2019-2020 Local Observation Protocol Guidance for Early Childhood Community Networks

Bulletin 140 §503 requires community networks to develop a plan and process to coordinate and conduct local observations reliably and without conflict of interest. The Department requires all community networks to adopt a written local observation protocol that meets the minimum requirements included in this document. This guidance document is provided to demonstrate how local protocols must align closely with the Department's requirements for third party observations conducted by the University of Louisiana at Lafayette (ULL) Picard Center. Where indicated, some parts of the third party protocol must be adopted directly as minimum requirements for local observations. The remainder of the third party protocol is provided as context and guidance.

Before the Observation Begins

	Minimum Local Protocol Requirements	Third Party Protocol Requirements
Minimum Observer Qualifications	Local observers must meet the following minimum qualifications: • Be certified by Teachstone as a reliable observer (certificate on file with lead agency); • Participate in on-going calibration exercises at least once per observation period; and • Pass a child care criminal background check that is on file with the lead agency.	Third party observers must meet the following minimum qualifications: • Possess at least a Bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a related field; • Have at least 2 years of experience in early childhood; • Be certified as reliable by Teachstone annually; • Participate in on-going calibration exercises, at least once per observation period, that result in 90-100% reliability; • Pass a criminal background check; and • Have proficient computer skills (i.e. typing, computer access, scanning documents, etc.) to be able to complete electronic forms.
Scheduling Observations	Community Networks must develop a written plan to ensure they have all sites and the classrooms for each site, with correct age types, entered in the *CLASS®* system by October 1 and have a schedule for completing local observations for each observation period. Community Networks may use "real time" scheduling to align with third party observations. If "just in time" scheduling is used across the community network or at select sites, the lead agency will provide the Department with written notice of their intention prior to September 30. The notice must identify the total number of local *CLASS®*	Each observation will take place at an assigned date and time. Monthly, the Picard Center staff will schedule observations for each third party observer in their assigned region. Before entering the site/school, the observer should know the age type (infant vs. toddler vs. pre-K) they are assigned to observe and the teacher's name.

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	observers in the community network and must name the sites where local observation scheduling will be aligned with third party observations. All programs, sites and classrooms must be treated similarly with announced and unannounced observations.	
Observer Schedules	Community Networks must establish a process to review observer schedules for schedule conflict, conflict of interest, or other concerns, and make adjustments that are communicated to observers and sites. When "real time" scheduling is used, Community Networks are still responsible for ensuring that no conflict of interest will occur.	Picard Center staff will provide teacher names for each observation along with a monthly calendar. Observers review their schedule for potential conflicts and notify the Picard Center prior to the scheduled observation to change their assigned teacher and/or site location. Each observer's schedule is reviewed for schedule conflict, and adjustments are made based on classroom or site-level information provided by the sites. Picard Center staff will provide each observer with a revised monthly calendar of sites to observe on designated days with contact information.
Site Notification	Community Networks must establish a process regarding how they will consistently notify sites about local and 3rd party observations. Community Networks must establish a process to contact sites to determine the optimal learning time during which to conduct observations. Community Networks must establish a process to require sites to contact the lead agency or the observer with any events that would preclude an observation no later than one week before the scheduled timeframe of the observation.	The Picard Center contacts each site by letter prior to the month they will be observed in order to verify site information: • Number of classrooms and age types • Optimal learning time • Mailing and physical address 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. The letter states, "If you have scheduled events during this time that preclude our observations (e.g., scheduled field trips, picture day, health screenings, holidays, teacher absences,

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	Sites aligning local observations with third party observations are required provide the lead agency with a copy of the information provided to the Picard Center about any events that would preclude an observation.	professional development days), please contact the Picard Center by email, classactull@gmail.com, no later than 1 week before the scheduled timeframe of the observation."
Rescheduling Observations	Communication between lead agency, site, and observer must adhere to a local protocol for observations.	Observers cannot directly contact sites/schools to reschedule an observation.

The Day of the Observation

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Observer Demeanor, Attire, and 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 back and forth 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 (exception: as communities build Infant *CLASS*® capacity, observers may conduct multiple observers per day when the second observation is an Infant *CLASS*® observation) At the conclusion of the observation, the observer will confirm with the teacher	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 back and forth 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. • Share feedback immediately following an observation At the conclusion of the observation, the observer will confirm with the teacher that the observation is complete. There will not be an exit interview after the observation, however, general feedback of the highest and lowest scoring dimensions

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	that the observation is complete.	for infant CLASS® observations and the two highest and lowest dimension scores for pre-K and toddler CLASS® observations will be provided via the LDE Early Childhood portal.
Observer Arrival at Site	Adopt third party protocol as written. Note: During the 2019-2020 Infant *CLASS*· practice year, community networks will be permitted to schedule local Infant *CLASS*· observations flexibly, including afternoon times.	Upon arrival at the site/school the observer must report to the administration office and: • Introduce him or herself to office staff and site administrator (if available); • Present identification and sign-in on appropriate site documentation; • Present a Child Care Criminal Background Check (for licensed centers only); • Verify classroom information with site administrator/director or designee (i.e., 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 (PreK only). If a double coder/shadow scorer is present for the observation, they must follow the same procedures above. The lead observer will select the classroom according to his/her schedule and the double coder will accompany the observer to that classroom. 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. For mixed infant and toddler classrooms,

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		the toddler CLASS® tool will be used if the majority or at least half of the children are 15 months or older and the infant CLASS® tool will be used if half or more of the children are younger than 15 months of age. For mixed toddler and pre-K classrooms, the PreK CLASS® tool will be used if the majority or at least half of the children are 36 months or older, and the Toddler CLASS® will be used if half or more of the children are 15 months up to 36 months of age. *Note: Use the age of the children on September 30, 2019 to determine the classroom configuration for the school year.*
Observer Classroom Entry	Adopt third party protocol as written *(Substitute "lead agency" for "Picard Center").*	Upon entering the classroom, the observer will introduce herself 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 this shadow score is to ensure inter-rater reliability, which has no reflection of the quality of the site being observed or alters the score. If the classroom is not available or the observer is unable to complete the observation: • If it is practical (close enough/time available) and the classroom is likely to become available for observation, the observer should wait until the observation can begin. • If the site/school has multiple classrooms with children of the same age as the

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		originally assigned classroom, the observer should contact the Picard Center for reassignment. If the site/school has mixed classes with infants and toddlers or toddlers and preschooler, contact the Picard Center to determine which age type the classroom is classified as in the LDE Early Childhood portal.
Teacher and Child Attendance	Adopt third party protocol as written *(Substitute "lead agency" for "Picard Center").*	A classroom must have the regularly assigned lead teacher, who has been employed at least 10 work days, present during the observation. *Exception: Lead substitute teachers are eligible for a CLASS® observation if they have been in the classroom for at least 10 days.* 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 Picard Center for assistance. At least 50% of children on the classroom roster must be present. Contact the Picard Center for assistance. If observers are unsure whether a classroom has been observed by another third-party observer, they should contact the Picard Center before they begin observing.
Observer Interactions	Adopt third party protocol as written.	Observers will not interact with teachers beyond requesting a daily schedule, 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.

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Scoring Cycles	Adopt third party protocol as written.	The observation will consist of four 20-minute observation cycles each followed by 10-minute scoring cycles (average 120 minutes total time) for pre-K and toddler observations and four 15- minute observations cycles followed by 10-minute scoring cycles (average 100 minutes total time) for infant observations. 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 will turn their back on the class and quietly complete the scoring.
Extra-Curricular Pull-Out and Special Visiting Teachers	Adopt third party protocol as written.	The following sessions conducted by extra-curricular pull-out teachers and/or special visiting teachers will not be observed: • Physical Education; • Music; • Computer; • Library; and • Art Cafeteria-based meals and preK 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.*

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Taking Notes	Notes must be detailed and must provide concrete examples of observations from the classroom. Summary statements for each dimension should address each indicator noting the presence/absence of particular behaviors.	Notes must be detailed and must provide concrete examples of observations from the classroom. Summary statements for each dimension should address each indicator noting the presence/absence of particular behaviors. Picard staff will conduct random data checks on 5% of the total number of observations completed. Feedback will be provided on the quality, completeness, and accuracy of observation data and corresponding evidence. If the information is not well-supported and is questioned by the LDE then the observer may be required to re-do the observation at no cost. If there are significant delays between cycles, observers should note the reasons. If there are any interactions that go beyond the ones stipulated here, the observer should document those interactions at the time of the observation.
Observation Concerns	Adopt third party protocol as written.	In the unusual circumstance of any suspected abuse or neglect observed at the time of the observation, the observer must report the observed behaviors to the Office of Community Services as mandated by law.

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Providing Observation Feedback	Community Networks must establish and implement a protocol to ensure that written results and feedback from each local observation are reported to sites within ten business days.	Third party observers will not share feedback with a teacher.
Reporting Scores	*CLASS®* scores must be entered in the portal within ten days of conducting the observation, or by the end of the observation period, whichever is first. Request corrections for the observation data in the *CLASS®* System in accordance with the procedures and timelines established by the state. Lead Agencies are responsible for ensuring that all community network observers submit their score sheets in a timely manner, and that they retain these score sheets on file for a period of three years.	The *CLASS®* scoring form must be entered into the Department's designated data system with the accompanying feedback (the highest and lowest dimension score for infant observations and the two highest and two lowest dimension scores for each preK observation) within two days of the completed observation. The observation scoring booklet and related notes must be postmarked within three days of the completed observation. Observation materials may be turned in earlier, but any materials turned in later will result in corrective action. 5% of score sheets per month are sampled and reviewed to ensure accuracy.
Observer Accuracy and Shadow Scoring	Ensure that all local observations entered into the *CLASS®* System are conducted according to the publisher's standardized procedures. Develop and implement a written process to monitor and compare the results of all local observers for the purpose of ensuring accurate observations. Identify a process to address concerns regarding reliability of local observers to ensure they can continue to observe for the accountability system. *NOTE: For local observation scores, high scores, low scores, and concerning patterns will trigger additional third party*	Shadow score each observer and at least 10% of observations monthly. For all shadow scoring observations both the lead observer and the shadow observer must enter their observation data into the Picard Center's designated system by 3 pm the SAME day of conducting the observation. The lead observer must send the observation feedback via email to the shadow observer within 3 days of the reliability observation (copy the Picard Center). The shadow observer must review the feedback and provide comments on the

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	observations to ensure accuracy; and Bulletin 140 §503 requires the state to impose consequences for observers who do not meet accuracy requirements. Conduct a minimum of one observation calibration activity each semester and ensure that all observers participate in at least one observation calibration activity each semester. Shadow score each observer at least once, at least 10% of all observations each observation period, and at least one observation in each age group, including infant during the 2019-2020 Infant *CLASS®* Practice Year.	accuracy, quality, and completeness of their work using the Picard- approved form within 7 days of the observation. If an observer does not achieve 80% inter-rater reliability, the observer will cease observing classrooms and will work with Picard staff to increase reliability to 80% or higher by coding additional observation videos and participate in a second shadow observation before conducting observations alone. If an observer is deemed unreliable over two consecutive shadow scoring observations they will be relieved of their duties. Picard will track observers' scoring trends to ensure observer drift is not occurring throughout the observation year. New *CLASS®* observers will participate in at least one practice observation with a veteran observer prior to starting observing alone. The observers will follow the same procedures for shadow scoring observations.
Conflict of Interest	Collaborate with all program partners to establish and implement written procedures that minimize potential observer conflict of interest as described in Bulletin 140.	Have observers attest monthly to no conflict of interest with classrooms in which they observe, and provide ongoing training on what may constitute conflict of interest. If an observer enters a classroom and determines that he/she is related to or associated with someone in the room, he/she must IMMEDIATELY notify the Picard Center and remove him/herself from the room. Additionally, if there is any question as to whether a perceived or potential conflict of interest exists the observer will contact the Picard Center and allow them to make the final determination.

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Record Keeping	Lead Agencies must collect and maintain for a period of three years, copies of current certification documents for all observers, copies of the background checks necessary to enter sites for all observers, and original or complete copies of all observation scoring forms in an accountability reporting period for a period.	
Additional Requirements	Local observers should be professional in demeanor and attire at all times and never let personal preferences influence scoring.	At no time should an observer discuss classroom observations or CLASS® scores with another observer. All information is confidential and should only be discussed with Picard Center staff. Annual CLASS® recertification is the duty of the observer. Proof of current certification must be provided to Picard Center staff, and updated as needed. A CCCBC is also the duty of the observer. A copy of the background check must be received by the Picard Center (via e-mail) prior to the observer's first scheduled observation. The observer should have a copy of the CCCBC with them for each observation and present it to the director (licensed centers only). Observers are not allowed to perform more than one observation per day, and cannot directly contact sites/schools to reschedule an observation. Observers should be professional in demeanor and attire at all times and never let personal preferences influence scoring.

2019-2020 Infant *CLASS®* Learning Year
Guidance for Lead Agencies

Beginning in 2019-2020, all infant classrooms will be observed using the Infant *CLASS®* tool, and beginning 2020-2021, Infant *CLASS®* observations will be included in the calculation of site and network performance ratings.

What is Infant *CLASS®*?
Infant *CLASS®* is an observation-based system of measures to assess and rate classroom quality across multiple areas on a scale from 1.00-7.00, similar to the Toddler and PreK *CLASS®* tools already used as part of the unified rating system for early childhood across the state.

Timeline of Statewide Infant *CLASS®* Implementation
In accordance with Bulletin 140, Infant *CLASS®* is being phased into the Early Childhood Accountability System over three years, and Infant *CLASS®* observations will be included in the 2020-2021 Performance Profile ratings, released in the fall of 2021.

2018-2019 **Infant *CLASS®* Pilot**	**2019-2020** **Infant *CLASS®* Learning Year**	**2020-2021** **Full Implementation**
• Lead agencies identified every infant classroom and set up each classroom in the *CLASS®* Portal • Sites participated in year two of the Infant *CLASS®* Pilot • Bulletin 140 was revised to include Infant *CLASS®* and those revisions were adopted by BESE	• All infant classrooms in the state will be observed for a statewide learning year • Performance Profile ratings released in fall 2020 will not be impacted by Infant *CLASS®* results conducted in the 2019-2020 year	• Infant *CLASS®* is fully incorporated into the unified quality rating system • Performance Profile ratings released in fall 2021 will reflect Infant *CLASS®* observations conducted in the 2020-2021 year

Conducting *CLASS®* Observations in Infant Classrooms

Due to the nature of infant care, infant classrooms are very different than toddler or pre-k classrooms. Local observers who will conduct Infant *CLASS®* observations during the 2019-2020 school year should anticipate the unique characteristics of infant classrooms.

- **Observing in infant-toddler mixed-age classrooms:** Many children of infant age are in mixed-age classrooms. If the majority of children in a mixed-age classroom are toddler age, the appropriate tool to use is Toddler.

- **Recordkeeping in infant classrooms:** 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. For example, while a teacher is multi-tasking she may call out to a child, "I'll be right there, Zoe!" This would be noted under the Teacher Sensitivity dimension and impact the score for that dimension.

- **Daily schedule:** While it is important that observers know the daily schedule of the infant classrooms that they observe, there is more flexibility in scheduling Infant CLASS observations. Infant CLASS observations may be conducted at different times of the day as appropriate.

- **Multiple adults in classrooms:** There may be more adults entering and exiting infant classrooms than is typical of classrooms with older children. The CLASS tool is designed to capture all of the interactions for the infants in the classroom. Observers should be prepared to use their judgment to decide how to balance the observation of multiple adults and the resulting code.

For questions or concerns about implementing Infant *CLASS®* during the 2019-2020 learning year, please contact Gray Whitsett at gray.whitsett@la.gov or by phone at 225-342-4593.