Site Designee and observer(s) will turn off video and mute their sessions. Observer(s) will score independently for 10 minutes.
9. The lead 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
10. The Site Designee and the observer(s) will have 2-3 minutes between back-to-back cycles in order to turn off Zoom video and prepare to start the next observation cycle.
11. If the schedule does not allow for back-to-back cycles, the Site Designee will notify the observer(s) with the start time for the next cycle through the chat function. The observer(s) will access Zoom 2-3 minutes before the start of each cycle.
12. All Picard 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 via the chat box on Zoom or telephone if they are experiencing any persistent technical difficulties. The Picard staff will work with the Site Designee and observer(s) to troubleshoot the issues and 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 (observer(s) and Site Designee).
4. The Picard observer(s) will document in their notes any potential issues during the observation including but not limited to:
 - a. Sound and video quality
 - b. Positioning of camera (if teachers move around the classroom)
 - c. Video capture concerns
 - d. Connection issues
 - e. Site communication difficulties or challenges

| Common Issues | Troubleshooting Tips |
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| Lag in video or audio | i. Switch to an alternate device |



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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">ii. Log off Zoom meeting and reconnect to meetingiii. Reboot routeriv. If using WiFi connection, try using a data plan instead |
| Audio quality issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Site Designee can get closer to the children or teacher(s)ii. If wearing a mask, change the mask typeiii. Teacher(s) can increase their speaking volumeiv. Switch to an alternate device |
| Video placement far from teacher children | <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Site Designee can get closer to the children or teacher(s)ii. Observer(s) can guide Site Designee on video placement to ensure view includes both children and teacher(s) in frame |
| Site communication issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. If the observer uses the chat function to communicate and the site does not respond the observer can unmute their microphone to communicate or text the Site Designee |
| Lack of site personnel to oversee streaming video | <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. The observer will text the Site Designee to reposition or change the camera angle.ii. If the problem persists and the camera continues to remain unattended, the observer will contact the Picard staff and the observation will be counted as incomplete. |