



The [Early Childhood Framework for Quality \(EFQ\)](#) describes the DOE Division of Early Childhood’s shared vision for high quality early childhood programming in New York City. The EFQ describes the key practices of family engagement, rigorous and developmentally appropriate instruction, professional collaborations, and leadership that support children in gaining the knowledge and skills outlined in the the [New York State Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core \(PKFCC\)](#). Grounded in the DOE’s vision for school improvement across the pre-K to 12 continuum, the DOE Framework for Great Schools, the EFQ establishes a shared set of expectations for early childhood programs across all settings. High-quality and enriching learning environments are critical to supporting student development and learning across all five domains of the PKFCC, and are embedded in the Early Childhood Framework for Quality.

The NYCDOE’s Division of Early Childhood Education (DECE) uses the [Classroom Assessment Scoring System \(CLASS\)](#)^[1] to measure the extent to which programs are successful at implementing the practices outlined in the EFQ related to the interactions between teachers and children in programs across the city. The CLASS tool is used widely in school districts across the country, and there is a consistent relationship between CLASS scores and a wide range of child development outcomes.

The observations conducted and/or the reports prepared as part of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS assessment), or any other assessment of the early childhood program, shall be used only for purposes of assessing the quality of the pre-kindergarten program generally and shall not be placed in any teacher’s official file or used in any action or employment-related decision involving an individual DOE employee (including, but not limited to, any letter to file, rating or tenure determination), and shall not be introduced by the DOE in any disciplinary proceeding, grievance or arbitration, case or action. Furthermore, the DOE agrees that the results of the CLASS assessments will not be used in any evaluation of any CSA member nor will the reports about CLASS assessments identify specific CSA members by name in any way.

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2021 – 2022 School Year Specific Questions

1. When will programs be notified that they are being assessed?

In order to give feedback to as many programs as possible while remaining flexible to potential changes in capacity or protocols due to COVID-19, programs will be notified of assessment on a rolling basis throughout the school year. Programs will have a minimum of eight weeks of notice from their initial notification email till their scheduled assessment date.

2. How will my assessment be scheduled to acknowledge the unique circumstances of this school year?

Evaluators will reach out to programs with a minimum of two weeks of notice to schedule assessment dates. When evaluators reach out, they will ask programs if they would like to have a brief phone call to go over assessment protocols and answer any questions the program may have. This optional call is intended to give program leaders a chance to connect with their evaluator and understand all procedures and protocols before the assessment.

3. Are there any enhanced health and safety protocols for this year?

Evaluators will follow all DOE health and safety guidelines including any applicable vaccine requirements, health screenings, and reporting appropriately if they test positive for COVID.

If a classroom or your whole program is required to close due to COVID cases on the day when the evaluator is supposed to visit, please alert your evaluator as soon as possible.

4. When will assessments occur?

Assessments for this school year will be conducted between January 2022 and June 2022. Program leaders will be contacted by a DECE staff member or program evaluator with additional information about scheduling and the observation process. Please note that the program evaluator will work with program leaders to schedule the program’s assessment day, which they will also confirm by email.

Assessments must take place on a typical day of school in which the daily schedule is roughly followed. School days that may be on either side of holidays, or that include regular schedule changes for children (such as one day of the week that is consistently shortened) are considered typical.





The CLASS and CLASS+

5. What is the CLASS?

The CLASS is an observational tool that provides a common lens and language focused on classroom interactions that research shows support student learning. The evaluator observes pre-K and 3-K classrooms at a site and looks for specific indicators of quality across three domains, which are further broken into ten dimensions:



Domain	Emotional Support	Classroom Organization	Instructional Support
Dimensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive Climate Negative Climate Teacher Sensitivity Regard for Student Perspectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behavior Management Productivity Instructional Learning Formats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concept Development Quality of Feedback Language Modeling
Description	Assesses whether everyday interactions with children promote a positive classroom climate. This includes assessing adult sensitivity and responsiveness to children, regard for student perspectives, and the degree to which the classroom climate is emotionally supportive.	Assesses the "management of children's behavior, time and attention in the classroom," with an emphasis on predictability and stability. This includes measurement of the methods to prevent and redirect misbehavior, and the consistency of schedules and routines.	Assesses how children's cognitive and language development are promoted. This includes teacher support of children's analytical and conversational skills and the quality of teacher feedback to children.

The Division of Early Childhood Education (DECE) uses the CLASS tool to measure and understand **program level** quality. A program's CLASS scores are the averages of all of the observations collected across classrooms at each site.

6. Why CLASS?

CLASS is used in major studies of early childhood programs throughout the United States and the world. As a result of the consistent relationship between CLASS scores and a wide range of child development outcomes, CLASS is widely adopted by many state preschool and/or child care assessment programs. CLASS is a reliable and well tested instrument; it is a *consistent* way to measure quality across all programs.

While the tool itself does not measure student performance outcomes, the connections between CLASS and child outcomes is an important reason why it is used by the DECE. The combination of CLASS and ECERS-3, which focuses comprehensively on the quality of the learning environment, is an important way that the DECE understands the extent to which early childhood programs prepare children for future



academic success, build positive relationships among children and adults, and ensure that children develop a strong sense of self.

7. What is CLASS+ and what does it measure?

To gain a more complete picture of what is happening in classrooms during CLASS observations, the DECE has adopted a selection of supplemental assessment scales called the CLASS+. The CLASS+ for pre-K combines the CLASS Environmental Scales, with selected elements of the ECERS-3 called the Quick Environment Check (QEC) tool, along with a scale designed to measure practices that support social-emotional development, called A-TSRS. CLASS+ allows CLASS evaluators to collect additional information on critical aspects of the classroom environment, health and safety applications, and practices that support the emotional well-being of children while conducting a CLASS assessment.

Tool	CLASS Environmental Scale	Quick Environment Check	A-TSRS
Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom Environment 	<p>Program Level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gross Motor Play Learning Activities <p>Classroom Level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hazards Classroom Space Handwashing Meal/Snack Social/Emotional Learning Activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom Awareness Positive Behavior Management Attention Support Consistency/Routine Preparedness Emotion Modeling Emotion Expression Emotion Regulation Social Awareness Social Problem-Solving
Description	Examines elements of the environment that support high quality teacher-child interactions, and that are closely linked to children's learning opportunities in classrooms: physical space and materials.	Adapted from elements of the ECERS-3, measures environmental factors and certain practices at the program-level and within the classroom.	Captures specific teaching practices and strategies that have been shown to contribute to children's self-regulation and social-emotional development.
Early Childhood Framework for Quality	<p>Respect and Value Differences Build trust by creating a community in which all children, families and staff feel welcome and included, embracing diversity in many forms.</p> <p>Create Safe and Positive Environments Create healthy, nurturing, and predictable environments for all children, families and staff.</p>	<p>Create Safe and Positive Environments Create healthy, nurturing, and predictable environments for all children, families and staff.</p> <p>Advanced Play-Based Learning and Responsive Instruction Engage children in a variety of play-based and developmentally appropriate learning experiences, and ensure that instruction is based on children's individual strengths, interests, and needs.</p>	<p>Respect and Value Differences Build trust by creating a community in which all children, families and staff feel welcome and included, embracing diversity in many forms.</p> <p>Create Safe and Positive Environments Create healthy, nurturing, and predictable environments for all children, families and staff.</p>





8. Why is the DECE using these additional scales (referred to as CLASS+ scales)?

Ensuring our children are in healthy and safe learning environments is essential for high-quality early childhood education. The Covid-19 pandemic has reinforced the value of providing programs with feedback on a consistent basis to help them meet and maintain these basic needs. While the ECERS-3 tool remains our primary tool for assessing the classroom environment, the CLASS+ scales allows us to provide ongoing feedback on critical aspects of classroom environments in years when programs do not receive an ECERS-3 assessment. In addition, it provides specific feedback about Social Emotional Learning strategies and practices that staff may use in the classroom to support children.

9. What is the difference between what the CLASS+ measures and what the ECER-3 tool measures?

Both the ECERS-3 tool and the CLASS+ scales measure the classroom environment and practices related to health and safety as well as interactions around accessible materials. However, the ECERS-3 tool provides a more in-depth and comprehensive look at these aspects of program quality. In addition, programs will receive feedback on the daily program structure as part of the ECERS-3 observation process. In an ECERS-3 observation, one classroom is randomly selected to be observed. This classroom is used as a sample for the environment and practices utilized on a programmatic level.

The CLASS+ focuses on a selection of critical environmental factors and key practices. Although this tool does not capture environmental data in as much depth as the ECERS, because it is designed to work in conjunction with the CLASS tool, it allows us to collect data from every classroom that is observed using the CLASS tool. This offers us a glimpse of the classroom environment and practices related to health and safety in more classrooms.

10. What is the Quick Environmental Check?

The Quick Environment Check, adapted from the ECERS-3, measures environmental factors and certain practices within the classroom. Items observed with the Quick Environment Check include classroom space, availability of learning activities, availability and condition of furniture, as well as potential health and safety concerns in areas used by children. Practices reviewed using the Quick Environment Check include handwashing, cleaning before and after meals, and staffs' explicit social and emotional interactions with children.

11. What is the A-TSRS?

The Adapted Teaching Style Rating Scale (A-TSRS) was originally developed to identify specific practices and strategies that have been shown to contribute to children's self-regulation and social-emotional development. A-TSRS was later adapted by New York University and NYC Department of Education in order to capture qualities that are aligned with practices that support children's play-based and developmentally appropriate learning, as well as support children's individual strengths, interests, and needs. A-TSRS is an observational measure designed to capture specific teaching practices and strategies that have been shown to contribute to children's self-regulation and social-emotional development.





12. What is the CLASS Environmental Scale?

Quality teacher-child interactions impact social-emotional and academic outcomes for children. The environments where these interactions take place can affect the effectiveness of interactions. Therefore, the DECE is using Teachstone's CLASS Environmental Scale to reliably measure and support children's experiences in classrooms by focusing on the elements of the environment. Solidly anchored in the research-based domains and dimensions of the CLASS tool, as well as NYC DECE's Early Childhood Framework for Quality, the scale focuses on specific elements of the classroom, such as physical space, materials, and activities.

13. How will observations using the CLASS+ be conducted?

The CLASS+ scales were designed to be used alongside the CLASS tool, as evaluators will gather CLASS+ data during normal CLASS observations. CLASS Evaluators will not conduct a separate observation using the CLASS+ tool. The CLASS+ tool captures environmental factors that a CLASS evaluator would normally see in the course of an observation.

Assessment Notification and Planning

14. Who is notified about the assessment?

DOE CONTRACTED NYCEECs AND CHARTER SCHOOLS

Notification is sent from programassessment@schools.nyc.gov to each site's main contact and instructional contact on file. Program leaders should notify their operations analyst to update contact information.

EarlyLearn: Notification is sent from programassessment@schools.nyc.gov to the instructional contact and main contact on file. Program leaders should reach out to earlychildhood@schools.nyc.gov if there is a change in contact that needs to be updated.

DISTRICT SCHOOLS: Notification is sent to the principal of the school and to the superintendent from programassessment@schools.nyc.gov.

PRE-K CENTERS: Notification is sent to the Early Childhood Director of the school and to the superintendent from programassessment@schools.nyc.gov.

15. Who will schedule and conduct the assessment?

A trained Program Evaluator will conduct the assessment. Program Evaluators undergo rigorous training, and must pass a certification test each year in order to use the CLASS tool. As part of our team's internal procedures to ensure and maintain consistent calibration and quality implementation, evaluators also undergo regular reliability checks throughout the year to ensure they are using the CLASS tool with fidelity. Reliability checks take place on regularly scheduled assessments. Because of this, multiple program assessment team members may attend the assessment with the evaluator assigned to your program.



Based on the number of classrooms at your program and program type, two evaluators may be assigned to conduct the CLASS observation, or the observation may take place over two days.

Program evaluators are required to bring their DOE photo identification and proof of CLASS certification to sites where they are conducting program assessments, and can provide identification if asked.

16. What should my program do before the assessment occurs? How should we prepare?

Prior to the assessment, program leaders are strongly encouraged to inform their staff of the assessment details and also of the scheduled date and time, making this document and the *CLASS Dimensions Guide* available to all staff. The assessment does not require additional preparation, as it is an observation of the daily interactions in your program.

17. If I know a certain period of the year will not be typical for my program (for example, my only lead teacher will be out for several months on parental leave), who should I contact?

Reach out to programassessment@schools.nyc.gov as soon as you are aware of any scheduling conflicts that may impact a portion of the school year for your site.

18. What should I do if my program closes on account of inclement weather on the day of our scheduled CLASS assessment?

NYCEECs ONLY: It is the responsibility of each program to notify its evaluator and the DECE of closure due to inclement weather or unexpected issues that result in program closure, as soon as that decision is made. Please email the program evaluator **and** programassessment@schools.nyc.gov.

DISTRICT SCHOOLS ONLY: The evaluator will not visit your school if a school closure is announced. He/she will reschedule your assessment when school resumes.

Assessment Day Details

19. Who will be observed and what should my teaching staff do during the assessment?

The CLASS codes are derived based on the behavior of *all* of the adults in the room during a given cycle. If the children are working with multiple adults in the classroom, the evaluator observes each adult when they assign scores on the CLASS dimensions. However, if most children are working under the direction of one adult and a couple children are working with the other adult, the evaluator will spend more time observing and weighing the adult working with the majority of the children.

Your staff should continue with normal instruction as they would on any other day of pre-K or 3-K.

20. Which parts of the day will be assessed?

CLASS assessments can take place during any part of the day when the lead pre-K or 3-K teacher is





responsible for supervision, except for nap and unstructured gross motor play.

21. How long will the assessment take, and what classrooms will be included in the assessment?

CLASS assessments will last between 2.5 - 4 hours per day. Some NYCEECs may have their CLASS assessment over multiple days. Please note that most or all pre-K and 3-K classrooms at the site will be included in the assessment during this time. Each observation cycle is about 20 minutes long and the number of cycles that will take place in each classroom will depend on the number of classrooms in the program:

22. What should I do if there is a substitute teacher in one of the classrooms on the day of assessment? What should I do if the teacher is not able to make it on the day of the assessment?

If there is a last minute teacher absence on the assessment day, alert your evaluator as soon as you are aware. Depending on the size of the program and the amount of days that the substitute teacher has been in the classroom, the assessment may be rescheduled.

If you know a teacher will be absent in advance of the assessment date, please let your evaluator know as soon as possible via email. Depending on the size of the program and the amount of days that the substitute teacher has been in the classroom, part or all of the assessment may be rescheduled. In addition to contacting your evaluator, if your program has a long term teacher vacancy, reach out to TRQ at 718-935-4627 or teachnycprek@schools.nyc.gov for assistance.

23. Do program leaders need to be at the program on the day of assessment?

While program leaders are not required to be present at the program on the day of assessment, please make arrangements for yourself or one of your staff members to greet the evaluator on the scheduled assessment date and show him or her to your classrooms.

24. Can one of the program leaders be present in the classroom during the assessment?

While program leaders are welcome to enter the classroom as part of their normal routine, they should not engage with children, or perform any classroom tasks when the evaluator is observing. Program leaders should also not engage in conversations with evaluators during the observation. Children are sensitive to changes in their daily routine. Extra adults in the classroom or other changes to the daily routine could result in atypical children's behavior that can impact CLASS scores and the length of the observation.

25. How are evaluators for each program chosen? Who will schedule the assessment?

All CLASS evaluators undergo rigorous training before conducting official assessments, and the DECE checks to ensure they are accurately using the CLASS tool through numerous co-observations during training and throughout the school year. CLASS evaluators are assigned to programs based on multiple factors, including:



Language: For dual language programs and programs that have indicated a language other than English is spoken during the day, an evaluator who understands that language is assigned, when possible.

Geography: Evaluators are assigned to programs based on location.

Conflict of Interest: Known relationships and prior experiences with program staff are considered when making assignments in order to avoid a conflict of interest.



CLASS Results

26. Will I have a chance to debrief with my evaluator after the assessment?

Evaluators will be available to briefly debrief with program leaders for about 15 minutes after the assessment. While they will not be able to share specific scores, they will be able to describe some trends and areas of strength and growth that they observed. If evaluators see any major hazards, they will also share those with program leaders. For more information on the debrief process please review [this resource](#).

27. When will I receive my results?

Reports are emailed to program leaders, principals, and Early Childhood Directors on a rolling basis from programassessment@schools.nyc.gov. Yahoo and AOL users should mark this email address as “not spam” in order to prevent the reports from filtering into spam folders. Program leaders can expect to receive their reports by email within approximately six weeks of the assessment.

DISTRICT SCHOOLS: Superintendents will also receive the report

28. What will the results look like once I receive them?

You will receive a CLASS Report, which consists of average scores (ranging from one to seven), interpretation guidance for each of the CLASS domains and dimensions, and observed interactions across the observations. At the end of the report, you will also receive a summary and feedback on the three CLASS+ scales. Since the DECE uses the CLASS+ tools to collect **site/school level** data, the scores on the CLASS and CLASS+ report will show an average of all of the 15-20 minute observation cycles that are conducted in all classrooms.




For more information on how to read your report, please visit bit.ly/nycprogramassessment.

29. How will the results of the CLASS assessment be used by the DECE?

CLASS data collected during the 2021- 2022 school year will be used in all the standard ways that DECE uses assessment data. Assessment results will be used in conjunction with other information for a variety of purposes, including:

- **Contract Renewals:** The DECE will consider these assessments when they make contract renewal decisions for NYCEECs.



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- **Support assignments:** the DECE will use these results to prioritize the supports that are currently provided to programs and determine what additional supports will be needed in the future. These supports are delivered through Instructional Coordinators, Social Workers, professional learning opportunities offered to teachers and program leaders, and other support provided.
 - **Research:** The DECE will use assessment results to understand the efficacy of supports offered by the division such as professional learning opportunities.

The observations conducted and/or the reports prepared as part of the ECERS-R assessment, or any other assessment of the early childhood program, shall be used only for purposes of assessing the quality of the early childhood program generally and shall not be placed in any teacher's official file or used in any action or employment-related decision involving an individual DOE employee (including, but not limited to, any letter to file, rating or tenure determination), and shall not be introduced by the DOE in any disciplinary proceeding, grievance or arbitration, case or action. Furthermore, the DOE agrees that the results of the ECERS-R assessments will not be used in any evaluation of any CSA member nor will the reports about ECESR-R assessments identify specific CSA members by name in any way.

30. How will CLASS+ data be used?

During the FY21 school year, CLASS+ data will be used to provide programs with additional feedback about their classroom environments and health and safety practices that they may use to inform their own professional development. Borough support staff may use CLASS+ data to inform coaching plans for programs. This data will also allow the DECE to identify programs that would benefit from more in depth feedback with an ECERS-3 observation in the following school year.

Resources

31. What CLASS resources does DECE offer to programs? What other resources are recommended to prepare for the assessment?

A number of resources are available to those wanting to learn more about the CLASS tool:

- In the year of their assessment, programs will be mailed a copy of the CLASS Dimensions Guide.
- The DECE has developed a webinar series to walk staff through the tool and some of the requirements. To view the webinars, please visit Protraxx.
- Additional CLASS documents and specific guidance are available at bit.ly/nycprogramassessment

[1] <http://www.teachstone.org/about-the-class>

