

GUIDANCE

FOR CONDUCTING CLASS[®] OBSERVATIONS OF IN-PERSON TEACHING DURING COVID-19

COVID-19 has ushered in profound changes in how most of us conduct our day-to-day lives—social distancing and wearing masks have become the norm in many cities and states across the country. This fall, individual localities will determine whether their schools and programs will provide in-person, online, or hybrid teaching. CLASS[®] observers want to know how COVID-19 guidelines will impact CLASS observations when teachers and students are socially distanced or taking other COVID-19 precautions. This document provides guidance for safely and effectively collecting CLASS data in schools and programs with in-person teaching during the pandemic.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- CLASS observations remain an effective way to understand the quality of interactions and support educators in their professional development during the pandemic.
- There are many decisions about how observations are conducted and used that will need to be made at the local level based on the impacts of the pandemic within the community. For instance:
 - » Whether to observe in-person, through video, or at all
 - » When to begin observations
 - » How to use the resulting scores
 - » Whether to make comparisons between scores before, during, and after the pandemic
 - » Whether and how to adapt observation protocols to suit the new environments
- Observers need to prepare appropriately to ensure that they can conduct their observations safely and reliably.
- Some behavioral markers may be difficult to assess or simply not present due to new health and safety procedures. All CLASS indicators remain codeable, and this document provides some additional suggestions of effective behaviors observers may see.

CONDUCTING CLASS OBSERVATIONS

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.

The decision of when to observe in person will depend on many factors, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the given community. For example:

- A community may have had very few or no COVID-19 cases. Once teachers and children have had time to adjust and establish new routines, classroom observations may proceed.
- A community may have had some cases, and may opt to conduct observations only for the purpose of professional development for a given time.
- A community may have had many cases and experienced widespread effects. Observations may be suspended until teachers and students have had adequate time to adjust to being back at school, and then may proceed only for the purpose of professional development for a given time.

Additionally, the impact of the virus goes far beyond physical illness. Even communities without confirmed cases have suffered from the stress and tension of school closings, the inequitable impact of the pandemic due to systemic racism, and the economic impact of the virus.

These conditions may affect the transition back to school, and a waiting period may be needed before observations begin. Because circumstances vary by locality, we recommend that wait times be decided at the local level. We typically recommend that formal CLASS observations not be conducted in the first few weeks of school, in order to give teachers and children an opportunity to adjust to the classroom setting. While this advice remains valid, we also recognize that some schools and programs may need an even longer time to adjust, depending on how much classroom settings

have changed since the time prior to the pandemic. In-person CLASS observations may simply not be possible in some localities for longer periods of time as programs work to limit exposure.

COMPARISON OF CLASS DATA BEFORE VS. DURING COVID-19

Just as decisions about whether or not to observe will depend on a community's experience with the pandemic, decisions about comparing new data with data collected before the pandemic will depend on the circumstances. It may be necessary to suspend comparison of data in an area that was greatly impacted by the virus, as teachers and children may need more time to readjust to school. For example, teachers may need to spend a significant amount of time providing Emotional Support and establishing Classroom Organization, and spend less time on Instructional Support.

We recommend considering these factors, in addition to others specific to each school/program, when determining whether/how to compare CLASS data:

- Issues of equity, such as how COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted low income, Black, Latinx, and Native American/Alaska Native communities, which already experience a larger number of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) under non-pandemic circumstances
- Whether schools/programs closed during the pandemic
- Length of time of closure, if the school/program was closed. The shorter the closure, the more likely teachers and children will restart, return, and readjust to their former relationships/interactions. Programs that were closed for a long time may need to shore up relationships and re-establish organizational structure after the long absence.
- Whether teachers and children are returning to the same classrooms they were in prior to COVID-19. If teachers and a majority of children are returning to the same classrooms, it may be possible to compare current data to pre-COVID data, provided that teachers and children have time to readjust to the new school year.

VIDEO OBSERVATION AND CODING

Schools/programs that wish to avoid bringing outside observers into the classroom may consider using video or remote live observations. CLASS has been validated for use in coding videotape of classrooms (Mashburn, Hamre, Downer, & Pianta, 2007), and this method has been widely used in research studies. Provided that teachers can capture and transfer video footage, coding via videotape is acceptable. Chapter 2 of the CLASS manual includes recommendations for obtaining high-quality video footage. In addition, Teachstone has guidance on both [video observation](#) and [remote live observation](#).

LENGTH AND TIMING OF CYCLES

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, many schools and programs have shortened their school days and may try to spend as much time outdoors as possible. This can create a challenge when conducting observations.

The scheduled length of observation may vary by site as needed to accommodate changes to the amount of time that children spend in the classroom. However, Teachstone recommends that whenever possible observers follow the observation protocol found in Chapter 2 of the CLASS

Manual (30-minute cycles consisting of 20 minutes of observation and 10 minutes of coding). CLASS cycles cannot be coded with fewer than 10 minutes of observation.

While Teachstone does not typically recommend observing across multiple days, we recognize the need for flexibility during this time. If it is not possible to complete four cycles in a single morning, observers should conduct the second set of cycles within the next several days. Furthermore, if the schedule allows, they should begin the second day's observations at the time when they concluded the observations on the first day. This increases the likelihood that the data will capture the same types of activities that would have been observed in a full two-hour session. Beginning the observations at the same time each day limits the scope of the observations.

If classrooms are being compared to one another, it is important that all classrooms are observed using the same method. Try to ensure that all classrooms are observed with the same protocol—for example, all teachers are observed for two 30-minute cycles, from 9am to 10am, on two mornings.

HOW TO CODE MULTIPLE ADULTS

In general, observers should follow the guidance in Chapter 2 of the manual. However, with social distancing measures in place, teachers may only be with a few children at a time. If this is the case, there are a variety of strategies that observers can use:

If each teacher bears the same responsibility and is working with the same number of children, split time observing each teacher evenly through the 20-minute observation.

If there are two teachers of focus, the observer can alternate observations between the teachers each cycle, ensuring that they observe each teacher for at least 2 cycles. If there are three teachers of focus, consider conducting six cycles to ensure each teacher has been observed equally.*

If the teachers are working with a significantly disproportionate number of children—for example, one teacher is working with one child and the other teacher is working with three or more children—the observer may exclusively code the teacher working with the larger group of children.*

If additional adults are present to help with tasks such as sanitizing, they should only influence coding if they add to or take away from interactions with the children.

*Teachstone recommends that data obtained in this manner be used to provide teachers with feedback and support as they work to maintain quality interactions with the children in their care during this unprecedented time.

PREPARING FOR SAFE IN-PERSON OBSERVATIONS

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. When preparing for in-person observations, observers should

- Verify the date and time of the observation and learn what steps are being taken to mitigate the impact of COVID-19.
- Understand the health and safety requirements for being on-site and obtain appropriate personal protective equipment.

- Ask teachers about
 - » The number of children likely to be present at the time of observation and the number of adults as well as their roles in the classroom
 - » The best place to sit or stand, understanding that observers may not be able to move freely around the room while observing
 - » The ways their interactions with children may have changed due to COVID-related health and safety restrictions
- Follow the required sanitizing procedures upon entering the classroom and maintain the suggested or required distance from others, both adults and children, at all times.

COVID-19–IMPACTED CLASSROOM SETTINGS

Whether observers are entering classrooms in person or observing video footage, the classrooms they see may look very different this fall. Conditions will vary based on state and local guidance on re-opening, and some states and districts will have more stringent requirements than others. We expect to see use of the following precautions, in various combinations, in many schools/programs:

- Temperature checks at the beginning of each day
- Strict hand washing and sanitizing procedures
- Limits on the number of children and adults in a classroom
- Mask-wearing requirements for adults and children
- Avoidance of singing and other behaviors that increase emission of airborne particles
- Social distancing measures, including a distance of six feet between desks and tables
- Limited class rotation, with children staying in the same classroom and teachers rotating when applicable
- Limited teacher movement within the classroom, with most teaching occurring from the front of the room
- Small groups made up of the same children each day
- Omission of whole group activities, such as morning meeting
- No sharing of materials among children
- Closing of common areas such as the cafeteria, library, and gym
- Removal of soft surfaces and toys from the classroom

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. For instance:

- 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 CLASS manual’s guidance related to coding times when children are engaged in different areas around the room:
 - » *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 (p. 66, Pre-K manual and p. 68, K-3 manual).

- » *Classrooms can be rated at the high end of the Facilitation of Learning and Development dimension even if every child does not have a direct interaction with the teacher during the observation period, as long as the teacher has made an effort to distribute his or her attention and facilitate children’s involvement (Toddler manual, p. 47).*
- 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. The table in the next section provides some additional examples, but it should not be considered a complete list.
- 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 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 can see and hear, which is typically sufficient to assess all CLASS dimensions.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR INFANT AND TODDLER CLASSROOMS

Infants and toddlers need the physical support of adults for their safety and healthy development. For that reason, fewer social distancing practices will be appropriate for this age group. Despite changes in some procedures, many of the normal routines for infant and toddler care may look the same; teachers will still engage children in feeding, diapering, playtime, and napping.

As observers prepare to use the CLASS tool in Infant and Toddler classrooms, they can consider the following ways these settings may be impacted by COVID-19 procedures:

- To reduce exposure, programs may set up classrooms to have a primary caregiver for specific children. In these cases, we may see one teacher attending to a small group of children and a second teacher attending to another small group. Observers will look for how teachers are involved with all of the children in their primary group and consider the experience of the average child in the classroom across the various groupings of teachers and children.
- Although COVID-19 guidelines such as social distancing and mask wearing may not be in place for infants and younger toddlers, there may be expectations that children between two and three years of age keep some distance from each other (for instance, using “airplane arms”) or wear masks for part of the day. Toddlers may require extra support in adjusting to such precautions.

Young children may not remember or feel comfortable with their caregivers right away, or may be experiencing group care for the first time, and may need more time to adjust to the environment and routines. Infants and toddlers may also display inconsistency in their development (for example, not walking as much, sudden resistance to potty training, increased separation anxiety) due to transitions in schedules and caregivers and as a result of heightened stress. To address these needs, teachers may spend a significant amount of time providing Emotional and Behavioral Support and less time on Engaged Support for Learning for toddlers specifically.

DIMENSION-LEVEL GUIDANCE

We’ve outlined at the dimension and indicator level how the changes to classroom settings described above may impact the evidence for each CLASS dimension across the Infant, Toddler, and Pre-K/K-3 tools.

We hope this guidance is helpful in answering some of your most important questions, but we recognize that circumstances differ across the education landscape. Please use the CLASS Learning Community as a way to get feedback and dialogue with others about their approaches in this COVID-19 world. If you have thoughts you’d like to share or would like to consult directly with us, we’d love to hear from you. Email us at interactions@teachstone.com.

IMPACTS ON PRE-K–K-3 CLASS[®] INDICATORS

The following table outlines at the dimension and indicator level how the changes to classroom settings described above may impact the evidence for each Pre-K CLASS[®] dimension. It also discusses some specific interactions to look for that meet the intent of these dimensions and indicators. Like the behavioral markers in the CLASS manual, the list provided here is not meant to be exhaustive, but rather, to help observers think about some different types of evidence they might be capturing.

This table addresses only indicators that may be difficult to assess or simply not present due to new health and safety procedures. Indicators that are likely to be observable regardless of new procedures are not included.

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

Facial expressions and physical presence are a large part of how people connect with each other. With social distancing and the use of masks in the classroom, teachers must make intentional efforts to build these important connections and establish relationships, especially with children who may have recently experienced trauma or increased levels of stress.

RELATIONSHIPS

Increased social distancing between teachers and children and among children may impact evidence for behavioral markers such as **physical proximity**, **shared activities**, and **peer assistance**. Additionally, the use of masks may limit **matched affect**, or observers' ability to assess it.

Nonetheless, the relationships indicator is about how **teachers and children enjoy warm, supportive relationships** with each other, and there are many other ways to observe the presence of these relationships in the classroom.

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

- Teachers give their time and attention to children, moving around the room and checking in frequently
- Teachers show a genuine interest in what children are doing
- Distanced activities are still shared—for instance, the teacher or children read a book aloud or put on a puppet show
- Children show concern if a peer is upset
- Children volunteer information to one another
- Teachers or children use photos, perhaps of themselves, to share their emotions when their faces are covered
- Teachers demonstrate personal knowledge of or interest in children's lives outside of school
- *Unaffected behavioral markers: social conversation*

POSITIVE AFFECT

The use of masks by teachers and/or children may impact evidence for the behavioral marker of **smiling**. However, there are many other behaviors that can indicate to an observer that the classroom is a **warm, pleasant place** to be.

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

- Teachers' smiling is evident in their eyes, eyebrows, temples, and cheekbones—if the observer can tell the teacher is smiling under the mask, the child can likely tell as well
- Teachers or children use photos, perhaps of themselves, to share positive emotions when their faces are covered
- Teachers nod and offer other affirmations
- Teachers and children are having fun and being playful
- *Unaffected behavioral markers: laughter, enthusiasm*

POSITIVE COMMUNICATION

Social distancing protocols may impact evidence for the behavioral marker of **physical affection**. However, there are many other ways that teachers can convey **positive communication** to children.

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

- Thumbs-ups, air fives, fist pumps, elbow bumps, clapping, and other celebratory gestures
- Air hugs, air hearts, finger hearts, “I love you” signs, and other affectionate gestures
- Phrases that show an intent to provide affection, such as “I would love to give you a hug”
- *Unaffected behavioral markers: verbal affection, positive expectations*

RESPECT

Increased social distancing between teachers and children and among children may impact evidence for behavioral markers such as **eye contact** and **cooperation and/or sharing**. Additionally, the use of masks may limit teachers' use of a **warm, calm voice**, or observers' ability to assess it.

Nonetheless, the respect indicator is about how **teachers and students demonstrate respect** for one another, and there are many other ways to observe demonstrations of respect in the classroom.

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

- Teachers and/or children orient themselves toward the person speaking
- Teachers bend down to get on a child's level, even from a distance
- Children take turns
- Children listen to one another
- *Unaffected behavioral markers: respectful language*

TEACHER SENSITIVITY

Encompasses the teacher's awareness of and responsivity 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

Depending on their experiences, children may display heightened levels of anxiety, stress, or depression during the pandemic. Despite health and safety protocols that may limit teachers' ability to monitor children's facial expressions, teachers need to be aware of subtle signs that children are having difficulty so that they can adequately support children and help provide them with a sense of safety.

AWARENESS

Social distancing protocols may impact evidence for the behavioral marker of **notices lack of understanding and/or difficulties** by limiting teachers' ability to see children's facial expressions.

However, there are many other ways for teachers to remain **aware of students who need extra support, assistance, or attention**.

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

- Teachers notice children's body language, such as raised hands, slouching, downcast eyes, or lack of engagement
- Teachers are attuned to the emotional needs underlying aggressive or withdrawn behaviors
- Teachers spread their attention around the room
- Teachers prepare differentiated activities to meet the needs of children who are on target for age/grade-level work as well as those who may have fallen behind during the pandemic
- *Unaffected behavioral markers: anticipates problems and plans appropriately*

RESPONSIVENESS

Social distancing protocols may impact evidence for the behavioral marker of **provides comfort and assistance** by limiting teachers' physical closeness with children.

However, there are many other ways that teachers can **match their support to children's needs**.

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

- Teachers verbally check in on children regarding their academic and emotional well-being
- Teachers provide time for children to share their feelings
- Teachers offer children strategies for self-soothing, such as deep breathing, self-hugs, or the ability to go to a quiet area
- *Unaffected behavioral markers: acknowledges emotions, provides individualized support*

REGARD FOR STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

Captures the degree to which the teacher's interactions with students and classroom activities place an emphasis on students' interests, motivations, and points of view and encourage student responsibility and autonomy

Teachers must make a concerted effort to provide flexibility within the structure imposed by COVID-19 restrictions, which may limit children's access to specific roles, materials, or opportunities for autonomy in the classroom. Even in this environment, teachers can provide children with choices. Providing choices empowers children who have experienced trauma to feel a sense of control over their environment, which is crucial for healing.

FLEXIBILITY AND STUDENT FOCUS

Strictly following school/program health and safety requirements, such as a minimum length of time for hand washing, may impact evidence for behavioral markers such as **shows flexibility** and **follows students' lead**.

However, there are many other opportunities for teachers to **involve students in a meaningful, formative way** within the classroom.

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

- When teachers must require children to do something, they provide choices within the experience—for instance, what song to sing while hand washing, or where or how to stand while having their temperature checked
- When teachers must interrupt a child's individual pace (to follow a sanitizing schedule, to keep pods together), they involve the child in deciding if and how they will return to their work later
- When teachers must prohibit an activity children are interested in (playing tag, working at the sensory table), they provide reasonable and related alternatives
- *Unaffected behavioral markers: incorporates students' ideas*

SUPPORT FOR AUTONOMY AND LEADERSHIP

Health and safety requirements may impact evidence for the behavioral marker of **gives students responsibility** by limiting children's ability to distribute materials or participate in cleanup.

However, there are many other ways for teachers to **enable students to be as independent as possible** in the classroom.

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

- Children do classroom jobs that don't require personal contact, such as watering plants or putting away their own nap mats
- Children lead morning routines from a distance
- Children come to the board to demonstrate, or model for others from their seats
- *Unaffected behavioral markers: allows choice, allows students to lead lessons*

RESTRICTION OF MOVEMENT

Health and safety requirements may impact evidence for the behavioral marker of **allows movement** by limiting children’s ability to navigate the classroom freely.

However, there are many other ways for teachers to make sure children experience **freedom of movement**.

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

- Children may sit, stand, lie, and move within their personal space
- Teachers have children use “airplane arms” or create hula hoop suspenders for children to help define personal space and encourage movement
- Teachers create routines or procedures to allow movement around the classroom—for instance, having children raise their hands to go to the washroom, sink, or other defined areas in the room
- *Unaffected behavioral markers: is not rigid*

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

Encompasses the teacher’s ability to provide clear behavioral expectations and use effective methods to prevent and redirect misbehavior

Children may have been out of school for months, and while some children may have had a regular schedule, others have not. This fact, coupled with COVID-19 restrictions, means that all children will be learning new rules and procedures. To ensure that children and adults remain safe, teachers may need to frequently provide clear behavior expectations and monitor safety procedures such as hand washing, social distancing, and mask wearing. Additionally, children who have had stressful experiences during the pandemic may let teachers know through their behavior. Teachers can support these children with proactive and positive behavior management strategies.

REDIRECTION OF MISBEHAVIOR

Social distancing protocols may impact evidence for the behavioral marker of **uses subtle cues to redirect**, or observers’ ability to assess it.

However, there are many other ways that teachers can **effectively redirect misbehavior**.

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

- Quick verbal redirections
- Redirections that involve hand signals or gestures
- Redirections that use pointers or picture cards
- *Unaffected behavioral markers: effective reduction of misbehavior, attention to the positive, efficient redirection*

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

Teachers will need to help children who are returning to school learn new routines so that they can participate in keeping everyone safe and keeping the classroom running smoothly. Routines that were previously based around songs may need to be altered. Transitions may need to be carefully planned to prevent children from crowding together. Additionally, teachers may have an increased set of managerial tasks related to maintaining separation and sanitation. Teachers will need to effectively plan for these tasks to avoid downtime in the classroom.

While evidence for Productivity may look different in the ways described above, all of the behavioral markers should be present to the extent that is typical.

INSTRUCTIONAL LEARNING FORMATS

Focuses on the ways in which the teacher maximizes students' interest, engagement, and ability to learn from lessons and activities

COVID-19 restrictions may limit teachers' usual strategies for drawing children into lessons and activities, such as sitting with children and directly joining in their play or using exaggerated facial expressions. Additionally, children who are experiencing high levels of stress may have difficulty concentrating. In these cases, teachers will need to employ new strategies to encourage children's engagement.

EFFECTIVE FACILITATION

Social distancing protocols may impact evidence for the behavioral marker of **teacher involvement**, by encouraging teachers to stay at a distance from children or limiting their movement around the classroom.

However, there are many other ways that teachers can **facilitate students' engagement in activities and lessons**.

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

- Teachers add to what children are already doing by suggesting new ways of using materials or developing their activities
- Teachers actively seek information about what children are working on and how it is going
- *Unaffected behavioral markers: effective questioning, expanding children's involvement*

VARIETY OF MODALITIES AND MATERIALS

Restrictions on the types of materials available in the classroom and the extent to which these materials can be shared may impact evidence for behavioral markers such as **interesting and creative materials** and **hands-on opportunities**.

However, there are many other ways for teachers to use materials and modalities to **effectively interest students and gain their participation** during activities and lessons.

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

- Children have a personal set of hands-on materials available to them
- Individual children go to the board for demonstrations
- Teachers use digital devices and projection
- Teachers help children use everyday objects in new and creative ways
- *Unaffected behavioral markers: range of auditory, visual, and movement opportunities*

CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

Measures the teacher's use of instructional discussions and activities to promote students' higher-order thinking skills and cognition and the teacher's focus on understanding rather than on rote instruction

The use of masks and social distancing could impact teachers' ability to engage in instructional discussions and/or the observer's ability to assess these discussions. Teachers can promote higher-order thinking skills by asking children questions and making connections aloud, even when there is not an immediate opportunity to develop the topic into a discussion, and by taking advantage of moments when they can work closely with small groups to have deeper conversations. Concept Development interactions specifically directed around conversations about COVID-19 and its effects can be an important part of helping children make sense of what is going on in the world around them.

CREATING

Health and safety requirements may impact evidence for the behavioral marker of **producing** by limiting children's access to certain materials that they might use to create their own products.

However, there are many other ways for teachers to **stimulate students' creativity and ability to generate new ideas**.

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

- Teachers and children discuss how they would make something and what materials they would need in the absence of actually being able to put the plan into action
- Children create their own products with the limited materials available
- Children use everyday objects in new and creative ways
- Children create nonphysical products, such as making up a story
- *Unaffected behavioral markers: brainstorming, planning*

QUALITY OF FEEDBACK

Assesses the degree to which the teacher provides feedback that expands learning and understanding and encourages continued participation

The use of masks and social distancing could impact teachers' ability to engage in back-and-forth exchanges and/or the observer's ability to assess these exchanges. Teachers can promote children's learning and understanding by responding to their comments and actions with hints, assistance, questions, information, and encouragement, even when there is not an immediate opportunity to continue the exchange, and by taking advantage of moments when they can work closely with small groups to have deeper exchanges. Quality of Feedback interactions can be an important part of motivating and instilling confidence in children who have experienced high levels of stress during the pandemic.

While evidence for Quality of Feedback may look different in the ways described above, all of the behavioral markers should be present to the extent that is typical.

LANGUAGE MODELING

Captures the quality and amount of the teacher's use of language-stimulation and language-facilitation techniques

The use of masks and social distancing could impact teachers' ability to engage in conversations with children and/or the observer's ability to assess these conversations. Teachers can promote children's language development by encouraging peer conversations within groups and using self- and parallel talk and advanced language to provide language as they move around the classroom, even when there is not an immediate opportunity to engage in a dialogue. Teachers should also take advantage of moments when they can work closely with small groups to have more authentic conversations. Language Modeling interactions can be an important part of providing children with the words they need to process and communicate their experience of the pandemic.

REPETITION AND EXTENSION

Social distancing protocols may impact evidence for the behavioral marker of **repeats**, or observers' ability to assess it.

However, there are many other ways that teachers can respond to children's comments in ways that **build directly on their contributions**.

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

- Teachers acknowledge comments they cannot hear by asking children to repeat themselves
- Teachers approximate repetitions for difficult-to-hear comments by asking children, "Did you say ...?"
- *Unaffected behavioral markers: extends, elaborates*

IMPACTS ON INFANT CLASS® INDICATORS

The following table outlines at the dimension and indicator level how the changes to classroom settings described above may impact the evidence for each Infant CLASS® dimension. It also discusses some specific interactions to look for that meet the intent of these dimensions and indicators. Like the behavioral markers in the CLASS manual, the list provided here is not meant to be exhaustive, but rather, to help observers think about some different types of evidence they might be capturing.

This table addresses only indicators that may be difficult to assess or simply not present due to new health and safety procedures. Indicators that are likely to be observable regardless of new procedures are not included.

RELATIONAL CLIMATE

Reflects the connections, emotions, and respect conveyed by teachers as well as the infants' responses to these interactions

For infants, especially those who are nonmobile, teachers will still need to be physically present and connected to provide care. Much of an infant's time for connection to adults occurs through routine care such as feeding, diapering, and rocking to sleep, and there may be limited social distancing during these activities. However, the use of masks may affect how teachers communicate with each other and build relationships with the children in their classrooms, and teachers must make intentional efforts to build these important connections.

RELATIONAL BEHAVIORS

Teachers can still display behaviors that support the development and maintenance of relationships with infants. Physical proximity, eye contact, joint attention, and verbal and physical affection should be observable, with teachers making only slight adjustments to these behaviors.

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

- Teachers pat children on the back rather than kissing them on the forehead
- Teachers sit near an infant, rather than holding the infant on their lap

EMOTION EXPRESSION

The use of masks may impact evidence for the behavioral marker of smiling. However, there should be many indications that teachers and children are enjoying their time together in the classroom. Teachers can still share in laughter and demonstrate enthusiasm for children's actions and presence in the classroom. Teachers may consider wearing clear masks for this age group to support children's developing understanding of emotions.

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

- Teachers' smiling is evident in their eyes, eyebrows, temples, and cheekbones
- Teachers use photos to demonstrate positive emotions when their faces are covered
- Teachers and children are having fun and being playful

RESPECT FOR INFANTS' STATE

Infants use their hands and mouths to explore materials. Observers may see teachers sanitizing toys more frequently, limiting the sharing of toys between infants, or washing children's hands more often. Observers should look for teachers to clearly communicate their intentions when they need to remove a toy or wash an infant's hands.

LACK OF ADULT NEGATIVITY

Overall, behavioral markers within this indicator remain unaffected. However, with increased concerns around coughing and sneezing, it is important for teachers to monitor and mitigate their own negative feelings when they come into contact with infants' saliva. Observers will look for teachers to remain positive in their interactions when infants sneeze, cough, or drool.

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

- Teachers making negative comments, such as "That's gross!" or "Don't sneeze on me"
- Teachers showing irritation at having to wipe a child's nose or resanitize a toy

TEACHER SENSITIVITY

Encompasses teachers' awareness of and responsiveness to infants' verbal and nonverbal cues, including availability to provide comfort, skill in resolving distress, and timeliness and contingency of responses

Infants need support from adults in addressing their needs and regulating their emotions. Additionally, infants can sense stress in caregivers, which may increase their own levels of stress, fear, or frustration. Teachers must be aware of signs that infants are having difficulty so that they can adequately respond to infants' needs and emotional and physiological expressions and provide them with a sense of safety.

AWARENESS

Teachers will still need to visually scan children, attend physically to children, and acknowledge children verbally and physically. Infants may need extra support if they are feeling tense or unsettled.

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

- Teachers notice children's body language, such as more agitated body movements when upset or sucking fingers as a way to soothe themselves
- Teachers understand that children may display more fussiness or crying

RESPONSIVENESS

Due to heightened levels of stress, infants may need to be held more often or may be more difficult to soothe. Observers should still look for teachers consistently responding to and making adjustments for children's individual needs, as well as infants seeking out teachers and being comforted by their efforts. If it takes more time for a child to be soothed, observers should consider how the teacher adjusts their responses and the effectiveness of those adjustments.

FACILITATED EXPLORATION

Considers teachers' facilitation of experiences and interactions in routine care and playtime to support infants' engagement and development

COVID-19 restrictions may limit teachers' usual strategies for helping to facilitate children's exploration, such as sitting with children and directly joining in their play or using exaggerated facial expressions. Additionally, children who are experiencing high levels of stress may have less interest in engaging in exploration. In these cases, teachers will need to employ new strategies to support their exploration.

INVOLVEMENT

Teachers' involvement may be a little more physically distant from infants who are mobile or can sit up on their own. Even so, teachers can be involved in infants' play and routines.

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

- Teachers sit across from infants, facing them and shaking a rattle, rather than holding the infants in their lap
- Teachers focus infants' attention on a mobile during diapering, instead of singing a song

INFANT FOCUSED

Due to new sanitation procedures, teachers may have to stop children's exploration when one infant reaches out to touch another infant's face, or when an infant is reaching for a toy. Teachers may also need to be more careful not to overstimulate if a child is in need of a quiet or soothing environment due to heightened stress.

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

- Teachers provide a different toy for an infant if the toy they are interested in needs to be sanitized
- Teachers guide an infant to touch a doll instead of another child's face
- If infants turn their heads away to regulate their stimulation, teachers pause facilitating exploration and wait to engage in the activity when infants indicate that they are ready

EARLY LANGUAGE SUPPORT

Captures the amount and effectiveness of teachers' use of language-stimulation and language-facilitation techniques to encourage infants' early language development

The use of masks could impact teachers' ability to engage in conversation with the children and/or observers' ability to assess these conversations. Teachers should still engage in teacher talk, communication support, and communication extension with infants. It may be helpful to wear clear masks or a face shield as infants benefit from seeing facial cues in understanding what is being said and imitating sounds. Observers may see teachers intentionally compensating for the presence of the mask, through behaviors such as using gestures to enhance the meaning of what they're saying and pausing intentionally to let children know when they are done talking.

While evidence for Early Language Support may look different in the ways described above, all of the behavioral markers should be present to the extent that is typical.

IMPACTS ON TODDLER CLASS® INDICATORS

The following table outlines at the dimension and indicator level how the changes to classroom settings described above may impact the evidence for each Toddler CLASS® dimension. It also discusses some specific interactions to look for that meet the intent of these dimensions and indicators. Like the behavioral markers in the CLASS manual, the list provided here is not meant to be exhaustive, but rather, to help observers think about some different types of evidence they might be capturing.

This table addresses only indicators that may be difficult to assess or simply not present due to new health and safety procedures. Indicators that are likely to be observable regardless of new procedures are not included.

POSITIVE CLIMATE

Reflects the connection between the teacher and children and the warmth, respect, and enjoyment communicated by verbal and nonverbal interactions

Facial expressions and physical presence are especially important for toddlers as they develop a sense of self in relation to the adults and other children around them. With social distancing and the use of masks in the classroom, teachers must make intentional efforts to build these important connections and establish relationships, especially with children who may have recently experienced trauma or increased levels of stress.

RELATIONSHIPS

Increased social distancing between teachers and children and among children may impact evidence for behavioral markers such as **physical proximity**, **reciprocal interactions**, and **peer connections**. Additionally, the use of masks may limit **matched positive affect**, or observers' ability to assess it.

Nonetheless, this indicator is about how teachers and children **enjoy warm relationships** with each other, and there are many other ways to observe the presence of these relationships in the classroom.

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

- Teachers give their time and attention to children, moving around the room and checking in frequently
- Teachers sit within a few feet of children playing in small groups
- Distanced activities are still shared—for instance, the children and teachers participate in finger plays together at their respective spots on the carpet
- Teachers or children use photos, perhaps of themselves, to share their emotions when their faces are covered
- Teachers engage in conversations with children from across a table
- Children engage in parallel play with each other while distanced

POSITIVE AFFECT

The use of masks by teachers and/or children may impact evidence for the behavioral marker of **smiling, laughing**. Social distancing protocols may impact evidence for the behavioral marker of **verbal or physical affection**.

However, there are many other behaviors that can indicate to an observer that **the classroom feels like a warm, pleasant place to be**.

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

- Teachers' smiling is evident in their eyes, eyebrows, temples, and cheekbones
- Teachers nod and offer other affirmations
- Teachers and children are having fun and being playful
- Teachers and children use thumbs-ups, air fives, elbow bumps, clapping, and other celebratory gestures
- Teachers and children use air hugs, air hearts, finger hearts, and other affectionate gestures
- Teachers use phrases that show an intent to provide affection, such as "I would love to give you a hug"
- Teachers rub children's backs when children are upset, rather than kissing them on the forehead
- Teachers use animated body language to express excitement and enthusiasm
- *Unaffected behavioral markers: enthusiasm*

RESPECT

Increased social distancing between teachers and children and among children may impact evidence for behavioral markers such as **eye contact** and **body orientation**. Additionally, the use of masks may limit teachers' use of a **warm, calm voice**, or observers' ability to assess it.

Nonetheless, the respect indicator is about how teachers **demonstrate respect for children**, and there are many other ways to observe evidence of respect in the classroom.

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

- Teachers orient themselves toward children even if they are a few feet away
- Teachers bend down to get on a child's level even from a distance
- Teachers communicate intentions, such as "I need to come close to your body to help you" or "I need to fix your mask to cover your nose"
- Teachers give children their full attention when speaking to them
- *Unaffected behavioral markers: respectful language and communication*

TEACHER SENSITIVITY

Encompasses the teacher's responsiveness to and awareness of children's individual needs and emotional functioning. The extent to which the teacher is available as a secure base (being there to provide comfort, reassurance, and encouragement) is included in this rating

Depending on their experiences, children may display heightened levels of anxiety, stress, or depression during the pandemic. Despite health and safety protocols that may limit teachers' ability to monitor children's facial expressions, teachers need to be aware of signs that children are having difficulty so that they can adequately support children and help provide them with a sense of safety.

AWARENESS

Social distancing protocols and mask wearing may impact evidence for the behavioral marker of **notices difficulties or children who are upset** by limiting teachers' ability to see children's facial expressions.

However, there are many other ways for teachers to remain **consistently attentive to children**.

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

- Teachers notice children's body language, such as slouching, downcast eyes, or wandering
- Teachers are attuned to the emotional needs underlying aggressive or withdrawn behaviors
- Teachers prepare additional activities or provide calm-down spaces to meet the needs of children who are having difficulty engaging in activities or regulating their behavior
- Teachers notice if a child is having difficulty wearing a mask or separating from a family member
- *Unaffected behavioral markers: is attentive to children throughout the classroom*

RESPONSIVENESS

Social distancing protocols may impact evidence for the behavioral marker of **provides comfort** by limiting teachers' physical closeness with children.

However, there are many other ways that teachers can **respond to children's needs and bids for attention**.

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

- Teachers verbally check in on children regarding their needs and emotional well-being
- Teachers provide time for children to share their feelings
- Teachers support self-soothing strategies such as deep breathing, self-hugs, or the ability to go to a quiet area
- *Unaffected behavioral markers: responds to children's bids for attention, acknowledges and accepts emotions*

REGARD FOR CHILD PERSPECTIVES

Captures the degree to which the teacher's interactions with children and classroom activities emphasize children's interests, motivations, and points of view and encourage children's responsibility and independence

Teachers must make a concerted effort to provide flexibility within the structure imposed by COVID-19 restrictions, which may limit children's access to specific roles, materials, or opportunities for independence in the classroom. Even in this environment, teachers can provide children with choices. Providing choices empowers children who have experienced trauma to feel a sense of control over their environment, which is crucial for healing.

CHILD FOCUS

Strictly following program health and safety requirements, such as minimum length of time for hand washing, may impact evidence for behavioral markers such as **follows children's leads**.

However, there are many other opportunities for teachers to ensure that **activities are child directed and child led**.

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

- Teachers ask children about their ideas for how they will play in centers
- When teachers must require children to do something, they provide choices within the experience—for instance, what song to sing while hand washing, or where or how to stand while having their temperature checked
- When teachers must prohibit an activity children are interested in, such as working at the sensory table, they provide reasonable and related alternatives
- Within an activity, children are able to decide how they use the materials—for instance, what they want to build with the blocks
- *Unaffected behavioral markers: provides choices, elicits children's expression and ideas*

FLEXIBILITY

Social distancing and sanitation procedures may impact evidence for behavioral markers such as **allows movement and talking, "goes with the flow,"** and **adjusts pacing for individual children**.

However, there are many other ways for teachers to be **flexible in their plans and within activities**.

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

- When teachers must interrupt a child's individual pace (to follow a sanitizing schedule, to keep small groups together), they involve the child in deciding if and how they will return to their work later
- Teachers provide areas in which children can move freely ("You look like you want to dance. You can go to the music corner so your body doesn't get too close to your friends.")
- Teachers allow movement between centers with limited children or once materials are sanitized
- Children may sit, stand, lie, and move within their personal space
- Teachers have children use "airplane arms" to help define personal space and encourage movement

SUPPORT OF INDEPENDENCE

Health and safety requirements may impact evidence for the behavioral markers of **child responsibility** by limiting children's ability to distribute materials or participate in cleanup. Additionally, teachers may limit the **materials accessible** to children due to the need for frequent sanitation, and children may not be able to stand close to one another while teachers support **peer perspective taking**.

However, there are many other ways for teachers to **maximize children's independence** in the classroom.

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

- Children do classroom jobs that don't require personal contact, such as watering plants or putting away their own nap blankets
- Teachers engage children in peer perspective taking by providing words to acknowledge needs and emotions while children stand a few feet away from one another
- Teachers keep materials that are easily sanitized accessible to children
- *Unaffected behavioral markers: support of self-care*

BEHAVIOR GUIDANCE

Encompasses the teacher's ability to promote behavioral self-regulation in children by using proactive approaches, supporting positive behavior, and guiding and minimizing problem behavior

Children may have been out of their classroom routines for weeks or months, and while some children may have had a regular schedule, others have not. This fact, coupled with COVID-19 restrictions, means that all children will be learning new rules and procedures. To ensure that children and adults remain safe, teachers may need to frequently provide clear behavior expectations and monitor behavior to prevent problems where possible. Although exploring and testing boundaries is a common developmental behavior in toddlers, children who have had stressful experiences during the pandemic may display more frequent unexpected or challenging behaviors. Teachers can support these children with proactive and positive behavior guidance strategies.

While evidence for Behavior Guidance may look different in the ways described above, all of the behavioral markers should be present to the extent that is typical.

FACILITATION OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Considers how well the teacher facilitates activities to support children's learning and developmental opportunities. How the teacher connects and integrates learning into activities and tasks should be included in this rating

COVID-19 restrictions may limit teachers' usual strategies for drawing children into lessons and activities, such as sitting with children and directly joining in their play or using exaggerated facial expressions. The use of masks and social distancing may also impact teachers' ability to embed information into children's play and routines and/or the observer's ability to assess these behaviors. Additionally, children who are experiencing high levels of stress may have difficulty concentrating. In these cases, teachers will need to employ new strategies to encourage children's engagement. Engaging children in conversations and getting them thinking about COVID-19 and its effects can be an important part of helping children make sense of what is going on in the world around them.

ACTIVE FACILITATION

Social distancing protocols may impact evidence for the behavioral markers of **teacher guides exploration** and **teacher is involved in children's activities to support learning and development** by putting teachers at a distance from children or limiting their movement around the classroom.

However, there are many other ways that teachers can **provide intentional opportunities and guidance for learning and development**.

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

- Teachers add to what children are already doing by suggesting new ways of using materials or developing their activities
- Teachers actively seek information about what children are working on and how it is going
- Teachers join in activities while sitting a few feet away from children and/or using their own set of similar materials
- *Unaffected behavioral markers: teacher provides opportunities for exploration and learning*

CHILDREN'S ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Restrictions on the types of materials available in the classroom and the extent to which these materials can be shared may impact evidence for behavioral markers such as **manipulation of materials** and **physical involvement**.

However, there are many other ways that teachers can ensure that children are **actively and consistently involved in activities and routines**.

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

- Children have a personal set of hands-on materials available to them
- Teachers help children use everyday objects in new and creative ways
- Teachers integrate movement opportunities into book reading and other activities
- *Unaffected behavioral markers: verbal involvement*

QUALITY OF FEEDBACK

Assesses the degree to which the teacher provides feedback (in response to what children say and/or do) that promotes learning and understanding and expands children's participation

The use of masks and social distancing could impact teachers' ability to engage in back-and-forth exchanges and/or observers' ability to assess these exchanges. Teachers can promote children's learning and understanding by responding to their comments and actions with hints, assistance, questions, information, and encouragement, even when there is not an immediate opportunity to continue the exchange. Teachers should take advantage of moments when they can work closely with small groups or individuals to have deeper exchanges. Teachers may also need to provide more verbal assistance than physical assistance when scaffolding for children. Quality of Feedback interactions can be an important part of motivating and instilling confidence in children who have experienced high levels of stress during the pandemic.

While evidence for Quality of Feedback may look different in the ways described above, all of the behavioral markers should be present to the extent that is typical.

LANGUAGE MODELING

Captures the quality and amount of the teacher's use of language-stimulation and language-facilitation techniques to encourage children's language development

The use of masks and social distancing could impact teachers' ability to engage in conversations with children and/or observers' ability to assess these conversations. Teachers can promote children's language development by using self- and parallel talk and advanced language to provide frequent opportunities for children to hear language throughout the day. Teachers should ask questions as they move around the classroom and engage smaller groups of children or individuals to have more authentic conversations. Language Modeling interactions can be an important part of providing children with the words they need to process and communicate their experience of the pandemic.

REPETITION AND EXTENSION

Social distancing protocols may impact evidence for the behavioral marker of **repeats**, or observers' ability to assess it.

However, there are many other ways for teachers to **focus on children's attempts to communicate and build directly on their contributions**.

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

- Teachers acknowledge comments they cannot hear by asking children to repeat themselves
- Teachers approximate repetitions for difficult to hear comments by asking children, "Did you say...?"
- Teachers describe their understanding of the purpose of a child's communication, even if they did not understand the specific utterance ("You're asking for help with something," "You have something to say")