

2026-2027 UNIFIED
VIRGINIA QUALITY BIRTH
TO FIVE SYSTEM (VQB5)
GUIDELINES

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PREFACE

Section 22.1-289.03 of the *Code of Virginia* directs the Board of Education to establish a unified quality rating and improvement system for all publicly-funded birth-to-five providers in order to improve school readiness outcomes.

A. The Board shall establish a statewide unified public-private system for early childhood care and education in the Commonwealth to ensure that every child has the opportunity to enter kindergarten healthy and ready to learn. Such system shall be administered by the Board, the Superintendent, and the Department and shall be formed, implemented, and sustained through a structure that engages and leverages both state-level authority and regional-level public-private partnership assets.

B. It is the intent of the General Assembly that the system established pursuant to subsection A shall (i) provide families with coordinated access for referral to early childhood education programs, (ii) provide families with easy-to-understand information about the quality of publicly funded early childhood care and education programs, (iii) establish expectations for the continuous improvement of early childhood care and education programs, and (iv) establish shared expectations for early childhood care and education programs among the Department of Education, the Department of Social Services, local school divisions, and state and regional stakeholders.

The Virginia Quality Birth to Five (VQB5) Guidelines were established in June 2021 and have been submitted to the Board of Education for review and approval annually.

The following 2026-2027 VQB5 guidelines include the protocols and expectations for participation in VQB5, as well as the requirements for determining annual quality rating results so that families have clear and comparable information about publicly-funded early childhood options. These guidelines reflect the learnings and data gathered from previous years and continue to set forth the strategies in which all programs will be supported to continuously improve the quality of care and education for Virginia's youngest learners to ensure all have the opportunity to enter school ready.

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SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 WHY SCHOOL READINESS MATTERS

The first five years of a child's life are incredibly important for the developing brain. Many critical language, social/emotional, and early cognition skills are formed during these early years, and they lay the foundation for future success.¹ Numerous studies show that children who enter school ready, with key early academic and social-emotional skills, are well poised to succeed in school and beyond. With many young children spending time in early childhood care and education outside of the home, much essential early learning takes place in child care, family day homes, Head Start or Early Head Start programs, and public schools. To maximize their potential, all of Virginia's young children need the opportunity to access early childhood experiences in public and private settings that support them to grow, learn, and thrive.

Data from the [Fall 2025 Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program \(VKRP\)](#) shows the percentage of kindergarten students meeting the overall benchmark increased from 51% in fall 2024 to 57% in fall 2025 - a gain of 6 percentage points. At the domain level, readiness rates increased in literacy and mathematics, while self-regulation and social skills held steady. Although this is a positive change, the results also show 43% of Virginia's kindergarteners began the 2025- 2026 school year still needing to build skills in literacy, mathematics, self-regulation, and/or social skills. The students whose scores fell below the overall benchmark were more likely to be Black or Hispanic/Latino, from low-income backgrounds, English language/multilingual learners, or have a disability. Yet, these groups of students showed meaningful gains in the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the overall benchmark when comparing fall 2025 to fall 2024. Latino students saw 7% improvement, Black students 6% improvement, students in low-income households 6% improvement, English Language Learners 5% improvement, and students with disabilities 4% improvement. Some of these groups, like students in low-income households and students with disabilities are the priority for publicly-funded early childhood programs, demonstrating the value of Virginia's historic state investments in early childhood quality and access and reinforcing the need for children to have access to high-quality educational experiences to support school readiness.

High-quality early learning and care across public and private settings provides the support children need to build a foundation for school and future success. Extensive research has identified many short- and long-term benefits of early learning experiences, including:

- Early childhood education reduces the percentage of children repeating a grade by 15%.

¹ Harvard University. (n.d.). *Center on the Developing Child*. Science of Early Childhood.

- Early childhood education lowers the rate of special education placement by 10%.²
- Children participating in high-quality early childhood education had increased college graduation rates and increased rates of employment at age 30.³
- Those participating children are more likely to be employed and less likely to be dependent on government assistance.

1.2 MEASURING QUALITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Supporting continuous quality improvement in early childhood programs of all types, including public schools, Head Start/Early Head Start, child care, and family day homes, is essential to improving the short and long-term outcomes for Virginia’s youngest learners.

Virginia’s early childhood system serves 138,000 birth-to-five children in sites that are supported by public funds in both public and private settings through state and federal funding. While families have choice in where they send their children, Virginia has historically had limited information on how publicly-funded programs compare in measures of quality and continuous improvement.

To improve school readiness outcomes, Virginia developed Virginia Quality Birth to Five (VQB5). VQB5 is a quality measurement and improvement system that focuses on measurable indicators of teaching and learning. This system:

- Focuses on the measures that promote positive child outcomes,
- Empowers educators with frequent, specific, and individualized feedback to educators,
- Provides improvement pathways that are accessible to all programs so that all educators have opportunity to strengthen their practice and support their children to thrive,
- Empowers and meaningfully engages parents and families in the co-creation of a system that fundamentally seeks to meet the unique needs of their children and families, and
- Rewards programs for continual improvement and ensure that educators are adequately compensated.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document has been designed for review by the Virginia Board of Education and for review and implementation by Ready Regions, Improvement Partners and publicly-funded birth-to-five programs, including public school preschools, Head Start/Early Head Start, child care centers and family day homes that participate in the child care subsidy or other forms of public subsidy. It sets forth the expectations for annual registration, measurement and improvement activities, along with rating and quality assurance protocols for VQB5.

²Karoly, L. A. (n.d.). *Informing Investments in Preschool Quality*. Research Reports.

³ Heckman. (n.d.). *Research Summary: The Lifecycle Benefits of an Influential Early Childhood Program*. The Heckman Equation.

SECTION 2: VIRGINIA’S UNIFIED MEASUREMENT AND IMPROVEMENT SYSTEM (VQB5)

2.1 THEORY OF CHANGE - CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT ACROSS A UNIFIED SYSTEM

All Virginia children should have the opportunity to participate in quality early childhood experiences that enable them to thrive.

Through the legislative requirement for VQB5, Virginia has the opportunity to drive quality and improvement in all publicly-funded early childhood programs. If Virginia can 1) continually strengthen the quality of teaching and learning experiences in existing publicly-funded programs and 2) increase the number of children who can access these publicly-funded early childhood experiences in both public and private settings, then more families will have more choices, and more children will enter school ready.

2.2 GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR VQB5

In response to the legislative requirement for VQB5, the VDOE worked with stakeholders and collaborators to establish a set of guiding principles for the uniform measurement and improvement system. The Guiding Principles below set forth the priorities and practical realities for building and implementing a statewide unified measurement and improvement system.

Guiding Principle: <i>VQB5 must:</i>	Explanation:
1. Impact quality and result in improved school readiness for children.	The ultimate purpose of the unified measurement and improvement system is to improve school readiness for all Virginia’s children through continuous quality improvement. Research shows that impacting school preparedness has long-term positive effects on child and societal outcomes. The system should be designed using research on what has a meaningful impact on child learning and school readiness.
2. Use measures that can distinguish levels of quality and demonstrate	Teachers and program leaders benefit from feedback on strengths and opportunities. Classroom-level change can be motivated by specific information that spotlights areas for

<p>growth over time.</p>	<p>growth and identifies the behaviors that are needed to drive improved experiences for children. The measurement and improvement system must clearly articulate levels of quality and present a clear path for improvement.</p>
<p>3. Provide clear, actionable information, resources, and incentives for improvement.</p>	<p>The measurement and improvement system must inspire action and offer coordinated resources and supports for improvement. The state should also consider formal and informal incentives that motivate community stakeholders, program leaders, and educators. All stakeholders should find the information useful and meaningful and understand why these things matter for young learners and their families.</p>
<p>4. Be affordable for providers and the state.</p>	<p>The unified measures must support measurement and improvement, without placing an undue burden on either the programs or the State. The unified measurements must be cost efficient and able to be used year over year.</p>
<p>5. Scale for use in up to 4,000 sites and 12,000 classrooms.</p>	<p>The measurement and improvement system needs to reliably and validly measure quality in <u>every</u> publicly-funded infant, toddler, and preschool classroom, including family day homes. This must be achieved in a method that provides reliable and current information to every participating provider across the state.</p>
<p>6. Increase opportunity for all children in 1) the outcomes that are measured, and 2) the process for making and using the system.</p>	<p>Virginia’s measurement and improvement system must ensure a level playing field and provide targeted funding to support all programs in meeting such standards, especially programs serving underserved communities and programs that have historically had less access to resources, including family child care. Including the voices and perspectives of all programs, including underrepresented groups, is essential to making sure the unified system serves all of Virginia’s children and families.</p>
<p>7. Serve as a resource for families.</p>	<p>Families are children’s first and most important educators. Virginia’s new measurement and improvement system should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leverage the valuable insight of parents, guardians, and families regarding the care and education their children need, 2. Ensure families can access quality options that provide culturally and linguistically responsive programming, 3. Enable deeper engagement in their child’s teaching and learning, and 4. Be designed to inform and support family choice.

2.3 UNIFIED PROGRAM QUALITY STANDARDS

VQB5 measures the quality of infant, toddler, and preschool teaching and learning based on two nationally recognized quality indicators: interactions and curriculum.

- **Interactions** - This standard measures the quality of teacher-child interactions and instruction in a developmentally-appropriate way, as measured by the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®). All children benefit socially and academically from being in classrooms with high quality teacher-child interactions, including children from diverse settings, dual language learners (DLLs), and children with special needs.⁴
- **Curriculum** - This standard measures the optional use of a comprehensive curriculum in alignment with Virginia’s early learning and development standards to ensure that all areas of learning and development are being covered in developmentally-appropriate ways. This standard will also help ensure that early childhood programs have curricula that provide guidance on how to individualize instruction based on needs, including children with disabilities, suspected delays, or other special needs.

2.4 RATIONALE FOR INTERACTIONS AND CURRICULUM

Interactions and Curriculum were selected for the unified measurement and improvement system based on their close alignment to the Guiding Principles mentioned in the prior section. By focusing on teaching and learning in a simple, clear, and measurable way in every infant, toddler, and preschool classroom, Virginia can motivate meaningful improvement in all publicly-funded birth-to-five early learning settings.⁵

Teacher-child interactions form the foundation for all social and cognitive learning. Studies have shown that quality teacher-child interactions result in improved school readiness for all children. Over [200 research studies](#) have demonstrated the connection between teacher-child interactions and academic and social outcomes.⁶ All children benefit from improved teacher-child interactions, including children who are dual language learners and children with special needs. A focus on measuring teacher-child interactions translates into actionable feedback that educators in all early learning settings can implement, presenting opportunities for incremental improvement that motivates educators at every level of the system.

⁴ Teachstone Training, LLC. (2020). *Research Validating CLASS® with Child Outcomes across Diverse Populations of Children*.

⁵ Yoshikawa, H., Weiland, C., Brooks-Gunn, J., Burchinal, M. R., Espinosa, L. M., Gormley, W. T., Ludwig, J., Magnuson, K. A., Phillips, D., & Zaslow, M. J. (2013, October). Investing in Our Future: The Evidence Base on Preschool Education.

⁶ Teachstone. (2020). *Proving CLASS® Effectiveness— A Research Summary*.

Along with interactions, VQB5 will support quality teaching and learning by promoting curriculum use in all settings. Using approved and effective curricula helps teachers support learning and development of critical learning skills in all early childhood programs and settings.⁷ Identifying curriculum that is aligned with Virginia’s Early Learning and Development Standards helps ensure that all areas of children’s learning and development are addressed.

2.5 ROLE OF READY REGIONS IN VQB5

The *Code of Virginia* (§ 22.1-289.05) directs the Board of Education to establish a set of regional entities that are responsible for coordinating early childhood care and education services, guiding quality improvement of such services and coordinated access to such services for families, and implementing the uniform measurement and improvement system. In 2021, the VDOE worked closely with the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) to competitively select and launch nine regional entities, now called Ready Regions. The VDOE annually funds VECF to administer the Ready Regions network to ensure the regional implementation of VQB5 and support coordination for every birth-to-five provider in the Commonwealth.

Each Ready Region has a lead organization charged to partner with parents, school divisions, social and human services agencies, quality improvement networks, early childhood care and education programs, businesses, and other stakeholder organizations to coordinate and integrate critical services and resources for families with young children. Ready Regions are responsible for the coordination, accountability, and family engagement for early childhood programs, including coordination of VQB5 activities.

Public funding for Ready Regions lead organizations must be allocated on a competitive basis. In fall 2024 VECF and VDOE led a competitive process to select nine organizations to serve as the lead agencies in their respective Ready Regions for a three-year period (FY26-FY28). Competition for the triennial period of FY29-FY31 is anticipated for fall 2028.

2.6 VQB5’S DATA SYSTEM - LINKB5

In order to measure quality and drive improvement at scale, Virginia has developed a data system called LinkB5 to collect and analyze measurement and improvement data across early childhood programs participating in VQB5. The use of LinkB5 is a requirement for all publicly-funded sites as part of VQB5.

All VQB5 participants are required to use LinkB5 to provide information about their sites, classrooms, and teachers through the completion of various profiles. Participants are also asked to provide information about children enrolled in publicly-funded sites to better understand the

⁷ US Administration for Children & Families. (2020). *Criteria for Effective Curricula*. Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center.

impact of public investments and ensure the growth and improvement of child outcomes at the classroom level. This enables the VDOE to link early childhood data with K-12 longitudinal data and track longer-term outcomes as required by state law. Ready Regions are responsible for coordinating and monitoring the completion of all VQB5 data entry, including the entry of observation scores. The VDOE funds the University of Virginia (UVA) to maintain and enhance LinkB5.

In August of 2025, LinkB5 was integrated into Virginia Connects for Kids (VAConnects), Virginia’s modern, secure integrated data system. VAConnects houses LinkB5, the Virginia Language & Literacy Screening System (VALLSS), and the Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP). VAConnects helps ensure Virginia is complying with state law, namely that VQB5 enables “outcome-based measurements” (§ 22.1-289.05). VAConnects:

- Improves outcomes for children by enabling the use of data to systematically improve child outcomes, including school readiness,
- Better supports educators as users of the system by increasing ease of use and providing better reporting information, and
- Ensures best-in-class operability and security, improving the technology experience for users and support best practices for data security.

Through VAConnects, LinkB5 meets all Commonwealth standards, including the Virginia Information Security Standard (SEC530) and is in compliance with the *Code of Virginia* §2-2.2009 with additional oversight from the VDOE’s Chief Information Security Officer. SEC530 specifies the requirements for features like encryption, access controls, authentication management, and more – all of which VAConnects has implemented. In addition to meeting all security standards, VAConnects has received Enterprise Cloud Oversight Service (ECOS) approval for sensitive data through the Virginia Information Technologies Agency (VITA). To confirm ongoing security compliance, the VDOE scans VAConnects for vulnerabilities regularly and a third party completes annual SOC2 Type II assessment reviews. In addition, any student/child data collected is compliant with the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99). To ensure the safety and security of data in transit and at rest, and of the system as a whole, several controls are in place. (See Appendix D for details)

2.7 PROGRESS UPDATE 2025-2026

The second year of VQB5 Quality Profiles were released in October 2025, via the EarlyChildhoodQuality.doe.virginia.gov website which included quality profiles for 3,293 public and private early childhood sites across the Commonwealth. Since launching in the fall of 2024, the VQB5 Quality Profile website has been viewed over 170,000 times as of March 2026.

- During the 2024-2025 year, 99% of 3,293 sites met or exceeded the state’s quality expectations, which was an increase from 98% the previous year.
- The statewide average was 592 points, which was an increase of 4 points from the previous year.
- 101 sites received an Exceeds Expectations rating for providing the highest quality learning and skills development and include public schools, child care centers, family day homes, and Head Starts, across all Ready Regions.
- Fewer sites received a Needs Support rating – down from 51 last year to 25 this year, which requires them to participate in VDOE Site Improvement Planning (See Section 7.3).
- For the first time, VQB5 awarded honor roll certificates to ~500 sites based on excellence, high quality infant/toddler programming, and/or significant improvement. This represented 15% of all sites and included child care centers, family day homes, schools and Head Start, across all Ready Regions.
- Detailed VQB5 Quality Rating and Honor Roll data can be found on the [Data Download webpage](#).

These results demonstrate that Virginia’s public and private programs positively impact more than 130,000 children under age five by providing quality classroom experiences that actively promote learning.

In the fall of 2025, 3,332 sites completed annual registration for 2025-2026 VQB5 participation which represents 1,640 centers, 817 family day homes, and 875 public schools.

- Ready Regions conducted 11,309 local CLASS observations and feedback sessions in participating infant, toddler, and preschool classrooms, including family day homes, with the same number of local CLASS observations expected in spring 2026.
- The External Observation Vendor also conducted over 3,535 external CLASS observations during the fall window and provided classrooms with an additional source of feedback and a quality assurance check for the state.
- 80% of sites reported they are using a VDOE-approved early childhood curriculum in every classroom, 2% of sites are using approved curriculum in some but not all classrooms, and 18% of sites reported not using approved curriculum in any classroom.

Data from fall CLASS observations and curriculum use are being used to guide individualized professional development. VQB5 quality rating results for the 2025-2026 year will be posted publicly in the fall of 2026 on EarlyChildhoodQuality.doe.virginia.gov.

See Appendix A for additional data from VQB5 2021- 2025.

SECTION 3 – PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

According to *Code of Virginia* (§ 22.1-289.05), all publicly-funded providers shall be required to participate in the uniform measurement and improvement system (VQB5) established by the Board of Education.

All other child day programs may participate in such system. Any participation in such system shall comply with all applicable federal laws and regulations, including the federal Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. § 9801 et seq.), as amended, and associated regulations.

3.1 REQUIREMENTS FOR PUBLICLY-FUNDED PROVIDERS

Publicly-funded sites must complete three activities annually to meet the legislative participation requirement. Non-publicly-funded sites who opt-in to VQB5 must also complete these activities to receive a public quality profile.

1. All VQB5 participants are required to use LinkB5 via the VAConnects platform to provide information about their sites, classrooms, teachers, and child enrollment through the completion of various profiles. This includes using LinkB5 to:
 - a. Complete all required registration information for sites, site administrators, educators, and classrooms between August 15 - October 1.
 - b. Enter information about optional use of a VDOE-approved early childhood curriculum for each classroom by October 1, with the option to update curriculum information by May 31.
 - c. Complete educator profiles between August 15 - December 22 and verify educator status in the spring.
 - d. Inform all families about VQB5 and complete student/child lists as applicable by December 22.
2. Every eligible classroom must complete two local CLASS observations, one in the fall and one in the spring, with scores entered in LinkB5.
 - a. The fall local observation window occurs from August 15 to December 22.
 - b. The spring local observation window occurs from January 20 to May 31.
3. In addition to the two local CLASS observations, all participating sites must participate in external CLASS observations for each age-level served, between August 15 and May 31.

3.1.2 PUBLICLY-FUNDED DEFINITION

“Publicly-funded provider” means any (i) educational program provided by a school division or local government to children between birth and age five or (ii) child day program that receives state or federal funds in support of its operations that serves three or more unrelated children.⁸

"Publicly-funded provider" does not include any program for which the sole source of public funding is the federal Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service.

This definition is intended to capture funding sources that support direct early childhood care and educational services for young children. These public funding sources include:

- Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI)
- Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE or IDEA Part B, Section 619 preschool)
- Title I Preschool
- Head Start/Early Head Start⁹
- Virginia’s Child Care Subsidy Program
- Local government child care assistance, such as Fairfax’s Child Care Assistance and Referral (CCAR) program
- Federal Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS)
- Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) Mixed Delivery
- Federal Department of Defense Military Child Care Fee Assistance (MCCYN)

The “publicly-funded” participation requirement does not include:

- Any site for which the sole source of public funding is the federal Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service,
- Publicly-funded sites/classrooms that only provide before/after school care, after hours/evening care, or summer camps, and
- Sites/classrooms that are not operating full-time.

As of July 1, 2025, [state law](#) indicates that the “publicly-funded” participation requirement does not include any site for which the sole source of funding is financial assistance for military child care pursuant to relevant federal law and is accredited by a U.S. Department of Defense-approved national accrediting body.

- Accredited sites who only receive MCCYN have the option to participate. As of July 1, these sites are not required to participate.

⁸ *Code of Virginia* (§ 22.1-289.02)

⁹ Head Start Performance Standard 1302.05 requires all Head Start programs, with the exception of American Indian and Alaska Native programs, to participate in its state or local Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)

- Non-accredited sites who only receive MCCYN are required to participate.
- Sites who receive MCCYN and other public funds are required to participate.

3.1.2a Definition of ‘Unrelated Children’

Unrelated children are those who are not a direct relative of a family day home provider or lead teacher. A child who is a “direct relative” means a son, daughter, grandchild, niece, or nephew whether by blood, marriage, or adoption. Publicly-funded programs that serve three or more unrelated children are required to participate in VQB5. Publicly-funded programs that only serve children who are direct relatives are not required to participate in VQB5.

3.1.3 FULL-TIME PROGRAMS

Full-time refers to a program which operates at least four days per week for at least 128 days per year, with children enrolled in classes that operate for a minimum of 3 hours per day. All publicly-funded full-time programs are required to participate in VQB5.

The ‘full-time’ definition is intended to include all local, state, and federally-funded programs that provide early care and educational services on a regular and consistent basis and includes:

- All VPI programs - All full day and half-day preschool programs that receive VPI funding are considered to be full-time within VQB5 based on the VPI state funding operations requirements outlined in the VPI Guidelines.
- All VECF Mixed Delivery - All Mixed Delivery classrooms are considered to be full-time within VQB5 based on state funding operation requirements that align with the VPI Guidelines.
- All Head Start and Early Head Start programs - All full day and half-day Head Start classrooms are considered to be full-time within VQB5 based on the updated guidance provided in the OHS Program Instruction ACF-PI-HS-21-02 Head Start Center-Based Service Duration Hour Requirements, with the exception of recipient agencies with an approved waiver.
- All other classrooms in public schools, child care centers, or family day homes who operate full day, or half-day schedules for at least 4 days a week on a regular basis.

3.1.3a Sites and Classrooms that Operate Less than Full-time

Publicly-funded early care and education sites and classrooms that operate less than 3 hours a day, less than 4 days a week, and less than 128 days per year are not required to participate in VQB5. Sites and classrooms that operate less than full-time are not eligible for a VQB5 quality rating.

3.1.4 SITE DEFINITION

For VQB5, a site is defined as one physical location where children are served. Each site (e.g., each public school location, each child care center, etc.) will receive one VQB5 site quality profile, which will include the site's quality rating, based on the measures obtained during the year. This means that, in general, sites that receive multiple sources of public funding will receive one VQB5 site quality profile, which will include their site's quality rating based on the measures obtained during the year from all eligible classrooms at the site's physical location.

3.1.4a Site Separation Request

In a few rare situations where there are multiple programs with differing governing bodies located at the same physical location (i.e., site), and children from each program are enrolled and served in different classrooms, programs may submit a site separation request to VDOE to be rated separately and receive separate site quality profiles.

Sites must submit a site separation request, including all detailed documentation, to vqb5@doe.virginia.gov by July 1 to be considered for the program year.

3.2 ANNUAL REGISTRATION CYCLE

The VQB5 system operates on an annual cycle. All publicly-funded sites with at least one full-time classroom as of October 1 are required to complete annual registration in LinkB5 to be considered participating in VQB5. Sites that do not receive public funds have the option to complete registration by October 1 for VQB5 participation.

3.2.1 REQUIRED REGISTRATION

Registration in the VQB5 data portal, LinkB5, must be completed between August 15 and October 1 on an annual basis. This includes completing all required fields for each of the following sections in LinkB5:

- 1) site profiles,
- 2) site administrator profiles,
- 3) educator list, and
- 4) classroom profiles.

Publicly-funded sites that do not complete all the required registration items in the LinkB5 system by October 1 will be out of compliance with state legislation requirements (See Section 3.4 for non-compliance).

All information entered into LinkB5 should be accurate and complete as of October 1 and is subject to verification or requests for documentation from Ready Regions and VDOE.

3.2.1a Designation of Primary Site Administrator

During registration, each site must designate a primary site administrator in LinkB5. The primary site administrator is required to:

- Ensure all site, educator, and classroom profile information is accurate and reflects actual operations and enrollment as of October 1.
- Ensure appropriate staff (site admin and educators) are invited into LinkB5 during the registration window and staff who no longer work at the site are removed prior to the registration deadline of October 1.
- Ensure all educators hired as of Oct. 1 complete their LinkB5 profile during the fall window by the December 22 deadline.
- Ensure educator information in LinkB5 is verified and updated if applicable in the spring, between April 1 - May 31.
- Ensure all local CLASS observation information, including scores from fall and spring observations, are submitted and verified in LinkB5 by the observation deadlines. (See Section 4 for details).
- Receive and respond to CLASS observation scheduling and documentation requests related to local and external observations (See Section 4 for details).
- Ensure observation results, feedback reports, and other pertinent VQB5 information is shared with the other appropriate site administrators and educators in a timely manner.
- Ensure that every parent/legal guardian is aware of site participation in VQB5, and that child-level information is gathered safely and securely through the completion of student/child lists in LinkB5.

3.2.1b Classroom Registration for Family Day Homes

In VQB5, family day homes are sites who are also considered as classrooms as they are places where children are supported to develop and learn. Family day homes typically have one classroom that serves mixed ages.

Family day homes should select the classroom type in LinkB5 that aligns with the age-level of the majority of children expected to be served for the program year. If there is not an age-level majority or if enrollment typically fluctuates throughout the year, the ‘toddler’ classroom type should be selected.

If a family day home site operates more than one full-time birth-to-five classroom in their home, with more than one lead teacher, they may request to add an additional classroom or classrooms to their LinkB5 site profile if the following guidelines are met:

- Children enrolled remain in the same classroom group for at least 3 hours per day and at least 4 days per week.

- The lead teacher remains with the same group of children for at least 3 hours per day and at least 4 days per week.

3.2.1c AM/PM Classroom Registration Requirements

If a lead teacher provides instruction to one group of children in the morning and a different group of children in the afternoon (i.e., AM/PM half-day sessions), both classrooms are required to enter information in separate classroom profiles in LinkB5 by October 1, provided that the classrooms each operate at least 3 hours per day, at least 4 days per week, and at least 128 days per year (See Section 4.5.2a for additional information regarding CLASS observation requirements for AM/PM classrooms).

3.2.1d - Sites and Classrooms that Open after October 1

Publicly-funded sites and classrooms that open after October 1 of a program year are not required to register or complete VQB5 measurement activities until the start of the following program year. Sites that open after October 1 are not eligible for a VQB5 quality rating until the following year.

Sites or classrooms that open after October 1 may opt to participate in some VQB5 activities during the program year to prepare for required participation the following year. VQB5 preparation activities could include having the option to enter site information in LinkB5, complete CLASS training, or receive a local CLASS observation for professional development.

3.2.2 VQB5 PARTICIPATION ENROLLMENT MINIMUM

Virginia law indicates that publicly-funded early care and education providers that have fewer than three unrelated children under age 5 enrolled are not required to participate in VQB5. Any publicly-funded provider that serves fewer than three unrelated children under age 5 at the time of the annual registration period (August 15-October 1) must complete the LinkB5 screener questions to inform the VDOE that it does not meet the enrollment minimum by October 1 and are subject to annual verification or requests for documentation.

Sites approved to receive public funds who are not receiving any public funds at the time of the annual registration period (August 15-October 1) are required to participate if they meet the participation enrollment minimum.

Sites and classrooms with fewer than three unrelated children under age 5 enrolled at the time of the annual registration period are not eligible to participate in VQB5 for the program year. This does not apply where a state or federal public funding authority requires VQB5 participation for all programs.

3.2.3 STUDENT/CHILD LISTS

State law (*Code of Virginia*, §22.1-289.05), requires the VDOE to measure child outcomes as part of VQB5. Virginia meets this requirement by asking sites, with parental permission, to complete student/child lists in the secure LinkB5 data portal. Student/child lists include all children who are enrolled in birth-to-five classrooms in VQB5 participating sites.

Student/child lists connect the experiences of all children in Virginia's early childhood classrooms with specific outcomes, like kindergarten readiness, for children who later attend public schools. With this information, Virginia can show how high quality early childhood experiences prepare all children for kindergarten and ultimately help them be more successful in school and beyond.

There are no stakes or consequences attached to the information collected through student/child lists. The information provided through student/child lists may only be used in broad, de-identified, and legal ways to increase understanding of how Virginia classroom experiences are associated with children's growth and development. To support site leaders with the completion of student/child lists, VDOE has provided detailed guidance in the [VQB5 Student/Child List Toolkit](#) which will be updated annually.

3.2.3a Informing all Parents about VQB5 and Student/Child Lists

Site leaders are responsible for informing all parents/legal guardians about VQB5 and student/child lists. This includes ensuring that families are aware of site participation in VQB5, and that child-level information is gathered safely and securely through the completion of student/child lists in a secure data portal, called LinkB5.

- Sites must inform parents about VQB5 in the fall as part of the annual site participation requirements. This means sites should inform parents between August 15 - December 22 each year.
- Sites may inform parents about VQB5 in a variety of ways. One way is to share the [VQB5 for Families](#) resource with parents. Sharing this resource will meet the requirement to inform parents. Additional strategies and suggestions can be found in Section 1 of the [VQB5 Student/Child List Toolkit](#).

3.2.3b Parent Permission Requirements for Student/Child Lists

Depending on how a child's early care and education is funded (i.e., private pay versus public funds) there are different requirements for obtaining parent permission for student/child lists.

- For parents of state publicly-funded children (Child Care Subsidy, Mixed Delivery, and public schools), child level information is part of existing state administrative and educational records. Therefore, no additional permission is needed for those children, and site leaders can proceed with entering child information in LinkB5 for student/child lists.

- Parents of private-pay children, and parents of non-public school Early Head Start/Head Start children and Military Child Care Fee Assistance children have the option to support student/child list completion by giving permission for the inclusion of their child's information. Parents must be notified and offered the option to support student/child lists on an annual basis.

Sites can obtain parent permission for student/child lists by using one of the following methods:

- Opt-in is when parents are asked to provide their explicit permission for the use of their child's information in student/child lists.
- Opt-out is when parents are notified that their child's information will be included in student/child lists, unless the parent denies permission.

Sites must keep copies of parent permission records securely on-site for at least 2 years after the child is no longer enrolled in the program. Records may be requested for review by VDOE. Additional Guidance and templates for gathering parent permission via opt-in/opt-out can be found in Section 2 of the [VQB5 Student/Child List Toolkit](#).

For public schools, each school division will upload students into VAConnects for VKRP/VALLSS assessments. These students will appear in the LinkB5 student/child list. Students not uploaded by the division must be added to the student/child list. Public schools must inform all parents about participation in VQB5 (See Section 3.2.3a).

3.2.3c Entering Student/Child Lists in LinkB5

The final step in the process for site leaders is to enter the following child-level information in LinkB5 by December 22:

- Child's first and last names
- Child's birthdate
- Child's gender

Student/child lists should reflect enrollment as of October 1, or as close to this timeframe as possible, to capture annual "point-in-time" enrollment information. To help ensure these lists remain accurate, VDOE will prompt sites to review and update student/child lists in the spring if there have been changes in enrollment or classroom assignments. All updates to student/child lists should be made by May 31.

Sites who do not complete student/child lists in LinkB5 by December 22 will receive follow up communication from VDOE to determine appropriate next steps and/or supports needed for successful student/child lists completion. This may include requesting documentation of efforts to inform parents about VQB5 and/or copies of opt-in/opt-out parent permission forms. This

may also include giving sites an additional time-bound deadline to complete student/child lists requirements.

3.2.4 EDUCATOR PROFILE COMPLETION

State law (*Code of Virginia*, §22.1-289.05) requires all publicly-funded programs to participate in VQB5 and activities that support continuous improvement of early childhood care and education programs. Virginia meets this requirement by asking sites to provide information about their sites, classrooms, and educators through the completion of various profiles in LinkB5 each fall. VQB5 educator profiles provide valuable information about the early childhood workforce. This information is used to assist with statewide efforts to improve quality, support educators, reduce teacher turnover, and increase access for young children and their families.

All educators and assistant educators who regularly work in VQB5-eligible classrooms as of October 1 must complete an educator profile in LinkB5 during the fall window, between August 15-December 22. Ready Regions will provide educators with support completing profiles. Sites should refer to the following definitions and guidance when determining which educators should complete required profiles:

- Educator - An educator is the professional responsible for designing and implementing classroom learning experiences in a VQB5-eligible classroom, including family day homes, on a regular basis. Each VQB5-eligible classroom must have at least one completed educator profile.
- Assistant Educator - An assistant educator is a professional who supports the lead/primary educator in daily classroom routines, child supervision, and activity facilitation on a regular basis.
- Educators who only work in before/after school and/or summer program classrooms are not required to complete educator profiles.
- Educators who only lead instruction for a short period of time, such as substitute teachers or student teachers, are not required to complete educator profiles.

VQB5 sites with incomplete educator profiles after December 22 will receive follow-up communication from VDOE to determine appropriate next steps and/or supports needed for successful educator profile completion. This may include requesting documentation of efforts to inform educators about VQB5 requirements and/or giving sites an additional time-bound deadline to complete educator profiles.

Each spring, between April 1 and May 31, site administrators will be prompted to use LinkB5 to verify the employment status of educators with active profiles at their site. This verification provides insight into within-year turnover in the ECCE workforce and ensures more accurate educator data for the next registration cycle. Understanding patterns in turnover and retention

helps VDOE strengthen supports for educators and improve early care and education programs, as required by state law.

3.3 SITE AND CLASSROOM CLOSURES

If a site or classroom closes during the 2026-2027 year and no longer serving children, the site administrator can notify their local Ready Region and VDOE that the site or classroom should be deactivated in LinkB5 and excluded from the VQB5 required activities for the current year. Closure requests can be submitted for all registered sites or classrooms that have permanently closed, program-year specific closure, or for temporary closures longer than 30 days (See Section 3.3.1 below).

- Requests for fall closures (sites or classrooms) must be submitted at least three weeks prior to the end of the fall observation window.
- Requests for spring closures (sites or classrooms) must be submitted at least three weeks prior to the end of the spring observation window.

Sites may notify their Ready Region or VDOE of a Site or Classroom Closure request by emailing vqb5@doe.virginia.gov.

3.3.1 DEFINITION OF A CLOSED SITE OR CLASSROOM

A closed site or classroom is one that was operating full-time with three or more unrelated children enrolled during the VQB5 registration window but then ceases to operate full-time and/or serve children permanently, for the program year specific, or temporarily during the fall or spring observation windows.

- Permanently closed sites or classrooms are those sites/classrooms that are no longer operating full-time and/or no longer serving children and are not expected to reopen full-time or serve children at any point in the future.
- Program year specific closure are those sites/classrooms that are no longer operating full-time and/or no longer serving children during the fall or spring window and are not expected to resume full-time operations or serve children at any point during the program year.
- Temporarily closed sites or classrooms are those that are not operating full-time and/or not serving children for a short period of time.
 - Sites or classrooms not operating full-time and/or not serving children for 30 days or more during the fall or spring observation windows will be eligible to request a classroom closure in VQB5.
 - Sites or classrooms not operating full-time and/or not serving children for less than 30 days are not eligible for a classroom closure in VQB5.

3.4 CONSEQUENCES FOR NON-PARTICIPATION

The *Code of Virginia* (§ 22.1-289.05) indicates that “All publicly-funded providers shall be required to participate in the uniform measurement and improvement system” and charges the Board of Education to “establish consequences for publicly-funded providers that fail to participate.”

Publicly-funded sites who do not complete the registration and enrollment minimum requirements outlined above by October 1 will be notified in writing by VDOE that they are out of compliance with the law and will be given a time-bound deadline to complete registration in LinkB5 in order to maintain public funding eligibility.

Sites who do not comply with the law after receiving notification from VDOE may have their current public funding terminated, with potential restrictions for future public funding. VDOE will also notify the applicable local, state, and/or federal funding authorities in writing that the site is out of compliance with state law.

Prior to fall registration, all publicly-funded sites will receive communications and notices from VDOE and Ready Regions regarding VQB5 requirements for each program year, with the goal of avoiding consequences for sites. All publicly-funded sites will be notified in writing before the August 15 registration window opens to ensure they are informed about the participation requirements, including the requirement to complete registration by October 1.

Publicly-funded sites that do not comply will put their public funds at risk. Below are the steps that the VDOE will take in the case that a site is known to be accepting public funds, but has not completed registration by October 1:

- Sites will be notified in writing by VDOE that they are out of compliance with the law. This notification will clarify that they have 10 business days from receipt to register through LinkB5.
- If the site does not register within 10 business days, VDOE will send a second written communication regarding non-compliance. This second notification will inform the site, in writing, that they continue to be in noncompliance with state law and inform them that if they do not comply in 30 days their participation in the applicable public funding program/s will be terminated.
 - This will include informing participating families, in writing, and facilitating their transitions to other sites.
- If after 30 days, the site is still out of compliance, VDOE, in consultation with the Attorney General, will provide a final notice of non-compliance and, where applicable, notice of termination of public funding to the site.
 - This will include notifying any enrolled publicly-funded families in writing and facilitating their transitions to other sites.

- Funding will be immediately terminated for sites that voluntarily take Child Care Subsidy, VPI, or Mixed Delivery funding.
- For Head Start and other funding sources that are not directly controlled by the state, the VDOE will work with the appropriate public funding authority to remove any non-compliant provider from their system.

Note that these steps outline the minimum process; the VDOE reserves the authority to add additional steps to improve communication or compliance.

VDOE will work with leaders from each public funding authority to establish additional notification procedures and follow up steps for the 2026-2027 year, with the goal of ensuring programs have the opportunity to meet legislation requirements and any unintended consequences/burden on families is limited to the extent possible.

SECTION 4: CLASS OBSERVATION REQUIREMENTS

4.1 RATIONALE FOR USING THE CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT SCORING SYSTEM (CLASS)

The quality of interactions between teachers and children is measured in VQB5 through use of the nationally recognized CLASS tool. CLASS stands for **CL**assroom **A**ssessment **S**coring **S**ystem. The CLASS is a tool for observing and assessing the characteristics of interactions among teachers and children in classrooms developed at the University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (CASTL).

The CLASS tool was chosen for use in VQB5 because it provides a rigorous and consistent approach to observing and measuring teacher-child interactions during critical developmental periods, while still providing a context-specific and developmentally sensitive metric for each age group. In addition:

- The CLASS is the most researched and validated observation measure of early childhood teaching and classroom quality. Over [200 published](#) studies show that students who attend classrooms with higher CLASS scores have better social and academic outcomes.
- All children benefit socially and academically from being in classrooms with high quality teacher-child interactions as measured by CLASS,¹⁰ including classrooms and family day homes with diverse populations: Dual Language Learners (DLL), children from migrant families, tribal communities, children with special needs, and children from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- Interactions, when measured by CLASS, promote incremental improvement that motivates educators at every level in the system. CLASS provides actionable feedback for every classroom and can be used with all educators, regardless of background, setting, or credential.

4.2 CLASS TOOLS USED IN VQB5

VQB5 uses the Infant, Toddler, and Pre-K CLASS observation tools. Each tool is developed specifically to evaluate the classroom characteristics and teacher-child interactions needed to promote child learning and development within each specific age range. In Virginia's system, family day home sites are considered as classrooms as they are places where children are supported to develop and learn (family day homes typically have one classroom).

¹⁰ Teachstone®. (2021). *Research*. Teachstone® Every student deserves life-changing teachers.

- Infant CLASS is used to observe classrooms that typically serve birth-18 months.
- Toddler CLASS is used to observe classrooms that typically serve 15-36 months.
- Pre-K CLASS is used to observe classrooms that typically serve 3–5-year-olds.

Mixed Age Settings, such as family day homes, use the CLASS tool that aligns with the age of the majority of children typically served during the program year.

Family Day Homes - To address the needs of mixed age family day homes whose enrollment typically fluctuates throughout the year, the Toddler CLASS tool should be used because it incorporates some aspects of Infant CLASS and some aspects of Pre-K CLASS and has broader applicability than either of the other two versions.

ECSE Self-Contained Preschool Classrooms - To address the unique needs of learners with special needs or developmental delays, ECSE self-contained Pre-K classrooms may be allowed to use the Toddler CLASS based on the children’s developmental age and IEP goals. Programs must notify VDOE at vqb5@doe.virginia.gov by October 1 to request the use of the Toddler CLASS tool and are subject to annual verification and requests for documentation. View [ECSE Toddler CLASS Guidance and Request Criteria](#) for more details.

4.2a CLASS Tool Selection in Spring

VQB5 uses CLASS to capture change over time, therefore in most classrooms the CLASS tool used for the program year should be the same in the fall and spring. This helps teachers prepare for their spring observation by being observed with a familiar tool. Using the same CLASS tool in the fall and the spring also provides teachers and program leaders with the consistency needed to work on specific CLASS improvement goals and to measure growth at the domain and dimension levels.

In the rare situation that the typical age-level of the children served in the classroom is significantly different during the full spring observation window timeframe, Ready Regions may request a ‘change in classroom type’ by emailing vqb5@doe.virginia.gov.

4.2b Use of CLASS 2nd Edition in VQB5

In 2022, the authors of the CLASS tool created an updated resource known as Pre-K CLASS 2nd Edition, which was followed by the 2025 release of the Infant-Toddler 2nd Edition tool. Virginia is currently exploring how to support a seamless transition to the most up-to-date CLASS tools which will depend, in part, on having accessible and affordable transition tools and training for all age groups and settings statewide. Equally important, this transition needs to be informed by data analysis that examines the impacts of adopting the 2nd Edition tools on teacher-child interactions, program quality, and child outcomes across diverse settings.

During the 2026-2027 year, Virginia will continue to use the original versions of CLASS for all local and external observations across all age-levels, with the following guidance regarding use of CLASS 2nd Edition Tools in VQB5.

For Pre-K Observers and Classrooms:

- Sites will have opportunities to learn about Pre-K CLASS 2nd Edition enhancements through state/regional webinars and trainings.
- Pre-K CLASS 2nd Edition may be used for professional development purposes including foundational training, observer transition training, and new observer training.
- The choice to use Pre-K CLASS 2nd Edition for professional development is a local decision. Sites are not required to use Pre-K CLASS 2nd Edition.
- Local observers who are certified on Pre-K CLASS 2nd Edition are considered to be reliable on both editions and may conduct local observations for VQB5.

For Infant and Toddler Observers and Classrooms:

- VQB5 CLASS observers must continue to certify/re-certify on the original Infant and/or Toddler CLASS tools to conduct observations for VQB5.
- Certification on the Infant-Toddler 2nd Edition is not considered interchangeable with the original versions because the combined Infant-Toddler CLASS 2nd Edition tool differs significantly from the original Infant and Toddler CLASS tools.
- There is no requirement for sites or observers to be trained in the Infant-Toddler 2nd Edition.

It has not yet been determined when Virginia will transition to required use of 2nd Edition tools and phase out use of the 1st Edition tools.

4.2.1 CERTIFIED CLASS OBSERVERS

Observers using the CLASS tool must successfully complete observer training and pass the reliability test through Teachstone to receive an official observer card and certificate from Teachstone. Only Teachstone is permitted to determine an individual's reliability and certification status for purposes of being eligible to complete CLASS observations for VQB5.

In addition to being a certified observer and using the appropriate age-level CLASS manual, CLASS observers in VQB5 must use Teachstone's guidance for conducting observations in the following settings:

- Family Day Homes - [Guidance for Observing in Family Day Homes](#)
- Early Childhood Special Education Classrooms – [Guidance for Using CLASS in Settings that Serve Children with Disabilities](#)

- Classrooms with Dual Language Learners - [Observing in Settings Serving Dual Language Learners, Birth-to-Five](#)
- Montessori Classrooms - [Guidance Document: CLASS Observation Support for Montessori Environments](#)

4.2.2 CLASS DIMENSIONS INCLUDED IN VQB5

For each age-level, the CLASS tool organizes effective classroom interactions into broad categories or domains, which are further subdivided into dimensions. These dimensions are based solely on observed interactions between teachers and children in classrooms; this system does not evaluate the presence of materials, the physical environment or safety, or the adoption of a specific curriculum. VQB5 CLASS observations include all applicable dimensions for each age-level tool as listed below.

Figure 4.2.2 CLASS Domains and Dimensions Measured in VQB5

Infant Domain and Dimensions	Toddler Domains and Dimensions	Pre-K Domains and Dimensions
<p>Responsive Caregiving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Relational Climate (RC) ● Teacher Sensitivity (TS) ● Facilitated Exploration (FE) ● Early Language Support (ELS) 	<p>Emotional and Behavioral Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Positive Climate (PC) ● Negative Climate (NC) ● Teacher Sensitivity (TS) ● Regard for Child Perspectives (RCP) ● Behavior Guidance (BG) <p>Engaged Support for Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Facilitation of Learning & Development (FLD) ● Quality of Feedback (QF) ● Language Modeling (LM) 	<p>Emotional Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Positive Climate (PC) ● Negative Climate (NC) ● Teacher/Educator Sensitivity (TS) ● Regard for Student Perspectives (RSP) <p>Classroom Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Behavior Management (BM) ● Productivity (PR) ● Instructional Learning Formats (ILF) <p>Instructional Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Concept Development (CD) ● Quality of Feedback (QF) ● Language Modeling (LM)
<p>View CLASS Dimensions Summary Tools for age-level dimension descriptions View Birth-to-Five CLASS alignment summary</p>		

4.3 SCORING WITH THE CLASS

In accordance with the manual, CLASS observers in VQB5 capture lower quality and higher quality behaviors that are demonstrated in classrooms. CLASS requires the observer to assign one score for each dimension per observation cycle based on the degree to which certain

behavioral markers characterize the classroom during that cycle. A score from 1 (minimally characteristic) to 7 (highly characteristic) is given for each dimension and represents the extent to which that dimension is characteristic of that classroom.

Scores are assigned using the following scale for each dimension.

- **Low scores (1-2)** are assigned when behaviors associated with a dimension were demonstrated in a low-quality manner, were lacking, or were rarely present in the classroom interactions.
- **Mid scores (3-5)** are assigned when the classroom interactions associated with a dimension were somewhat present during the classroom observation or a part of some children’s experience.
- **High scores (6-7)** are assigned when the classroom interactions were highly characteristic of a dimension during the observation. High-range behaviors are those that are meaningful, consistent, sustained, and reflective of everyone’s experience in the classroom.

4.3.1 OBSERVATION CYCLES IN VQB5

CLASS provides specific directions for observing classrooms, including family day homes, as outlined in the manual for each age-level tool.

- Each cycle of observation for Pre-K and Toddler CLASS consists of a 20-minute period during which the observer watches classroom interaction and takes notes followed by a 10-minute period for recording scores.
- Observation cycles are 15 minutes in Infant CLASS followed by a 10-minute period for recording scores.

CLASS Observations in VQB5 require four observation cycles for all CLASS observations. This results in a total of 80 minutes of observed teacher-child interactions in preschool and toddler classrooms, and 60 minutes of observed interactions in infant classrooms.

4.4 TYPES OF CLASS OBSERVATIONS IN VQB5

There are two types of CLASS observations conducted in VQB5: local and external observations. These observations have different purposes and frequencies during the annual measurement and improvement cycle as described below.

	Local Observations	External Observations
Purpose	Used for gathering classroom-level information about the quality of teacher-child interactions and to provide individualized feedback in VQB5.	Used by the state to gather information about the accuracy and consistency of local observations across the Ready Regions and to provide additional feedback in VQB5.

Definition	Coordinated and scheduled at the local level through Ready Regions, with results recorded in LinkB5. Conducted by locally identified reliable observers.	Coordinated, scheduled, and recorded for the state by the Teachstone External Observation Team. Conducted by externally identified reliable Teachstone observers.
Annual Cycle	In VQB5, all birth-to-five classrooms will get two local observations each year. One in the fall and one in the spring.	In VQB5, only some birth-to-five classrooms will get an external observation. All sites will receive external observations in at least one of their classrooms, for each age-level.

Through both local and external observations, early childhood classrooms are better prepared to support child learning and development.

4.5 LOCAL OBSERVATION REQUIREMENTS

Local CLASS observations are used to gather classroom-level information about the quality of teacher-child interactions and to provide individualized feedback to educators. In a VQB5 local CLASS observation, certified observers from the local community, such as principals, site directors, early childhood coordinators, or instructional specialists, conduct observations of the early childhood classrooms within their community. Local CLASS observations are coordinated by Ready Regions and occur twice a year in every participating classroom.

4.5.1 REQUIREMENTS FOR LOCAL OBSERVERS

In addition to being certified by Teachstone (See Section 4.2.1), local observers must meet the following requirements:

- Local observers must be reliable for each version of the tool they observe with (Pre-K, Toddler, Infant)
- Local observers must maintain their certification each year by passing an online recertification test.
 - If more than a year has lapsed, local observers need to take the CLASS Observer Training and certification again before conducting any CLASS observation.

Ready Regions have discretion in who may serve as local observers. Local observers may have working relationships with the sites and/or teachers they are observing, such as site director, program coordinator, or principal.

- Local observers are not allowed to observe teachers that they have a direct personal relationship with, such as a spouse or other relative.
- Local observers are not allowed to serve as VQB5 external CLASS observers in Virginia within the same region.

4.5.2a Supports for Local Observers

Ready Regions are responsible for maintaining reliable local observers by implementing quality assurance supports. These supports include three main forms: (1) in-the-field questions, (2) group meetings, and (3) quality assurance checks such as fidelity monitoring, calibrations, double-coding, and data integrity reviews. Ready Regions are also expected to regularly monitor their results and update written regional policies to articulate expectations and practices that support observer consistency and effectiveness.

Regions must actively use local CLASS data to support observation quality and consistency. This includes monitoring score entry throughout the fall and spring observation windows to confirm that local CLASS data is submitted accurately and on time. In addition, Regions should analyze local CLASS scoring trends to identify patterns that may indicate inconsistencies or potential issues with local observer reliability. If concerns arise, such as significantly delayed score entry or unusual scoring patterns, Ready Regions are responsible for conducting audits of scoresheets and observation notes. Audit results should be used to provide local observers with individualized feedback to help strengthen their application of CLASS scoring and note-taking protocols. See [VQB5 Local Observation Guidebook](#) for details about local observer support activities.

At the end of the fall and spring observation windows, Ready Regions should use data from score replacement/quality assurance data files provided by VDOE, local observer inventories, and other relevant sources to design, implement, and evaluate individual and collective strengths and areas for improvement within the region. By analyzing trends in scoring accuracy, timeliness, and adherence to protocols, Ready Regions can tailor local observer supports to address specific needs while reinforcing existing strengths. This targeted approach ensures that local observers receive the support necessary to conduct accurate, consistent, and effective observations for VQB5.

4.5.2 ANNUAL LOCAL OBSERVATION REQUIREMENTS

Ready Regions are responsible for making sure that every participating classroom is locally observed twice a year, once in the fall and once in the spring. All local observations must take place during the following observation windows.

- The fall local observation window occurs from August 15 to December 22.
- The spring local observation window occurs from January 20 to May 31.

Local CLASS observations completed outside of these observation windows will not be counted in the site's overall quality rating. Sites who do not complete local CLASS observations during the above windows will be subject to consequences as outlined in Section 4.8.

4.5.2a AM/PM Classroom Observation Requirements

If a lead teacher provides instruction to one group of children in the morning and a different group of children in the afternoon (i.e., AM/PM half-day sessions), only the AM classroom needs to be observed once in the fall and once in the spring, as long as the following guidelines are met:

- The lead teacher is the same for both the AM and PM classrooms, and
- The group of children in the AM and PM classrooms are the same age-level, and
- The physical space used for instruction is the same for the AM and PM classrooms and,
- The instruction is generally provided in the same manner for the AM/PM classrooms,
 - There are no significant differences in the skills taught, language of instruction, or activities for the AM/PM classrooms.
 - If curriculum is used, it must be the same curriculum in both AM/PM classrooms.

Sites with AM/PM classrooms that meet the requirements above must notify Ready Regions and VDOE by October 1 and are subject to annual verification or requests for documentation. If the above items do not all apply to the AM and PM classrooms, then both the AM and PM classrooms must be observed.

4.5.3 LOCAL OBSERVATION PROTOCOLS

The following procedures are to be followed for all local CLASS observations in VQB5. Ready Regions are responsible for ensuring all local observers receive training and ongoing support with observation protocols.

A. BEFORE THE LOCAL OBSERVATION	
A.1 Determining Which Tool to Use	<p>Before conducting a local CLASS observation, Ready Regions and local observers should refer to the classroom type listed in LinkB5 to identify the age-level the classroom typically serves.</p> <p>Local observers should use the age-level CLASS tool that matches the classroom type as listed in LinkB5 (i.e., if the LinkB5 classroom type is ‘infant’, then the Infant CLASS tool should be used). (Refer to Section 4.2 for more information about CLASS Tools Used in VQB5.)</p> <p>If the classroom type in LinkB5 does not accurately reflect the age-level of children typically served due to a significant change in enrollment or data entry error during registration, Ready Regions should request a ‘change in classroom type’ by emailing vqb5@doe.virginia.gov before the observation is completed.</p>

<p>A.2 Observing in Diverse Settings</p>	<p>In addition to selecting the appropriate age-level CLASS manual, observers must review guidance provided by Teachstone for conducting observations in the following settings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Family Day Homes - Guidance for Observing in Family Day Homes ● Early Childhood Special Education Classrooms - Guidance for Using CLASS in Settings that Serve Children with Disabilities ● Classrooms with Dual Language Learners - Observing in Settings Serving Dual Language Learners, Birth-to-Five ● Montessori Classrooms - Guidance Document: CLASS Observation Support for Montessori Environments <p>Observers must be able to speak and understand the primary languages of instruction used in the classroom.</p>
<p>A.3 Scheduling Local Observations</p>	<p>Local observations may be announced or unannounced. Ready Regions may optionally provide teachers with a predetermined window of time during which unannounced local observations may take place, or they may optionally decide to tell teachers the exact time and date of their local observation. Ready Regions are not required to notify teachers when local observations are taking place.</p> <p>Fall local CLASS observations should not be scheduled during the first two weeks of school, to give teachers and children an opportunity to adjust to the classroom setting. Ready Regions should confirm the first day of school for any local observation scheduled between August 15 - October 1 to ensure the observation is not being conducted during the first two weeks of school.</p> <p>If a new lead teacher is assigned to a classroom during the fall or spring observation window, they should not be observed during their first 2 weeks to give them time to adjust to their new teaching assignment. Ready Regions should confirm the start date for any new lead teacher assigned to a classroom during the fall or spring observation window.</p>
<p>A.4 Foundational CLASS Training</p>	<p>Ready Regions must ensure that all teachers and leaders who are new to CLASS are provided with opportunities to complete foundational CLASS training prior to the classroom observation.</p>

<p>A.5 Health and Safety Procedures</p>	<p>Local setting (e.g., school-based, community-based) procedures and requirements for volunteers and visitors must always be followed (e.g., health and safety, background check, identification presented). Ready Regions or the local observer must ask about these procedures prior to the observation.</p>
<p>A.6 Recorded Video and Remote-Live Observations</p>	<p>Use of recorded video or remote-live observations is allowed in VQB5 provided that the following guidance from Teachstone is followed.</p> <p>Recorded Video Observations are those in which the teacher and children are recorded via video tape while they are physically together in a classroom and then scored at a later time by a CLASS certified observer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance for Recording and Coding Video Observations <p>Remote-live observations are those in which the teacher and children are physically together in a classroom, but the observer joins via Zoom or another video conferencing platform that allows the observer to watch the classroom in real time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance for Conducting Remote-Live Observations
<p>B. DURING THE LOCAL OBSERVATION</p>	
<p>B.1 Length of Observations</p>	<p>All local observations must include four observation cycles completed on the same day. Cycles repeat over a two-hour period (approximately 2 hours total).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-K and Toddler Observations include four 20-minute observation cycles with a 10-minute coding session following each cycle. • Infant CLASS observations include four 15-minute cycles with a 10-minute coding session following each cycle. <p>There are a few circumstances where it is allowable for a cycle to be less than 20 minutes, such as a fire drill or sudden illness of the teacher that occurs in the middle of an observation cycle. In these situations, CLASS codes can still be assigned, provided that at least 10 minutes of observation have occurred. Local observers should use the guidance in Chapter 2 of each age-level CLASS manual, in the section on "<i>Rules for What to Observe and Terminating a Cycle</i>".</p>

<p>B.2 Activities to Observe</p>	<p>To the extent possible, local observations should occur on a typical day. Local observers should ask about the typical classroom schedule prior to the observation to ensure that both structured and unstructured times of the day can be observed, and to ensure that the local observation occurs on a typical day.</p> <p>Activities, transitions, and routines, including snacks and meals, in the morning or afternoon may be observed to capture children’s typical experiences (morning observations are typically recommended).</p> <p>Time periods that should not be observed include: when the whole group leaves the classroom for “specials” which are taught by a different teacher (such as PE, music, art), or for cafeteria meals when children are allowed to sit with peers from different classrooms and/or are not supervised by their lead teacher.</p> <p>In the case of children napping in infant, toddler, and mixed age classrooms (such as family day homes), only one child needs to be awake for the observation to proceed. For preschool classrooms, nap time should not be observed.</p> <p>Observation of outdoor activities varies by age-level. Observers should follow the guidance in each age-level CLASS manual to determine whether outdoor activities should be included in the observation cycle.</p>
<p>B.3 Adults to Observe</p>	<p>To the extent possible, local observers should try to schedule observations when the lead teacher is present.</p> <p>In order to meet legislative requirements, local observations in the following situations may also be conducted when the lead teacher is not present in order to observe children’s typical experiences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term substitutes may be observed in the assigned lead teacher’s place if they have been present in the classroom for 10 consecutive days. • A director, assistant teacher, substitute, or floater teacher who has led instruction for 10 or more non-consecutive days within the observation window can be observed. • A short-term substitute can be observed if there is another adult instructional leader in the room that typically leads instruction when the lead teacher is not present (such as an assistant teacher).

	<p>Observers should follow the CLASS manual, which states that observers watch children’s interactions with all teachers/adults in the room/area. Observers should be prepared to move around the classroom as needed to see and hear what is happening.</p> <p>At times, teachers may switch groups of children throughout the day. If this is typical practice and the lead teacher is still present and engaged with children, the observer may continue to observe even if the children in the classroom have changed.</p>
<p>B.4 Child Attendance</p>	<p>At least 50% of children enrolled (or typically in attendance) must be present during the observation.</p> <p>If less than 50% of children are present when the observer arrives, and this is not typical attendance for this time of day, Ready Regions will work with the program to reschedule the local observation.</p> <p>If less than 50% of child attendance occurs again during the rescheduled observation, Ready Regions should notify VDOE. This may be a concerning pattern and may result in additional external observations to ensure the site can meet requirements (See Section 4.6.2).</p>
<p>B.5 Observer Interactions</p>	<p>Observers should use a gaze that appears to float over the teacher, child, or group rather than directly staring at individuals for long periods of time.</p> <p>If children approach the observer, observers should only acknowledge their presence with a warm smile or a nod. More engagement than this may cause the observer to distract from classroom processes being observed and potentially disrupt the classroom and observation results.</p>
<p>B.6 Note-taking and Note Retention</p>	<p>Detailed notes must be taken for each dimension during every observation cycle. All notes and scores must be recorded on the official CLASS scoresheets.</p> <p>Local observer’s notes must show evidence of understanding and attentiveness to each dimension (e.g., notes include specific examples, quotes and inclusion of H/M/L ranges for each indicator most of the time).</p> <p>Original or complete copies of scoresheets with notes from local observations must be saved as back-up documentation for at least</p>

	two years after the observation (See Item C.4 below for record keeping details).
B.7 Scoring Cycles	<p>For the 10-minute coding sessions following each 20-minute observation cycle, observers may select to remain in the classroom or leave the classroom to complete coding.</p> <p>Observers do not conduct observations during the 10-minute coding sessions.</p> <p>Observers do not conduct more than four cycles of observations.</p>
B.8 Health and Safety Concerns	<p>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 Child Protective Services as mandated by law.</p> <p>For other observed issues that significantly impact the health and safety of the children in care, observers can report concerns to the VDOE. Local observers must report observed health and safety concerns to Ready Regions. Ready Regions must share reported concerns with VDOE (vqb5@doe.virginia.gov).</p> <p>For additional details, refer to VDOE Mandated Reporter Guidance.</p>
C. AFTER THE LOCAL OBSERVATION	
C.1 Determining Scores	When determining CLASS scores, observers follow the guidelines on the appropriate pages of the CLASS manual and CLASS Scoring Summary Sheet.
C.2 Submitting Scores into LinkB5	<p>Local observation scores must be entered into the LinkB5 data portal within 10 business days of the observation, or by the end of the observation period, whichever is first.</p> <p>For the fall observation period, the 10-day score entry requirement will apply after registration closes to ensure all sites have adequate time to complete their required classroom profiles. This means scores for all local observations completed during registration (August 15 - October 1) must be entered in LinkB5 by October 10.</p> <p>Scores for Toddler and Pre-K Negative Climate should be entered in LinkB5 as the raw score (not reversed).</p>

	<p>All local observers are responsible for ensuring the accuracy of their CLASS scores before submitting scores in LinkB5.</p>
<p>C.3 Site Admin Observation Review and Verification in LinkB5</p>	<p>Once scores have been submitted by the local observer in LinkB5, the primary site administrator, or other designated site administrator, must review and verify observation information in LinkB5 within 10 business days, or by the end of the observation window whichever comes first.</p> <p>Verification of observation information in LinkB5 includes checking to make sure the following observation information is accurate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The name of the local observer • The date the observation occurred • The primary/lead teacher listed is accurate based on the day/time of the observation • The CLASS tool used for the observation matches the classroom type designated in LinkB5 • The Negative Climate scores have been entered as the raw score (not reversed) <p>If the information listed above was not entered correctly, the site administrator should reject the observation in LinkB5 and contact the Ready Region. Observers must make requested corrections within 3 business days, or by the end of the observation period, whichever is first. Ready Regions may request additional documentation from the observer to verify the accuracy of the requested correction if needed.</p> <p>If the site administrator rejects the CLASS observation due to a concern about the observation scores, the site should request a VDOE CLASS observation review by emailing vqb5@doe.virginia.gov (See Section 4.9 for details). In this situation, the site administrator should still verify that the observation information listed above is accurate in addition to submitting a formal CLASS review request.</p>
<p>C.4 Record Keeping</p>	<p>After the local observation and feedback form has been completed, observers send their CLASS scoresheets to the Ready Region lead agency. It is also acceptable for original or complete copies of scoresheets to be stored securely by the observer as long as they are easily accessible if requested for an audit by the Ready Region Lead and/or VDOE within 3 business days.</p>

<p>C.5 Feedback</p>	<p>The observer (or assigned feedback provider, in the case that a local observer cannot provide the teacher feedback) must schedule a time to meet with each teacher or teaching team within 10 business days of the observation, or by the end of the observation period, whichever is first.</p> <p>Local observers should use either the feedback templates posted on the VDOE VQB5 webpage, or another similar template approved by Ready Regions to share scores, ranges, and notes on what was observed (including positive examples).</p> <p>Local observers should provide high-quality supportive feedback that recognizes teachers’ strengths while also focusing on opportunities for growth and skill development. (See Section 7.2.2a for additional information about providing feedback in local observations.)</p>
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4.6 EXTERNAL CLASS OBSERVATION REQUIREMENTS

VQB5 primarily relies on local observations and local feedback to produce site quality ratings and drive quality improvement across all of Virginia’s publicly-funded classroom settings. Considering VQB5 includes thousands of observers who observe 11,000+ classrooms across diverse age groups and settings, the VDOE must ensure the consistency, reliability, and accuracy of these local observations. The VDOE funds, oversees, and uses VQB5 external observations to ensure statewide consistency by providing an impartial, external comparison point and to promote continual improvement of local observer capacity. This includes using external observations to 1) confirm the accuracy of local observers by providing an impartial, external comparison point, 2) provide professional development to local observers to identify issues of “drift” as they continue to strengthen in their practice of the CLASS tool, and 3) provide additional feedback to program leaders and educators. VQB5 employs a local-external score comparison protocol to assess observation consistency and to replace local scores that are significantly different from the external observations results in the rating calculation. Continually evaluating the alignment between local and external observations enables the VDOE to continuously monitor the consistency, quality, and credibility of VQB5 local observations.

In VQB5, external classroom observations are conducted by a certified CLASS observer who is not employed by the program and has no relationship to the school, program, or classroom. This reduces the risk of actual or perceived observer bias. In addition, external observers participate in additional rigorous training and ongoing support to maintain their observation skills that go above and beyond what is expected of local observers. These requirements, which are detailed

below, help ensure external classroom observations are conducted reliably and consistently statewide for compatibility.

External observations are conducted by a contracted party, selected by the VDOE. In 2022, the VDOE conducted a competitive Request For Proposals (RFP) to identify an external observer contractor. The Teachstone External Observation Team will continue as the contractor for external observations in 2026-2027. In the fall of 2026, VDOE will initiate a new Request for Proposals process for the external observation contract to begin in the 2027-2028 year, with the option for three one-year renewals.

4.6.1 REQUIREMENTS FOR EXTERNAL OBSERVERS

In addition to being certified by Teachstone (See Section 4.2.1), the external observation contractor must ensure all external observers meet the following requirements:

- Individual external observers must be reliable for each version of the tool they observe with (Pre-K, Toddler, Infant)
- External observers must maintain their certification each year by passing an online recertification test.
 - If more than a year has lapsed, external observers need to take the CLASS Observer Training and certification again before conducting any CLASS observations.
- External observers cannot have any direct working relationship or other potential conflict of interest with the sites, teachers, or classrooms they are observing. External observers are not allowed to conduct external observations in the same Ready Region where they conduct local observations. (See Appendix C for External Observer Conflict of Interest Policy.)
- External observers must complete training for observing in different types of settings including Special Education, Family Day Homes, and Dual Language Learners.
- External observers must complete at least one calibration monthly. Observers who are certified on multiple age-levels of the CLASS tool will alternate the age-level at which they calibrate on a monthly basis.
 - External observers are required to achieve at least an 80% reliability rate on each calibration for all three age-levels of the CLASS tool - Infant, Toddler, and Pre-K.
 - If an observer does not achieve at least an 80% reliability rate, they are removed from observations at that age-level until they calibrate successfully.
- External observers must complete at least one double-coding session per program year as an inter-rater reliability check. External observer pairs must achieve at least an 85% inter-rater reliability rate across the four-cycle observation.

- External observers must participate in weekly meetings with external observation coordinators to review protocols, receive feedback, and participate in additional CLASS-related professional development.

In addition to the external observer requirements listed above, the external observation contractor must conduct frequent and rigorous data integrity checks and scoresheet audits for all external observers on a regular basis. The contractor must provide VDOE with a monthly report summarizing the data integrity checks conducted and the findings. The contractor must also maintain detailed records of all data integrity checks and scoresheet audits, including any follow-up actions taken. If significant discrepancies are identified during a data integrity check, the contractor must report them to VDOE within 3 business days.

4.6.2 ANNUAL CYCLE EXTERNAL OBSERVATION REQUIREMENTS

External CLASS observations will be completed at every site with every age-level at a site receiving at least one external observation annually, in approximately 75% of all participating classrooms statewide. Doing so will provide sufficient data to ensure consistency and fairness across the state in all programs and age-levels served.

- Sites with more than one age-level (infant, toddler, or pre-K), will receive at least one external observation for each age-level served.
- Sites with only one age-level served or with only one mixed age classroom, such as a family day home, will receive at least one external observation annually.

The majority of external observations will be assigned to registered classrooms at random, with the objective of providing an external observation to every age-level within each site during the observation windows, which align with the local observation windows.

- The fall external observation window will be August 15 - December 22.
- The spring external observation window will be January 20 - May 31.

External observations may also be completed outside of the designated fall/spring observation windows in order to fulfill legislative requirements.

In addition to the randomly selected classrooms, external observations will also be required in the circumstances listed below.

- Unusual scoring patterns such as significantly high scores (6 or higher) or low scores (2 or lower).
- Unusual age-level tool selection, such as observing a Pre-K classroom with the Infant CLASS tool (or) the use of different age-level tools for a local and external observation completed in the same classroom, during the same window (or) using a different tool in the spring than was used in the fall.

- Significantly late LinkB5 score entry for local observations (See Local Observation Protocol C.2).
- Incomplete local observation during the designated fall or spring window (See Section 4.8).
- Discrepancies found during a VDOE CLASS observation review (See Section 4.9).
- Other concerning patterns or unusual circumstances.

External observations for any of the above circumstances means that an individual classroom may receive more than one external observation during the program year. There is not a limit on the number of external observations that a classroom may receive.

See section 4.8 for consequences and steps that will be taken related to incomplete required external observations

4.6.3 EXTERNAL OBSERVATION PROTOCOLS

The following procedures are to be followed for all external CLASS observations in VQB5. The external observation contractor is responsible for ensuring all external observers receive training and ongoing support with observation protocols.

A. BEFORE THE EXTERNAL OBSERVATION	
A.1 Determining Which Tool to Use	<p>Before conducting an external CLASS observation, the external observation contractor should refer to the classroom type from LinkB5 to identify the age-level the classroom typically serves (infant, toddler, or preschool). External observers should use the age-level CLASS tool that matches the classroom type as listed in LinkB5 (i.e., if the LinkB5 classroom type is ‘infant’, then the Infant CLASS tool should be used). (Refer to Section 4.2 for more information about CLASS Tools Used in VQB5.)</p> <p>External observations in ECSE Self-Contained Pre-K classrooms may be conducted with the Toddler CLASS tool if approved by VDOE for use in local observations.</p>
A.2 Observing in Diverse Settings	<p>In addition to selecting the appropriate age-level CLASS manual, external observers must complete training in observing in the following settings in alignment with Teachstone’s guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Day Homes - Guidance for Observing in Family Day Homes

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Early Childhood Special Education Classrooms - Observing in Settings Serving Children with Special Needs Birth-to-Five ● Classrooms with Dual Language Learners - Observing in Settings Serving Dual Language Learners, Birth-to-Five ● Montessori Classrooms - Guidance Document: CLASS Observation Support for Montessori Environments <p>Observers must be able to speak and understand the primary languages of instruction used in the classroom.</p>
<p>A.3 Notification of External Observations</p>	<p>The external observation team will notify the primary site administrator listed in LinkB5 via email at least two weeks before the first business day of the three-week observation window.</p> <p>The notification email will not include the specific classrooms receiving an external observation. The primary site administrator should share the observation window dates with all applicable staff at the site so that all staff are prepared for an observation to occur in their classroom if they are selected.</p> <p>The external observation team will also notify Ready Regions with a list of sites who are scheduled to receive external observations in the upcoming observation window. Ready Regions should share the observation window with the applicable site administrators to ensure that observation notifications have been received.</p>
<p>A.4 External Observation Window and Blackout Dates</p>	<p>External observations will be conducted within a three-week observation window. The primary site administrator may identify three blackout dates within the window as ‘do not observe’ dates.</p> <p>Blackout dates must be provided to the external observation contractor at least one week in advance of the observation window.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If the observation is confirmed as having been scheduled on a blackout date (i.e., it is a contractor error), the observation will be rescheduled on a date that does not conflict with blackout dates. ● If site administration fails to provide blackout dates one week in advance of the observation window, the observation will take place in any classroom at the site.

<p>A.5 Health and Safety Procedures</p>	<p>External observers must have a government-issued ID (i.e., driver’s license, passport) as well as a VQB5 External Observer name tag with a photo to present when they arrive on site.</p> <p>External observers are required to have a background check that is aligned with VDOE Child Care Licensing checks and verification of a negative TB Test to be kept on file by the external observation contractor.</p>
<p>B. DURING THE EXTERNAL OBSERVATION</p>	
<p>B.1 Time of Day</p>	<p>External observations can occur at any time of day, however, as much as possible, external observers will aim to arrive at the start time provided by the identified primary site administrator. If the primary site administrator does not provide a start time, external observers will typically default to a start time between 8:45-9:15 a.m.</p> <p>Based on classroom schedules, multiple classrooms at the same site may be observed by the same observer in one day. For example, an external observer may observe a Pre-K classroom followed by an additional external observation in an infant classroom.</p>
<p>B.2 Length of External Observations</p>	<p>All external observations must include four observation cycles completed on the same day. Cycles repeat over a two-hour period (approximately 2 hours total).</p> <p>Pre-K and Toddler Observations include four 20-minute observation cycles with a 10-minute coding session following each cycle.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infant CLASS observations include four 15-minute cycles with a 10-minute coding session following each cycle. <p>In a few select, circumstances it is allowable for a cycle to be less than 20 minutes, such as a fire drill or sudden illness of the teacher that occurs in the middle of an observation cycle. In these situations, CLASS codes can still be assigned, provided that at least 10 minutes of observation have occurred. Local observers should use the guidance in Chapter 2 of each age-level CLASS manual, in the section on "<i>Rules for What to Observe and Terminating a Cycle</i>".</p>

<p>B.3 Activities to Observe</p>	<p>To the extent possible, external observations should occur on a typical day. Activities, transitions, and routines, including snacks and meals, in the morning or afternoon may be observed in order to capture children’s typical experiences. (mornings are typically preferred, See Item B.1 above).</p> <p>Time periods that should not be observed include: when the whole group leaves the classroom for “specials” which are taught by a different teacher (such as PE, music, art), or for cafeteria meals when children are allowed to sit with peers from different classrooms and/or are not supervised by a lead teacher.</p> <p>In the case of children napping in infant, toddler, and mixed age classrooms (such as family day homes), only one child needs to be awake in order for the observation to proceed. For preschool classrooms, nap time should not be observed.</p> <p>Observation of outdoor activities varies by age-level. Observers should follow the guidance in each age-level manual to determine whether outdoor activities should be included in the observation cycle.</p>
<p>B.4 Adults to Observe</p>	<p>To the extent possible, the lead teacher should be present during an external observation.</p> <p>In order to meet legislative requirements, external observations in the following situations may also be conducted when the lead teacher is not present in order to observe children’s typical experiences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term substitutes may be observed (e.g., typically any lead teacher present in the classroom for 10 consecutive days). • A director, assistant teacher, substitute, or floater teacher who has led instruction for 10 or more non-consecutive days within the observation window can be observed. • A short-term substitute can be observed if there is another adult instructional leader in the room that typically leads instruction when the lead teacher is not present (such as an assistant teacher). <p>Observers should follow guidance in the CLASS manual, which states that observers watch children’s interactions with all teachers/adults in the room/area. Observers should be</p>

	<p>prepared to move around the classroom as needed to see and hear what is happening.</p> <p>At times, teachers may switch groups of children throughout the day. If this is typical practice and the lead teacher is still present and engaged with children, the observer may continue to observe.</p>
<p>B.5 Child Attendance</p>	<p>At least 50% of children enrolled (or typically in attendance) must be present during the observation.</p> <p>If less than 50% of children are present when the external observer arrives, the external observer will wait for one hour to see if more children arrive. If the number of children does not reach 50% of expected attendance after one hour, the external observation team will work with the site to reschedule the observation.</p> <p>If less than 50% of child attendance occurs again during the rescheduled observation, the external observation team will notify VDOE. This would be considered a concerning pattern and may result in additional external observations or consequences to ensure the site completes participation requirements. (See Section 4.8)</p>
<p>B.6 Observer Interactions</p>	<p>Observers should use a gaze that appears to float over the teacher, child, or group rather than directly staring at individuals for long periods of time.</p> <p>If children approach the observer, observers should only acknowledge their presence with a warm smile or a nod. More engagement than this may cause the observer to distract from classroom processes being observed and potentially disrupt the classroom and observation results.</p>
<p>B.7 Note-taking</p>	<p>Detailed notes must be taken for each dimension during every observation cycle. All notes and scores must be recorded on the official CLASS scoresheets.</p> <p>External observer’s notes must show clear and strong evidence of understanding and attentiveness to each dimension across the entire observation (i.e., notes must include specific examples, quotes and inclusion of H/M/L ranges for each indicator for every dimension).</p> <p>Original or complete copies of scoresheets with notes from external observations must be saved as back-up</p>

	documentation for at least two years after the observation. (See Item C.3 below for record keeping details.)
B.8 Scoring Cycles	<p>For the 10-minute coding sessions following each 20-minute observation cycle, observers may elect to remain in the classroom or leave the classroom to complete coding.</p> <p>Observers do not conduct observations during the 10-minute coding sessions.</p> <p>Observers do not conduct more than four cycles of observations.</p>
B.9 Health and Safety Concerns	<p>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 Child Protective Services as mandated by law.</p> <p>For other observed issues that significantly impact the health and safety of the children in care, observers must report concerns to the VDOE. External observers must report observed health and safety concerns to the external observation contractor. The external observation contractor must share reported concerns with VDOE. (vqb5@doe.virginia.gov)</p> <p>Refer to Mandated Reporter Guidance document for more information.</p>
C. AFTER THE EXTERNAL OBSERVATION	
C.1 Determining Scores	When determining CLASS scores, observers follow the guidelines on the appropriate pages of the CLASS manual and CLASS Scoring Summary Sheet.
C.2 Submitting Scores	<p>External observation scores must be submitted to the external observation contractor within 24 hours of the observation.</p> <p>All external observers are responsible for ensuring the accuracy of their CLASS scores before submitting to the external observation contractor.</p>
C.3 Record Keeping	<p>Original or complete copies of scoresheets with notes from external observations must be saved as back-up documentation for at least two years after the observation.</p> <p>After the observation and feedback form has been completed, observers send their CLASS scoresheets to the external observation contractors.</p>

C.4 Feedback	<p>The external observation team will email a written feedback report to the primary site administrator 10 business days after the observation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure statewide consistency of the external feedback process, external observers are not allowed to provide any in-person feedback to the program on the day of the observation or at any time after the observation. <p>The external observation report will include CLASS dimension and domain scores as well as a summary of areas of strengths and recommended strategies for improvement.</p>
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4.7 LOCAL-EXTERNAL SCORE COMPARISON AND REPLACEMENT PROTOCOL

To ensure the consistency, quality, and credibility of ratings and performance profiles, VDOE will compare all local and external observations that are completed in the same classroom during the same observation window (e.g., fall observation window or spring observation window). VDOE may also use required external observations that were completed outside of the designated fall/spring observation windows for score comparison. (See Section 4.6.2.)

VDOE will use the following protocol to compare local-external observations and to identify significant discrepancies for score replacement after the completion of the fall and spring observation windows:

1) Compare Domain Level Scores

- If all domain level local scores are within one point of the external domain level scores, this observation is determined to be reliable, and no score replacement would occur. Only local scores will be used to determine the rating.
- If any local domain level scores differ by more than one point from the external domain level score, the external domain level scores will replace the local domain scores for the quality rating calculation (See Section 6).
 - Domains where there is not a difference of more than one between local and external scores will use the local domain score. Only the domains with a discrepancy will be replaced.

2) When domain scores are replaced, VDOE will notify the site and the designated local observer after the completion of VDOE fall and spring data integrity checks.

- Sites will receive notification of score replacement at the age-specific classroom level.

- Local observers will receive notification of score replacement at the age-specific domain level.

3) The VDOE will provide Ready Regions with a score replacement summary and a detailed score replacement data file for the fall and spring observation cycles.

- Information about the frequency of score replacements and recurring domain replacement will be used by Ready Regions to identify strengths and needs for supporting local observers.
- VDOE will share information about state and regional score replacement trends with the field through webinars and stakeholder meetings.

4) All Ready Regions and sites will be informed of rating results including score replacements during the Data Verification process prior to the publication of any profiles or ratings.

Information from local and external comparison data from the practice years was used to inform the development of the domain-level score replacement protocol for the following reasons:

- Using domains, instead of overall total scores, allows sites and regions to maintain autonomy over most of their overall score, while adjusting underlying components of scores to improve accuracy.
- Replacing scores at the domain level allows VDOE to give more specific and targeted feedback to more educators, particularly in the domains related to learning and instructional supports.
- Reviewing scores by domain helps local observers identify areas where they may need to adjust their observation techniques, while not overwhelming them with more granular, dimension-level replacements.

At the end of each program year, VDOE will evaluate the alignment between local and external observations at the state and regional levels to ensure that the score comparison and replacement protocol remains an effective approach for monitoring the consistency, quality, and credibility of VQB5 local observations. Details about score consistency and domain replacement rates from 2024–2025 can be found in Appendix A.

4.8 CONSEQUENCES FOR NOT COMPLETING REQUIRED CLASS OBSERVATIONS

All sites participating in VQB5 are required to complete local and external CLASS observations. In cases where the required observations do not take place, a set of actions will be followed to support the most complete collection of data for the site.

Type of Incomplete Observation	Resulting Action
<p>Incomplete Fall Local Observation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Fall Local Observation scores entered in LinkB5 as of December 22 for a particular classroom. • Fall Local observation scores are listed as pending, in-progress, or rejected in LinkB5 as of December 22 for a particular classroom. 	<p>If an external observation was completed in the same classroom during the fall window, scores from the external observation will be used in place of the missing fall local observation.</p> <p>If there are no fall external observations for the classroom, the most recently completed fall external observation scores from another classroom at the same age-level will be used in place of the missing fall local observation. In the rare case of there being multiple same age-level observations completed on the same and most recent day, these observations will be averaged in place of the missing fall local observation.</p> <p>If there are no external observation scores available from the fall window at the same age-level, the state will send an external observer to the classroom. Scores from this external observation will be used in place of the missing fall local observation.</p> <p>Ready Regions will be notified in the case of any situations where an external observation was used for a missing local observation, because a local observation failed to be completed. In this case, the VDOE reserves the right to adjust Ready Regions contracted funding levels to reflect the cost for external observations.</p>
<p>Incomplete Spring Local Observation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Spring Local Observation scores entered in LinkB5 by May 31 for a particular classroom. • Spring Local observation scores are listed as pending, in-progress, or rejected in LinkB5 as of May 31 for a particular classroom. 	<p>If an external observation was completed in the same classroom during the spring window, scores from the external observation will be used in place of the missing spring local observation.</p> <p>If there are no external observation scores available for the spring window, scores from an external observation completed in the same classroom during the fall window will be used in place of the missing spring local observation.</p> <p>In order to support the most complete data collection by the end of the VQB5 program year, Ready Regions must notify VDOE within 3 business days if any local observation scheduled for May is not completed. In these circumstances, VDOE will send an external observer to the classroom by</p>

	<p>June 20, if there are no other external observations from the fall or spring available for the classroom.</p> <p>If an external observation cannot be completed due to the end of school year and there are no external observation scores available from the fall or spring windows in the same classroom, external observation scores from the most recently completed external observation from another classroom at the same age-level will be used in place of the missing observation.</p> <p>Ready Regions will be notified in the case of any situations where an external observation was used for a missing local observation, because a local observation failed to be completed. In this case, the VDOE reserves the right to adjust Ready Regions contracted funding levels to reflect the cost for external observations.</p>
<p>Incomplete Fall <u>and</u> Spring Local Observations</p>	<p>In addition to the consequences described above, if a classroom does not complete either of the required two annual local observations within the designated fall and spring windows, they will be considered out of compliance with the law and will be notified by VDOE that future public funding may be impacted. (See Section 3.4)</p> <p>Ready Regions will be notified in the case of any situations where external observations were used because fall and spring local observation failed to be completed. In this case, the VDOE reserves the right to adjust Ready Regions contracted funding levels to reflect the cost for external observations.</p>
<p>Incomplete External Observation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site does not complete any required external observation during the program year. • No external observation scores by the end of the program year. 	<p>Failure to complete any required external observation as during the program year as described in Section 4.6.2 will be considered as refusing to participate. Sites will be considered out of compliance with the law and will be notified by VDOE as described in Section 3.4 that future public funding may be impacted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a required external observation in a specific classroom cannot be completed due to the end of school year and an external observation was completed in the same classroom during the fall or spring window, scores from the most recent external observation will be used in place of the missing external observation.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a required external observation in a specific classroom cannot be completed due to the end of the school year and there are no external observation scores available from the fall or spring windows in the same classroom, external observation scores from the most recently completed external observation from another classroom at the same age-level will be used in place of the missing external observation. <p>In addition, any site that does not have at least one external observation by the end of the program year will automatically receive a rating of Needs Support.</p>
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4.9 CLASS OBSERVATION REVIEW PROCESS

Site administrators or teachers who have a concern about their results from local or external CLASS observations, may request a formal review from VDOE by emailing vqb5@doe.virginia.gov during the program year.

- VDOE CLASS Review requests for fall observations must be submitted by January 12.
- VDOE CLASS Review requests for spring observations must be submitted by June 7.

To the extent possible, CLASS Review requests should be submitted within 30 days of when the contested observation was completed and/or at least three weeks prior to the last day of school to allow for a thorough review and applicable follow up if needed. Requests received after the deadlines will only be reviewed if there are significant reported violations of observation and scoring protocols (e.g., multiple protocol violations, clear conflict of interest) or other extreme circumstances.

For all requests submitted, VDOE will work with the Ready Region and/or the external observation contractor to gather all relevant observation data, observation scoresheets with notes, feedback forms provided to sites/teachers, other information from the observer and/or teacher that relates to the reason for the review request such as copies of classroom daily schedules, copies of lesson plans from the day of the observation, teacher/student attendance records, or other types of related evidence.

All requests will be reviewed thoroughly by VDOE in the following manner:

- VDOE will request a copy of the observer’s certification from Ready Regions and/or the external observation contractor to determine if the required certification is up to date and aligns with the age-level of the observed classroom.
- If the contested observation occurred in a Family Day Home, special education classroom, classroom that serves dual language learners and/or Montessori classroom,

VDOE will request verification that the observer received and reviewed the applicable guidance as outlined in Section 4.2.1.

- VDOE will check the top section of the observation score sheet to determine if the observation information was filled out completely for each cycle. Information from the top section of the scoresheet will be compared to the information provided by the site/teacher to determine if there is any potential discrepancy.
- VDOE will check to make sure all four cycles were completed correctly as outlined in Chapter 2 of each age-level CLASS manual.
- VDOE will check to make sure notes were recorded on the score sheet for every dimension, to determine if there is sufficient and objective evidence to support the assigned score.
- VDOE will request and review other documentation submitted by the site (such as daily schedules, lesson plans, attendance records, or other information) if needed to support the review request. If additional information is needed from the site, VDOE will work with Ready Regions to obtain documentation.
- If there is a concern about observation procedures, protocols, or observer conflict of interest, VDOE will contact the Ready Region (or) external observation contractor to gather information from the observer and any others directly involved to obtain additional information about what occurred on the day of the observation or any potential conflict of interest.

The VDOE will use this process to determine if there are discrepancies or other concerns with the observation(s). If discrepancies or concerns are found, the VDOE will address the situation, typically using an external observation to replace the original score.

- Any local observation where a scoring discrepancy is found will result in a score replacement using scores from an external observation from the same classroom and same observation window. If there are no previous external scores available from the same window, an external observation will be scheduled in order complete a score replacement.
- Any external observation where a scoring discrepancy is found will require a second external observation (completed by a different external observer), conducted in the relevant classroom(s) to allow for additional score comparison and possible score replacement.
- In order to address all identified discrepancies in a timely manner, VDOE reserves the right to use external scores from other same-age classrooms at the site that occurred in the same window as the observation with the discrepancy as outlined in Section 4.8 and/or to conduct an external observation outside of the designated observation windows in order to fulfill legislative requirements.

After the review is completed, VDOE will send a letter informing the site, and the Ready Region lead agency (or) external observation contractor, of the determination of the review within 30

days of submission. The letter will include information about applicable follow up, including but not limited to the situations described below:

Final VDOE Decision – Type of Discrepancy Found	Follow Up Steps to Support Observer Accuracy
<p>1) Observation scoresheets and notes do not support the observation scores.</p>	<p>Ready Region (or) external observation contractor will work with observer to review proper scoring and note-taking procedures, as applicable.</p> <p>Observer must complete a calibration for the applicable age-level within 30 days of VDOE decision. The use of double-coding may be allowed in place of a calibration, provided this is done with an expert CLASS coder, such as a CLASS Affiliate Trainer, or external observation contractor team member.</p> <p>Observer must submit scoresheets with notes from next scheduled observation to Ready Regions (or) the external observation contractor for review and feedback, as applicable.</p>
<p>2) Proper observation procedures or protocols were not followed.</p>	<p>Ready Region (or) external observation contractor will work with the observer to review proper observation protocols, as applicable.</p> <p>Observer will complete a fidelity check with someone from the Ready Region, or the external observation contractor team.</p>
<p>3) Conflict of interest on the part of the observer.</p>	<p>Ready Region (or) external observation contractor will work with observer to review regional and/or external conflict of interest policies, as applicable.</p> <p>Observer should review and sign an updated conflict of interest statement.</p>
<p>4) Other discrepancy/error identified not captured in previous categories above.</p>	<p>To be determined, based on the type of discrepancy identified.</p>
<p>5) No discrepancy found, and scores determined to be accurate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All procedures and protocols were followed. 	<p>VDOE will provide cycle level scores to help leaders and teachers understand how the dimension level scores were determined.</p> <p>VDOE will share information about state external score averages.</p>

	<p>Ready Regions will work with site and classroom teachers to review CLASS scoring procedures and/or observation protocols to clarify future observation expectations.</p> <p>Ready Regions will provide site leaders and teachers with Foundational CLASS training, or other similar CLASS training based on needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ready Regions will also strongly encourage site leaders to complete CLASS Primer for Leaders and/or CLASS Observer Training to build leaders' understanding of CLASS.
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SECTION 5: MEASURING USE OF QUALITY OF CURRICULUM

5.1 BACKGROUND ON EARLY CHILDHOOD QUALITY CURRICULUM

Use of curricula in an early learning program is a critical first step to supporting learning in every birth-to-five classroom. Curriculum use data gathered during the initial years of VQB5 indicate growth in statewide use of quality curricula, yet there still remains significant variation in curriculum use based on site type and classroom age-level (See Appendix A). To ensure that more children have access to intentional learning experiences, the VDOE will recognize sites for obtaining and implementing this foundational resource in every classroom during the 2026-2027 year.

5.1.2 VIRGINIA'S BIRTH-TO-FIVE EARLY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS - FOUNDATION FOR QUALITY INSTRUCTIONAL TOOLS

A core component of a high-quality early education experience is provision of opportunities, experiences, and materials that allow children to engage deeply within developmental/early learning domains that build their school readiness skills. The [Virginia's Birth-to-Five Early Learning and Development Standards](#) (ELDS) are a foundational school readiness resource that, through effective implementation, helps educators create and support conditions for the success of all of Virginia's youngest learners.

The ELDS are designed for adults who care for and teach young children in a variety of settings including family day homes, center-based child care, Head Start classrooms, early intervention programs, private preschools, public early childhood programs, and Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) classes. The ELDS provide all early childhood providers, inclusive of parents/families, teachers, and program leaders, a resource for understanding what children should know and be able to do as they grow and change from birth until they enter kindergarten. **The ELDS are not intended to serve as a developmental checklist, an assessment, or a curriculum.**

These ELDS organize information into five Areas of Development. While not reflective of the true, integrated nature of development, this organization aims to help educators know what to encourage and what to look for as they support and keep watch over a child's development and learning. The Areas of Development include:

- Approaches to Play and Learning
- Social and Emotional Development

- Communication, Language, and Literacy Development
- Health and Physical Development
- Cognitive Development (including Science, Social Science, Mathematics, and Fine Arts)

5.1.3 DEFINING CURRICULUM FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD

According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), “curriculum” is the organized framework that delineates the content children are to learn, the processes through which children will use to achieve the identified curricular goals, what teachers will do to help children achieve these goals, and the context in which teaching and learning occur. Essentially, a curriculum identifies the “what” and “how” of the learning experiences children will have.

Curriculum, or the content of what children learn, is central to supporting and strengthening young children’s learning and development. Educators and other stakeholders in young children’s lives have a shared responsibility to implement a curriculum that is thoughtfully planned, challenging, engaging, developmentally-appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive, comprehensive, and likely to promote positive outcomes for all young children. Quality early childhood curriculum uses a strengths-based approach to teaching that is rooted in respect for all children’s learning and development. Curriculum should support interactions, learning experiences, and learning materials that support responsive early learning experiences for all children and families.

5.1.4 THE ROLE OF APPROVED CURRICULUM IN VQB5

The use of an approved curriculum is optional in VQB5. VQB5 does not require the use of any curriculum.

To encourage the use of quality curriculum, the choice to use an approved curriculum results in additional points towards the rating displayed on VQB5 Quality Profiles (See Section 6). However, this is not required for participation or required for receiving a rating that meets expectations.

Programs that are interested in using an approved curriculum as part of VQB5 may: 1) use one of the 75+ approved early childhood curricula available, including five no-to-low-cost options: [STREAMin3](#) (See Section 5.2.2), [Early Learning Matters](#), [Core Knowledge Preschool Sequence](#), [Circle Curriculum](#) or [Great First Eight](#), or 2) request to have their curriculum of choice reviewed for possible approval.

Quality teaching and learning is supported by curriculum use in all birth-to-five early learning settings. In fall 2025, 82% (2,715) of sites participating in VQB5 reported using a VDOE-approved early childhood curriculum in at least one classroom. Of the sites that reported using an

approved curriculum, 97% (2,634) reported using curriculum in all classrooms within the site, and only 2% (81) reported using curriculum in at least one, but not all classrooms. VQB5 sites using curriculum in all classrooms has increased from 2024-2025 as the VDOE and Ready Regions have worked closely with sites to expand the use of curriculum to all age groups within sites to support high-quality instruction in all VQB5 classrooms.

5.1.4a Change to Requirements for Curriculum Recognition

Starting in the 2026-2027 VQB5 program year, sites will be required to use a VDOE-approved early childhood curriculum in every classroom to receive 100 points for curriculum use on their VQB5 profile. This enhancement, approved by the Board of Education in June 2025, reflects VDOE's commitment to supporting high-quality instruction in all VQB5 classrooms.

Sites who are using an approved curriculum in all VQB5 participating classrooms as of May 31, 2027, will receive curriculum points in fall 2027 VQB5 Quality Profiles. Throughout the 2026-2027 year, VDOE will provide notices to sites regarding curriculum recognition, including targeted outreach to sites that may be impacted by the change in points calculation (refer to Section 6.2 for details about calculating site curriculum points).

5.2 MEASURING THE QUALITY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CURRICULA

VDOE-approved curricula are comprehensive, integrated, and aligned to the VA-ELDS among other [baseline criteria for quality early childhood curriculum](#). The following criteria from the National Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center's [Curriculum Consumer Report](#) are used to measure the quality of infant, toddler, preschool, and family day home (mixed-aged) curricula. These criteria are based on early childhood education research, the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS), and other standards for high-quality curricula.

[VDOE Baseline Criteria for High-Quality Birth-to-Five Curriculum](#) serves as a reference document to inform stakeholders of the criteria used to review birth-to-five curricula. Criteria and definitions used to indicate quality include:

- **Evidence Base for Child Outcomes:** Evidence from research demonstrates that the curriculum has been associated with children's positive learning outcomes.
- **Research-Based Curriculum:** The curriculum provides research-based content and teaching practices to support children's development and learning.
- **Scope and Sequence:** The curriculum includes an organized developmental scope and sequence to support children's development and learning.
- **Alignment with Applicable Early Learning and Development Standards:** The curriculum, or curricula, covers all areas of children's learning and development.
- **Learning Goals for Children:** The curriculum specifies learning goals for children.

- **Ongoing Child Assessments:** The curriculum provides guidance on ongoing assessment.
- **Parent and Family Engagement:** The curriculum promotes parent and family engagement.
- **Professional Development Materials to Support Implementation:** The curriculum offers professional development and materials to support implementation and continuous improvement.
- **Learning Experiences and Interactions:** The curriculum promotes rich learning experiences and interactions to support development across domains.
- **Learning Environments and Routines:** The curriculum provides guidance on how to set up rich learning environments and developmentally-appropriate routines.
- **Cultural Responsiveness:** The curriculum supports cultural responsiveness.
- **Linguistic Responsiveness:** The curriculum supports linguistic responsiveness.
- **Individualization for Children with Disabilities, Suspected Delays, or other Special Needs:** The curriculum provides guidance on how to individualize for children with disabilities, suspected delays, or other special needs.
- **Individualization Based on Interests, Strengths, and Needs:** The curriculum offers guidance on how to individualize based on children's interests, strengths, and needs.

5.2.1 REQUESTING A CURRICULUM REVIEW

The VDOE reviews and approves quality curriculum through a comprehensive and expert-led curriculum review process. While over 75 birth-to-five curricula have already been reviewed and approved as quality, as of March 2026, any site is able to request a review of the curriculum materials they are interested in using at any time.

The chart below outlines the curriculum review process for VQB5:

<p>Step 1: Program completes Curriculum Pre-Submission Checklist for Birth-to-Five Programs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs first review their curriculum and the set of baseline evaluation criteria for review by completing the Curriculum Pre-Submission Checklist for Birth-to-Five Programs. • Curricula that meet the criteria will be considered by VDOE for a comprehensive review and added to the pending curriculum list. Curriculum remains pending until materials have been reviewed. • Curricula that do not meet the criteria outlined in the Curriculum Pre-Submission Checklist will not be moved forward in review.
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<p>Step 2: Program works with VDOE to facilitate expert review of curriculum and materials</p>	<p>Once VDOE reviews the Curriculum Pre-Submission Checklist for Birth-to-Five Programs from Step 1 and confirms all criteria have been met, a full curriculum review is initiated. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with the program or vendor to obtain copies of all resources included with the curriculum. • Completing an in-depth review of the curriculum and related materials using a rubric. This rubric is similar to the tool developed by the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning (NCECDTL).
<p>Step 3: Decision on curriculum is made</p>	<p>Curriculum is determined to be “Approved” or “Not Approved”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This decision will be communicated to the requesting program via a letter. If approved, the curriculum will be added to the Approved Curriculum List.

5.2.2 USING AN APPROVED CURRICULUM

The following curricula have been approved by the VDOE as of March 2026. This list is updated monthly and is posted on the [VDOE Early Childhood Curriculum website](#).

- Infant, Toddler, and Family Day Home (Mixed-Age) Curricula
 - ABC Jesus Loves Me
 - Ascend Curriculum: Toddlers
 - Ascend Curriculum: Twos
 - Beyond Cribs and Rattles (BCR) Comprehensive Program, 2nd Edition (2019)
 - Callahan Education
 - Circle Curriculum (Infant, Toddler)
 - Core Knowledge Preschool Sequence
 - Creative Curriculum for Family Child Care, 3rd Edition
 - Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers, & Twos, 3rd Edition
 - Creative Curriculum Infant
 - Creative Curriculum Toddler
 - Creative Learning (TEE Spot)
 - Creative World School: 3 E’s Foundation of Excellence
 - Early Learning Matters
 - Experience Early Learning/Mother Goose Time
 - Frog Street Infant
 - Frog Street Toddler
 - Gee Whiz Curriculum for Family Child Care
 - Get Set For School (Learning Without Tears)
 - Golden Path Curriculum

- Great First Eight (Infant/ Toddler)
 - HighReach Learning
 - HighScope Infant-Toddler Curriculum
 - InvestiGator Club Family Child Care Program
 - InvestiGator Club Little InvestiGators (Infants and Toddlers)
 - Kiddie Academy Life Essentials
 - Kids ‘R’ Kids First Class Curriculum
 - KinderCare Infant and Toddler
 - LeafSpring Schools PLAYWORKS
 - Learn As We Grow (Infants, Toddlers, Twos)
 - Learn Every Day: The Program for Infants, Toddlers, and Twos, 2nd ed (LED ITT)
 - Learn From the Start Twos (24 months to 36 months)
 - Learn From the Start Infants (6 weeks to 12 months)
 - Learn From the Start Toddlers (12 months to 24 months)
 - Learning Beyond Paper
 - Learning Experience Academic Program (L.E.A.P.)
 - Lillio Learning
 - Montessori Birth Through Five Curriculum: Virginia Montessori Association
 - Robert E. Simon Jr. Children’s Center, Inc.
 - Wonder Program (Primrose Balanced Learning)
 - Robert E. Simon Jr. Children’s Center Inc.
 - Seedlings
 - STREAMin³
 - Wonder of Learning (Goddard School)
 - World at their Fingertips (Bright Horizons)
- Preschool Curricula
 - ABCJesusLovesMe
 - Ascend Curriculum: Pre-K
 - Ascend Curriculum: Fours
 - Ascend Curriculum: Threes
 - Benchmark Ready to Advance
 - Blueprint
 - Brain Based Learning by Blue Ribbon Results
 - Callahan Education
 - Circle Curriculum (Pre-K)
 - Connect4Learning, 2nd Edition
 - Core Knowledge Preschool Sequence
 - Creative Curriculum for Preschool Guided Edition

- Creative Curriculum for preschool, 6th Edition
- Creative Learning (TEE Spot)
- Creative World School: 3 E's Foundation of Excellence
- Curiosity Corner, 2nd Edition
- Early Learning Matters
- Exceed Preschool Curriculum
- Experience Early Learning
- Fairfax County Public Schools Pre-K Curriculum
- Frog Street Pre-K
- Frog Street Threes
- Funnydaffer
- Lillio Learning (formerly FunShine Express)
- Get Set For School (Learning Without Tears)
- Golden Path Curriculum
- Great First Eight (Pre-K)
- HighReach Learning
- HighScope Preschool Curriculum
- InvestiGator Club Just for Threes
- InvestiGator Club PreKindergarten Learning System
- Kiddie Academy Life Essentials
- Kids 'R' Kids First Class Curriculum
- KinderCare Pre-K
- LeafSpring Schools PLAYWORKS
- Learn As We Grow
- Learn Every Day: The Preschool Curriculum, 2nd Edition
- Learning Beyond Paper
- Learning Experience Academic Program (L.E.A.P.)
- Lillio Learning
- Montessori Birth Through Five Curriculum: Virginia Montessori Association
- Pre-K On My Way
- Robert E. Simon Jr. Children's Center, Inc.
- Seedlings
- STREAMin³
- TeachTown Pre-K
- Three Cheers for Pre-K
- Tools of the Mind
- Venture Program (Primrose Balanced Learning)
- Virginia Beach Pre-K Curriculum
- Wee Learn Curriculum (Pre-K)
- Wonder of Learning (Goddard School)
- World at their Fingertips (Bright Horizons)
- World of Wonders

Open Source or Free Approved Curriculum:

- [STREAMin³](#) – available to publicly-funded programs in Virginia, through a vendor supported by a contract with VDOE.
- [Early Learning Matters](#) is a nationally available free/open-sourced Virginia-approved birth-to-five curricula.
- [The Core Knowledge Preschool Sequence](#) is a preschool-focused, nationally available free/open-sourced Virginia-approved curricula.
- [Circle Curriculum](#) is a nationally available free/open-sourced Virginia-approved curriculum for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.
- [Great First Eight](#) is a nationally available free/open-sourced Virginia-approved curriculum for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

5.2.3 CURRICULUM USE REPORTING REQUIREMENT

Curricula use must be reported at the classroom level for every site on an annual basis. This data must be reported via the LinkB5 data portal as a part of site classroom profiles as follows:

- Each registered full-time classroom must indicate if they are or are not using a VDOE-Approved Curriculum by October 1 as a part of the initial registration requirements.
- Classrooms can update their curriculum use information through May 31.
- If a classroom is using a VDOE-Approved Curriculum, they must enter the name of the curriculum being used.

The VDOE may conduct a site audit by requesting documentation to support the validity of the curriculum information submitted. This may include contacting sites when curriculum use information does not appear to match the classroom and/or site type information entered in LinkB5.

The use of an approved curriculum in VQB5 is optional. There is no curriculum requirement.

SECTION 6: DETERMINING VQB5 QUALITY RESULTS

PROPOSED RATING CHANGE FOR 2026–2027

Beginning in the 2026–2027 program year, VQB5 will shift from a three-level to a five-level rating system to better highlight the depth and quality of teacher-child interactions, reflecting VDOE’s commitment to fostering emotionally responsive, meaningful early learning experiences that better prepare all children for kindergarten.

Transitioning from three to five rating levels creates a clearer, more actionable system that supports improved experiences for children across Virginia and more nuanced distinctions in quality, benefiting the Commonwealth in the following ways:

- For Sites
 - Recognizes sites providing higher quality experiences.
 - Provides specific and actionable feedback to guide improvement.
 - Recognizes incremental achievement and progress.
 - Increases support for lower performing sites so children can benefit, particularly in centers and family day homes.
- For Families
 - Offers a clearer understanding of quality differences and what they mean for children’s daily experiences.
- For Ready Regions and Improvement Partners
 - Enables better resource targeting for regional supports, enabling more strategic and effective interventions.
- For the Early Childhood System
 - Generates more granular data to inform decision making, policy development, and resource allocation, ultimately driving continuous improvement across Virginia’s early childhood landscape.

This change only impacts the cut-points and definitions of VQB5 rating levels. The overall method for calculating VQB5 ratings as a three-digit point score remains the same (See Section 6.2). This consistency ensures that VDOE and the field can continue to measure year-over-year changes accurately, maintaining comparability and stability in the rating system, while improving clarity and actionability through refined level definitions.

See section 6.2.3c for details about the rating change transition timeline.

6.1 DEFINITIONS OF QUALITY LEVELS

The following scale describes how well sites are meeting the quality standard for the current 2025-2026 year.

- **Exceeds Expectations** - The site performing at this level demonstrates performance that consistently and considerably surpasses the established standard. This rating is reserved for performance that is truly exemplary and done in a manner that exemplifies the state's mission and goals for early childhood care and education.
- **Meets Expectations** - The site meets the standard in a manner that is consistent with the state's mission and goals for early childhood care and education.
- **Needs Support** - The site is performing below the established standard or in a manner that is inconsistent with the state's mission and goals for early childhood care and education.

Starting in the 2026-2027 year, the following scale will be used to describe how well sites are meeting the quality standards.

- **Distinguished** - The site demonstrates a level of quality that is exceptional and considerably surpasses the state's highest standards of practice. This rating is reserved for performance that is truly exemplary and done in a manner that exemplifies the state's mission and goals for early childhood care and education. Sites earning this rating serve as national exemplars, setting a benchmark for best practices in the field.
- **Exceeds Expectations** - The site demonstrates performance that consistently exceeds the state's established quality standard. These sites implement approaches that can serve as models for peers and contribute to advancing effective practices across the state.
- **Meets Expectations** - The site meets the established quality standard in a manner that is consistent with the state's mission and goals for early childhood care and education.
- **Approaching Expectations** - The site is making progress toward (*but has not quite met*) the established quality standard. Performance requires targeted improvement to fully meet quality expectations.
- **Needs Support** - The site is performing below the established standard or in a manner that is inconsistent with the state's mission and goals for early childhood care and education. Intensive support is needed to improve quality and align with quality expectations.

Each rating level represents a shift in the frequency, quality, and intentionality of interactions that impact children's experiences, as described below.

Needs Support	Approaching Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations	Distinguished
Children rarely or never engaged in learning; limited positive or supportive interactions	Children occasionally engaged in learning through positive, supportive interactions	Children generally engaged in learning through positive, supportive interactions	Children frequently engaged in learning through positive, supportive interactions	Children continuously engaged in learning through positive and highly supportive interactions

6.2 CALCULATING SITE RESULTS

The annual VQB5 quality rating is calculated at the end of the annual data collection cycle (i.e., end of the program year). The site results are based on measurement data collected from fall and spring local CLASS observations entered into the LinkB5 system, and from classroom curriculum information collected from the LinkB5 site profile. The site results are calculated after all score review and score replacement has taken place for the annual cycle (See Section 4.7 for score replacement protocol).

- All publicly-funded sites registered by October 1 will receive an annual quality rating. Non-publicly-funded sites who opt-in to participate in VQB5 will also receive a quality rating provided that all required participation activities have been completed.
 - All full-time registered classrooms will be included in the site’s calculated complete rating.
 - VDOE-approved site or classroom closures will be excluded from the VQB5 required activities for the current year (See Section 3).
- New publicly-funded sites that open or begin to receive public funding after the October 1 registration deadline will not receive a VQB5 quality rating for the year.
- New classrooms that open or begin to receive public funding after the October 1 registration deadline will not be included in the VQB5 quality rating calculation for that year.

6.2.1 CALCULATING INTERACTION POINTS

Interaction points are determined by using an overall CLASS average score for the site. This site score is calculated using the average CLASS scores from every eligible classroom including both fall and spring results, based on classroom registration information as listed above. All age-levels

are weighted equally, and scores are averaged at the dimension level to provide a reflection of what is happening in the classroom.

Using classroom average scores at the dimension level allows for consistent quality measurement across the Infant, Toddler, and Pre-K CLASS tools. In addition, using average classroom and site scores rewards incremental improvements as well as offers the most overall transparency and fairness in terms of ratings.

VDOE will use the following steps to calculate the overall site average at the end of the program year:

1. Determine the dimension scores for each classroom observed.
 - a. Individual cycle scores for each dimension are averaged across the four observation cycles to determine the overall dimension score for the classroom.
 - i. If an external CLASS observation has been completed for any classrooms during the fall or spring observation window, the external CLASS observation domains are compared to the local CLASS observation domains for the same classroom as outlined in the score replacement protocol (See Section 4.7).
 1. Dimension scores within each domain are averaged to determine the domain scores for the classroom (See Section 4.2.2).
 - ii. If score replacement is necessary in one or more domains, observation scores for each dimension within the replaced domain occurs at this step.
2. Determine overall average CLASS score for each classroom in the fall and then again in the spring.
 - a. Calculate average CLASS score for each classroom by summing the scores for each dimension and dividing by the number of dimensions for the specific age-level tool.
3. Determine average CLASS score for each age-level in the fall and then again in the spring. Then use fall and spring averages to calculate the full year age-level CLASS score.
 - a. Calculate the fall and spring average CLASS scores for each age-level (Infant, Toddler, Pre-K), by summing scores for each classroom within the same age-level and then dividing by the number of classrooms within the same age-level.
 - b. Then calculate the full-year age-level CLASS score by summing the fall and spring age-level averages and dividing by two.
4. Determine the overall average CLASS score for the site.
 - a. Calculate the overall site CLASS score by summing the age-level scores and dividing by the number of age-levels served at the site.

All scores are rounded to two decimal places. If the digit in the thousandths place is greater or equal to 5, the hundredths digit is increased by one unit. For example, 4.6378 is rounded to 4.64.

The average CLASS score for a site will be multiplied by 100 for the overall quality rating, resulting in a maximum score of 700 points from the CLASS observation portion of the measurement.

6.2.2 CALCULATING CURRICULUM POINTS

The site curriculum score is calculated using the classroom curriculum information entered in LinkB5 as of May 31 each year as follows:

- Sites using an approved curriculum in all classrooms by May 31 are awarded 100 points for the quality rating.
- Sites using an approved curriculum in some classrooms, but not in every classroom by May 31 receive 0 points for curriculum.
- Sites who are not using an approved curriculum in any classrooms by May 31 receive 0 points for curriculum.
- Sites who do not report on use of an approved curriculum as of May 31 receive 0 points for curriculum.

6.2.3 COMPUTING THE OVERALL SITE SCORE

The overall site score will be calculated by adding the interaction points and the curriculum points together. The total score will be out of a maximum of 800 points.

2025-2026 ratings will be broken down by the following ranges:

- A score between 700-800 points will result in Exceeds Expectations rating.
- A score between 400-699 points will result in Meets Expectations rating.
- A score between 100-399 points will result in Needs Support.

2026-2027 ratings will be broken down by the following ranges:

- A score between 700 and 800 points will result in Distinguished rating.
- A score between 600 and 699 points will result in Exceeds Expectations rating.
- A score between 500 and 599 points will result in Meets Expectations rating.
- A score between 400 and 499 points will result in Approaching Expectations rating.
- A score between 100 and 399 points will result in Needs Support rating.

Interactions Points (700 pts total)	Average of all CLASS scores from the fall and the spring (<i>all classrooms</i> at a site) x 100 points*	
Curriculum Points (100 pts total)	2025-2026 Sites using an approved curriculum <i>in at least one classroom</i> will receive 100 points	2026-2027 Sites using an approved curriculum <i>in every classroom</i> will receive 100 points.
TOTAL POINTS	Interactions Points + Curriculum Points = Total Points	
QUALITY RATING	2025-2026 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exceeds Expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 700-799 points • Meets Expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 400-699 points • Needs Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 100-399 points 	2026-2027 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinguished <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 700-800 points • Exceeds Expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 600-699 points • Meets Expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 500-599 points • Approaching Expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 400-499 points • Needs Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 100-399 points

**If score replacement is necessary in one or more classrooms, external observation scores will be used when calculating the interaction points for the total as outlined in Section 6.2.1.*

6.2.3a Recognition and Consequences Based on Quality Rating Levels

VQB5 Quality Profiles, which include the site quality rating, will be posted publicly on an annual basis on EarlyChildhoodQuality.doe.virginia.gov (See Section 6.3). In addition, all programs will receive a certificate to document their annual quality rating. Displaying the certificate for public recognition is optional.

Programs that receive a rating of 499 points or below on their annual VQB5 Quality Profile will be required to participate in VDOE improvement planning. Improvement planning requirements will be differentiated based on the site’s rating, with specific requirements for those rated Approaching Expectations and Needs Support (See Section 7.3).

6.2.3b VQB5 Honor Rolls

Each fall, VDOE will publish statewide “VQB5 Honor Rolls” to recognize the top performing sites and sites who show significant improvement. These Honor Rolls are intended to elevate excellence and improvement across diverse settings, including child care centers, family day

homes, Head Start, and public schools, while shining a spotlight on educators who provide quality care for young children. By recognizing these achievements, Honor Roll sites serve as models for peers and motivate programs to continually improve, fostering stronger instructional practices, leadership, and child outcomes. In addition, Honor Rolls empower families by providing additional information about program accomplishments, helping parents make informed choices for their children’s early learning experiences.

VQB5 Honor Rolls will be awarded in three categories, as follows:

- Excellence Honor Roll recognizes sites who achieve a total rating score of 700-800 points, the highest possible rating in VQB5, serving as national exemplars.
 - For Fall 2026, this will be sites who receive an Exceeds Expectations rating of 700-800 points.
 - For Fall 2027, this will be sites who receive a Distinguished rating of 700-800 points.
- Infant/Toddler Honor Roll will recognize top interactions performance in infant and toddler classrooms in child care centers and family day homes.
- Improvement Honor Roll will recognize sites who demonstrate significant improvement in interactions from one year to the next.

Honor Roll recipients will be recognized publicly on the [VQB5 Quality Profile website](#) and will receive certificates to document their achievements. Displaying the Honor Roll certificate is optional. In addition, each site’s individual performance profile will highlight Honor Roll achievements, providing families and stakeholders with clear visibility into the site’s commitment to quality.

Ready Regions will also celebrate Honor Roll achievements at the regional level through public recognition efforts, such as announcements at meetings or events, on social media, and other communication channels to demonstrate the impact of quality early learning across local communities.

6.2.3c VQB5 Rating Scale Change Transition Timeline

VDOE will take the following steps to help VQB5 sites and families understand the transition from the current 3-level rating scale to a 5-level rating scale in VQB5.

Timeline	Transition Steps
Summer 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During 2025–2026 Data Verification each site will receive their official 3-level rating as well as a “preview” rating showing what their rating would look like on the new 5-level scale (See Section 6.4 for Data Verification information).

Fall 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2025-2026 VQB5 Quality Profiles will be publicly-released using the 3-level rating scale. VQB5 Quality Profiles website will only include the 3-level scale for participating programs. • All VQB5 sites who receive a quality profile in the fall of 2026 will receive email notification from VDOE about the upcoming rating levels change, which will again include a “preview rating” showing what their current rating would look like on the new 5-level rating scale. • General resources for families and the field will be posted on the VQB5 Quality Profile website to explain the upcoming rating levels change. • Sites who receive a Needs Support rating are required to participate in site improvement planning during the 2026-2027 year (See Section 7.3.2). • Meets Expectations sites with a score of 400–499 points will be notified about changes to site improvement planning requirements that will go into effect in the fall of 2027 (See Section 7.3.2).
Winter/Spring 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing communication from VDOE and Ready Regions to keep families and the field informed about the rating levels change via emails, newsletters, and state/regional webinars
Summer 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2026-2027 Data Verification for VQB5 occurs using the new 5-level rating scale (See Section 6.4 for Data Verification information).
Fall 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2026-2027 Quality Profiles published using the new 5-level rating scale. • Resources for families and the field posted on the VQB5 Quality Profile website to explain the rating levels change. • Sites who receive a Needs Support rating are required to participate in site improvement planning during the 2026-2027 year (See Section 7.3.2). • Sites who receive an Approaching Expectations rating are required to participate in site improvement planning during the 2026-2027 year (See Section 7.3.2).

6.3 VQB5 QUALITY PROFILES

As established by the Board of Education, all VQB5 participating sites will receive an annual VQB5 quality profile. The VQB5 public profiles will be posted each fall on EarlyChildhoodQuality.doe.virginia.gov.

At the end of each program year, VDOE will use 1) site performance information and 2) other site information entered in LinkB5 to create the VQB5 Quality Profiles for all publicly-funded sites and any non-publicly-funded sites who opted to participate. VQB5 Quality Profiles will include the following two parts:

- 1) **Site Performance** – This includes the overall site quality rating as well as information about interactions and curriculum performance by age-level. Historical performance information is included for returning sites. Honor Roll achievement is included for sites recognized for excellence, infant/toddler quality, and/or significant improvement.
- 2) **Site Information** - This includes basic site information, such as location, age-levels served, and hours of operation entered in LinkB5. This may also include other topics to be determined, such as type of public funding received, optional ECE care services provided at the site.

6.4 DATA VERIFICATION PROCESS

All sites that are receiving a VQB5 quality profile can participate in a data verification process prior to profiles and rating information being made public. This will provide sites with an opportunity to update or verify information, review any score replacements that have taken place, or request corrections prior to the information becoming publicly available.

- No later than July 15, sites will receive notice via email that draft profiles are uploaded in LinkB5.
- Sites have 10 business days to log in to LinkB5 and review data in the draft profiles uploaded.
- Sites have the opportunity to contact the VDOE with any corrections or concerns with the data by completing the online form linked in the instructions provided in the draft profile.

Data verification is the final opportunity sites will receive to review, confirm, and if needed, contest any data or rating information that will be included in the VQB5 Quality Profile.

Ready Regions and VDOE's VQB5 team will provide support to site administrators during the verification period. Ready Regions and sites will be informed again of score replacements during the Data Verification process prior to the publication of any profiles or ratings. (See Section 4.7 for score replacement protocol.)

At the conclusion of the data verification process, VDOE will make changes to quality profiles as necessary, and finalize quality profiles before publication.

6.5 VQB5 FORMAL REVIEW PROCESSES

To ensure the integrity of the VQB5 system, VDOE will provide the following structured processes for programs to request formal reviews of decisions related to site/classroom eligibility, observation results, curriculum approval, practice ratings, and other applicable topics.

- Site/Classroom Enrollment Minimums (See Section 3.2.2)
- Site/Classroom Closure Request (See Section 3.3)
- CLASS Observation Review Request (See Section 4.9)
- Curriculum Review Request (See Section 5.2.1)
- Data Verification (See Section 6.4)

SECTION 7: SUPPORTING CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

7.1 QUALITY MEASUREMENT SUPPORTS IMPROVEMENT

Through the VQB5 system, all birth-to-five early learning programs will participate in ongoing quality improvement. All programs benefit from a shared vision for quality early teaching and learning. Identifying the core components of quality teaching and learning and aligning all improvement resources to these core components helps organize the system. Doing so helps ensure that each level of the system can create aligned targets for improvement and measure success in similar ways. Research has shown systems that focus on simple and consistent measures of quality can provide a feeling of control for educators and can result in significant gains across all program types.¹¹

Quality improvement takes place on multiple levels within Virginia’s system: state, regional, and local implementation partners, program leaders, and classroom educators. Systems-level work to improve effectiveness and outcomes impacts—and is impacted by—change on the program and implementing partners’ levels.¹²

To improve child outcomes, Virginia’s system continually improves supports for educators, prioritizing those who need it most. VQB5 must ensure that:

- **Educators**, including those in family day homes, centers, and school sites, receive consistent observations and frequent feedback on their teaching practice. Professional support and coaching are data-driven and responsive to specific needs.
- **Program leaders**, such as child care directors, principals, or early childhood coordinators, receive frequent information about the strengths and areas for growth within their program(s).
- **Improvement partners**, such as organizations that are contracted to provide technical assistance (coaching, mentoring, and consultation), training, professional development and other supports to early childhood programs, have accurate and current data to inform their work. They use data to design and measure the success of improvement supports based on the detailed information known about each region, site, and classroom (See list of VDOE-funded improvement partners in Section 7.4).

¹¹ Bassok, D., & Markowitz, A. (n.d.). *The value of systemwide, high-quality data in early childhood education*. Brown Center Chalkboard.

¹² Billie, Y., & BUILD initiative. (2017). *Continuous Quality Improvement in Early Childhood and School Age Programs: An Update from the Field*.

While VQB5’s unified approach to measurement and improvement benefits all programs and teachers, it places intentional focus on those most in need of support to ensure every child receives a high-quality early learning experience.

7.1.1 CYCLE OF CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

An important feature of VQB5 is that measurement, feedback, and supports are ongoing and frequent. Educators and leaders have opportunities to measure their progress multiple times a year. At the same time, reflection on data is embedded throughout the measurement cycle. This leads to continuous growth, year over year.

The continuous quality improvement cycle is applicable to all programs that are participating in VQB5. Programs with the most demonstrated need receive additional resources and have additional expectations throughout the annual cycle. The expectations for programs that are not meeting the state’s expectations can be found in Section 7.4.



7.2 USING DATA TO TARGET SUPPORTS FOR INTERACTIONS AND CURRICULUM

Analysis of 2024-2025 VQB5 Quality Ratings from returning sites provided important insights into program improvement trends and areas for growth. As noted earlier, in Section 2.7, many sites demonstrated strong performance, with nearly all meeting or exceeding the state’s current quality expectations, and overall rating scores improved across site types. Family day homes

showed the greatest average improvement, and fewer sites received a Needs Support rating compared to the previous year.

At the same time, the data revealed the following challenges that are being used to inform improvement efforts for the 2026-2027 year.

- Only about half of returning sites (53%) showed gains in teacher-child interaction scores (i.e., total site CLASS score).
- The range of interactions point change varied greatly across all site types, from a 209-point decrease to a 224-point increase.
- The most common experience for all returning sites was a modest three-point improvement in interactions points.
- The range of quality rating scores from lowest to highest score varied greatly, with low and high performers across all site types.
- Only 14% of sites rated 400–499 points participated in state coaching, even though coaching is an effective way to improve interactions that better prepare all children for kindergarten.

These patterns highlight the importance of strengthening the use of VQB5 data not only to recognize progress but also to identify targeted strategies for strengthening interactions and supporting consistent growth across all settings.

The VDOE works closely with Ready Regions and improvement partners to use the following site, classroom, and educator data, to inform the improvement supports available to VQB5 programs. This data is also publicly available for use by the ECCE field on the [VQB5 Quality Profile website via the Download Data](#) tab:

- 2024-2025 Data Files
 - VQB5 Quality Profile and Ratings Data
 - VQB5 Honor Roll Data
 - Approved Curriculum Used in VQB5 Sites
 - Virginia Statewide External CLASS Averages
- 2023-2024 VQB5 Quality Profile and Ratings Data
- 2025-2026 VQB5 Participation Data
- 2019-2025 Virginia Access and Workforce Data

Ready Regions and site administrators can also access additional site, classroom, and educator data from within the LinkB5 data portal, under the ‘Reports’ tab to support improvement planning and to measure progress over time. School divisions and other community partners who support improvement in early childhood programs are encouraged to connect with their local Ready Region to learn more about local/regional strengths and needs in VQB5 programs.

7.2.1 PREPARING EDUCATORS FOR CLASS OBSERVATIONS

Before classroom observations are conducted, teachers and program leaders need to understand what is being measured and why. Data gathered from educator profiles in LinkB5 during the 2024-2025 year indicated that teachers who reported receiving CLASS training scored higher on CLASS on average, across all age-levels (See Appendix A). Ready Regions are funded to provide teachers and leaders who are new to CLASS with opportunities to complete foundational CLASS training prior to being observed. This is an especially important support for child care centers and assistant teachers given their particularly high turnover rates.¹³

During foundational training, teachers and program leaders view videos from real classrooms to view effective teaching practices in action in alignment with the domains and dimensions in CLASS. Foundational CLASS training also provides information about what teachers can expect when an observer comes to their classroom as well as an overview of the types of information they will receive after an observation.

Foundational CLASS training for teachers focuses on the CLASS tool that covers the age-level of the children in their classroom, including how the CLASS tool organizes interactions by domains and dimensions, for a specific age-level. Foundational CLASS training for program leaders focuses on CLASS tools for different age-levels in the program. Foundational CLASS training is different from reliable observer training in that it is much shorter and accessible via online and in-person options.

7.2.2 PROVIDING FEEDBACK ON CLASS OBSERVATIONS TO SUPPORT IMPROVEMENT

In VQB5, all site leaders and teachers benefit from receiving frequent and specific feedback provided through CLASS observations conducted at least twice a year at the local level in every classroom, and at least once at every site within each age-level served by the external observation contractor. Providing program leaders and teachers with quality feedback regarding their local and external CLASS observations is a critical component of VQB5 improvement supports.

7.2.2a Local Observation Feedback

One of the largest benefits of local CLASS observations in VQB5 is that teachers receive more frequent feedback on their practice, at least twice a year from a local individual who already supports their practice (such as when the observer is a site leader). This feedback provides teachers with an opportunity to recognize growth and provides program leaders with a complete reflection of what children are experiencing throughout the year. When surveyed, site leaders

¹³ Bassok, D., Fares, I., & Denker, H. (2024, December). Turnover Rates Remain Among Virginia's Early Educators: New Evidence from 2023-2024. Study of Early Education through Partnerships.

and teachers at VQB5 sites frequently mention “individualized feedback” as one of the most positive parts of participating in VQB5.

Ready Regions are responsible for ensuring all local observers have training and support in providing individualized strengths-based feedback. The following feedback steps should be used to prepare for and guide effective feedback sessions for local CLASS observations;

- Start with a general conversation and work to make teachers feel comfortable.
- Orient teachers to the structure of the local feedback form.
- Review dimension- and domain-level scores, which includes reminding the teacher about the focus of each dimension/domain and calling attention to score range trends. (i.e., scores in the high range, mid range, low range).
- Highlight areas of strength (focus on the positive first) and then one area for growth within each domain, unpacking specific examples.
 - If the teacher has had a previous CLASS observation, this step should also include highlighting areas of growth from the last observation.
 - Help teachers understand how their results compare to [Virginia CLASS Data Averages](#).
- Work with teachers to determine a dimension or one aspect of a dimension to be an area of focus.
- Discuss how teachers can focus on this area of interactions in the coming weeks in their daily classroom interactions with children.
- Identify specific strategies or action steps that teachers can do to practice implementing quality interactions with children in a targeted manner, such as referring the teacher to the [CLASS Dimension Guide](#) strategy tip pages.
- Connect teachers to additional CLASS resources and information about other professional development options for ongoing improvement support.

Results and feedback from local observations can also be used by program leaders to inform program-level goals as well as goals for individualized professional development, within the context of infant, toddler, and preschool settings.

7.2.2b Using Feedback from External Observations to Support Teachers

External observations result in feedback for teachers as well. External observations provide an additional opportunity for feedback and help ensure that observation results are used consistently to support improvement and assess growth over time. Site leaders and Ready Regions should use the external observation feedback report along with the more individualized feedback from local observations to guide professional development for teachers.

The external observation feedback report template has been standardized to ensure feedback is being provided in a consistent and timely manner statewide.

- Virginia’s External CLASS score averages are included in the report so that teachers can compare their individual domain- and dimension-level scores to statewide results.
- Score ranges (low, mid, high) from the external observation are used to generate automated dimension and indicator level feedback, including tailored examples of improvement strategies drawn from resources like the CLASS Dimensions Guide.
- Detailed guidance for helping teachers reflect on their domain, dimension and indicator level results can be found in the [Understanding and Using Your External Feedback Report](#) document.

Primary site administrators are responsible for sharing external feedback reports with other appropriate site administrators and teachers in a timely manner. Sites are also encouraged to share external feedback reports with their Ready Region and other partners who support improvement. Sample external feedback reports for each age-level are provided for on the [Virginia External Observations website](#).

7.2.3 SUPPORT ON CLASS FOR ONGOING IMPROVEMENT

Results from local observations are used by instructional leaders to inform ongoing professional development and assess growth in teacher-child interactions over time. Increasing capacity and knowledge of quality interactions at the local level promotes shared understandings of the strong principles of high-quality teaching in early childhood settings that are highlighted in the CLASS tool. Having program or school division leaders and improvement partners trained to reliability in CLASS enables them to bring the CLASS lens to every aspect of their work.

Site Leaders and Improvement Partners can use the CLASS score ranges below to determine next steps when focusing on classroom-level improvement.

- CLASS scores in the High Range (score of 6-7) indicate areas of strength. Classrooms with domain/dimension scores in the high range should share their effective teaching practices with peers.
- CLASS scores in the Mid Range (score of 3-5) indicate areas to build upon. Classrooms with domain/dimension scores in the mid range should build upon the effective practices that they are already using to strengthen their teacher-child interactions. (Suggested strategies listed below.)
- CLASS scores in the Low Range (score of 1-2) indicate areas for improvement. Classrooms with domain/dimension scores in the low range should learn about effective teaching practices by participating in foundational CLASS training (See Section 7.2.1).

Additional improvement strategies and resources can be found on the [VQB5 Supporting Continuous Quality Improvement Webpage](#).

7.2.3a CLASS Coaching in VQB5

Coaching is designed to build capacity for specific professional dispositions, skills, and behaviors and is focused on goal setting and achievement for an individual or group.

- Coaching supports the development of specific skills and practices focused on performance-based outcome(s) and uses relevant data to determine needs and measure progress.
- Coaching occurs through multiple planned sessions and concludes when the specified goal has been achieved.
- Coaching may be provided in-person or virtually through distance, technology-based, or hybrid methods.

In VQB5, coaching is generally considered to be “Instructional Coaching” because it specifically aims to improve instructional practices focused on teacher-child interactions, as measured by CLASS, resulting in improved child outcomes. VDOE recommends that VQB5 coaching include the use of [Practice-Based Coaching](#) strategies with site leaders and teachers to support continuous quality improvement.

During the 2026-2027 year, VDOE will use the following criteria to determine which sites, classrooms, and/or educators should be prioritized for [state coaching supports](#).

2026-2027 VQB5 State Coaching Priorities		VQB5 Data Source
Sites	Sites with a quality rating of 499 points or lower (See Section 7.3 for details).	Annual Quality Profiles <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Total quality rating points (Interactions + Curriculum)
Classrooms	Classrooms with a total CLASS score of 3.99 or lower on a fall or spring observation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fall/Spring Local CLASS scores (LinkB5)• Fall/Spring External CLASS score reports
Educators	New teachers with less than one year of early childhood experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fall/Spring Educator Profile Information (LinkB5)

Coaches supporting VQB5 programs use site and/or classroom results from the most recent local and/or external CLASS observations along with information about curriculum use to identify specific areas for improvement, set improvement goals, and create an individualized coaching action plan. Scores from future observations are also used to assess growth in teacher-child interactions and to determine future coaching needs.

Programs and regions may also want to consider using other professional development funding to support internal coaching capacity to target specific site and classroom-level needs and priorities using the guidance and data sources listed above.

7.2.4 TARGETED SUPPORTS FOR CURRICULUM

Quality curriculum options include professional development resources and materials to support educators to effectively implement curriculum to support children’s learning. Professional development materials should be used by educators, leaders, trainers, and coaches to provide initial training and ongoing support to implement curriculum effectively and to support continuous improvement in teacher-child interaction and learning.

Choosing, accessing, and implementing an approved curriculum can strengthen quality improvement in VQB5. Sites and classrooms least likely to have access to curriculum are prioritized for curriculum support, training, and technical assistance. VQB5 participating programs can learn more about resources to support curriculum use on the [VDOE Early Childhood Curriculum webpage](#).

The VDOE has partnered with [STREAMin3](#) to provide a high-quality low-to-no-cost curriculum option to Virginia’s early learning programs. The partnership aims to:

- Provide access to a low-to-no cost comprehensive, birth-through-preschool, curriculum.
- Develop sustainable resources so programs can use the curriculum and professional development resources beyond the initial rollout years at low-to-no cost.

Publicly-funded programs in Virginia have access to the STREAMin³ curriculum and professional development, including sites previously without access to VDOE-approved curriculum. Sites with CLASS scores below the state’s quality expectations may also be prioritized for STREAMin³ coaching.

7.2.4a Connection between CLASS and Quality Curricula

It should also be noted that some aspects of a quality curriculum help reinforce behaviors that are aligned with the behavior markers measured by the CLASS tool. High quality curriculum offers guidance on how to individualize activities to help teachers be more responsive to children’s individual strengths and needs, which can improve the quality of interactions and lead to improved CLASS scores. Data from VQB5 2024-2025 indicated that classrooms who reported using a VDOE-approved curriculum scored higher on the CLASS across all three age groups, particularly in the instructional focused domains. (See Appendix A).

To support VQB5 programs in understanding how high-quality curriculum can be used to improve the quality of teacher-child interactions as measured by CLASS, VDOE has developed the resources below outlining how CLASS domains connect to high quality curriculum.

- [CLASS and Curriculum Connections Infant/Toddler](#)
- [CLASS and Curriculum Connections Pre-K](#)

7.3 REQUIRED IMPROVEMENT PLANNING FOR SITES WHO DO NOT MEET EXPECTATIONS

Publicly-funded programs that do not receive a Meets Expectations rating or higher will be required to participate in additional improvement activities through Site Improvement Planning in order to maintain public funding.

Site Improvement Planning is the formal mechanism for 1) prioritizing improvement resources and opportunities for sites that have demonstrated the most need, and 2) monitoring progress throughout the performance year to ensure sites are not repeatedly flagged for needing support.

VQB5 Site Improvement Planning is grounded in a four-step process for program success. This process is designed to focus on the use of VQB5 data to identify strengths, analyze needs, plan strategically, and monitor progress with rigor and transparency.

- Step 1: Complete Needs Assessment - identify, understand, and prioritize the needs that must be addressed in order to improve interactions performance, as measured by CLASS.
- Step 2: Develop Quality Improvement Plan - transform findings from the needs assessment into a focused, actionable improvement plan.
- Step 3: Implement Improvement Plan and Monitor Progress – execute plan as intended and monitor progress regularly, making adjustments when needed.
- Step 4: Progress Reporting and Reflection – complete progress reports at the end of the fall and spring observation windows, detailing successes and ongoing challenges.

This approach reflects a commitment to data-informed decision-making, strong state and local collaboration, and evidence-based action. Together, these elements create a robust and sustainable model for improving children’s experiences in VQB5 classrooms most in need.

Improvement Planning for sites who do not meet the state’s quality expectations will be led and/or determined by the VDOE. Improvement planning requirements will be differentiated based on the site’s rating, with the intensity, focus, and options tailored for those rated Approaching Expectations and Needs Support as described in the following sections.

Sites meeting or exceeding expectations are encouraged to use or adapt the improvement planning process within their own program to strengthen quality in classrooms who may benefit from additional support. Use of the improvement planning process for sites who are meeting or exceeding expectations is not required.

7.3.1 COACHING REQUIREMENTS FOR NEEDS SUPPORT SITES

Sites who receive a Needs Support rating will be assigned a coach in September and will be required to participate in regular CLASS-focused coaching sessions as part of their annual Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) requirements, with coaching sessions beginning in October. Coaching for Needs Support sites is conducted by a contracted party, selected by the VDOE. In 2024, the VDOE conducted a competitive process to identify a contractor to serve as the state-funded coaching partner for Needs Support sites. The Virginia Early Childhood Consultation (VECC) team at The Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) at the University of Virginia was awarded the contract as of July 2024 and will continue as the coaching contractor for sites who receive a Needs Support rating during the 2026-2027 year.

All Needs Support sites will receive specific deadlines for completing required improvement activities in their Quality Improvement Plan as outlined below. Sites that do not complete required site improvement activities by the deadlines outlined in their QIP will put their public funds at risk (See Section 7.3.1c).

7.3.1a Quality Consultant Responsibilities for Needs Support sites

Any site that receives a Needs Support rating will be paired with a Quality Consultant. Quality Consultants are employees of or contracted through the VDOE. Each Quality Consultant will be assigned a small caseload of Needs Support sites by July 15 to conduct the following Quality Improvement Planning Steps:

1. Quality Consultant will complete initial in-person visit and needs assessment by August 15, which will include:
 - a. Building rapport and establishing initial expectations.
 - b. Reviewing required annual registration process and VQB5 eligibility requirements (e.g., LinkB5 screener questions).
 - c. Assisting with completion of site and teacher self-assessments of areas of strength and areas for improvement.
2. Quality Consultant will develop annual QIP with the site by September 1 which includes:
 - a. Setting goals and clear deadlines related to completion of required VQB5 activities, teacher-child interactions, and curriculum use (if applicable) using information on current need found in the 2025-2026 VQB5 Site Quality rating results.

- b. Sharing a copy of the QIP with Ready Regions and the identified state coaching partner once completed, to ensure all involved parties are aware of site goals, action steps, and deadlines.
3. Quality Consultant will complete monitoring of site QIP progress throughout the year:
 - a. Quality Consultant will meet with the site once a month or an agreed upon frequency as specified in the QIP. Meetings may be in-person or virtual.
 - b. Quality Consultant will conduct ongoing monitoring to ensure QIP goals related to required VQB5 activities and coaching sessions are completed by the specified deadlines.
 - c. In January, VDOE will facilitate mid-year progress meetings with each applicable Ready Region, Quality Consultant(s), and state coaching partner. This meeting will be used to review QIP progress and to determine if any adjustments are needed to the QIP for the remainder of the year.
4. Quality Consultant will close out of the annual QIP by May 31:
 - a. Prior to the end of the spring observation window, the Quality Consultant will meet with the site to review spring observation results and other goal progress.
 - b. In June, VDOE will facilitate an end of year progress meeting with each applicable Ready Region, Quality Consultant(s), and state coaching partner. This meeting will be used to review final QIP Progress and to determine if additional improvement supports are needed for the upcoming year.
 - c. By June 30, sites will receive a final notification from VDOE outlining required and/or recommended improvement planning activities for the upcoming year, based on each site's individual needs.

The VDOE may alter or adapt this process as needed to address the unique needs of Needs Support sites.

7.3.1b Ineligible Needs Support Sites

Needs Support sites who are determined to be ineligible for VQB5 during the 2026-2027 registration process as outlined in Section 3.2 will participate in a modified quality improvement process. This will include monthly Quality Consultant check-ins and/or Ready Region engagement in applicable training for future VQB5 participation based on site needs.

7.3.1c Consequences for Needs Support Sites Who Do Not Complete Required Site Improvement Activities

Below are the steps that the VDOE will take in the case that a Needs Support site does not complete one or more required activities, with the goal of avoiding consequences for Needs Support sites.

- If the QIP is not completed by September 1, sites will be notified in writing by VDOE that they are out of compliance. This notification will clarify that they have 10 business days from receipt to complete the QIP.
 - If the site does not complete the QIP within 10 business days, VDOE will send a second written communication regarding non-compliance. This second notification will inform the site, in writing, that they continue to be in noncompliance and will inform them that if they do not comply in 30 days their participation in the applicable public funding program/s will be terminated.
- If a scheduled Quality Consultant meeting or coaching session does not occur, it must be rescheduled within 10 business days.
 - If the meeting or coaching session does not occur on the rescheduled date, sites will be notified in writing by VDOE that they are out of compliance. This notification will clarify that they have 10 business days from receipt to complete the meeting/coaching session.
 - If the site does not complete the meeting/coaching session within 10 business days, VDOE will send a second written communication regarding non-compliance. This second notification will inform the site, in writing, that they continue to be in noncompliance and inform them that if they do not comply in 30 days their participation in the applicable public funding program(s) will be terminated.

VDOE will work with leaders from each public funding authority to establish additional notification procedures and follow up steps for Needs Support sites, with the goal of ensuring programs have the opportunity to meet site improvement requirements and any unintended consequences or burden on families is limited to the extent possible.

The VDOE will monitor and assess progress for Needs Support sites at the mid and end of year. If a Needs Support site does not meet the state’s established quality expectations for multiple years, the required level of support will be escalated to ensure improvement, which may include more frequent coaching, enhanced oversight, and other corrective actions as determined by the state. VDOE will also work with leaders from each public funding authority to determine if additional follow-up steps are needed with the goal of ensuring sites have support to improve.

7.3.2 COACHING REQUIREMENTS FOR APPROACHING EXPECTATIONS SITES (STARTING IN FALL 2027)

Starting in the fall of 2027, sites receiving a rating of Approaching Expectations (400–499 points) will be required to engage in coaching as part of the site improvement process to advance toward meeting VQB5’s quality expectations. Sites may satisfy this requirement through one of two pathways: (1) enroll in free, state-supported coaching services offered through VECC, ITSN, STREAMin3, or TTAC, or (2) opt-out of state coaching and submit a comprehensive Needs

Assessment and Improvement Plan for review and approval by VDOE. Sites that refuse to participate in either option will lose eligibility for public funding, ensuring accountability and alignment with statewide quality expectations.

7.3.2a Preparing for Change – Coaching Transition Timeline for sites with 400-499 points

VDOE will take the following steps to inform and support sites who receive 400-499 points on their 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 rating:

Timeline	Transition Steps
Summer 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meets Expectation sites with a score of 400-499 points on their 2025-2026 rating will be notified about free state coaching options along with information about the upcoming ratings level change and improvement planning requirements. Participation in state coaching is not required.
Fall 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meets Expectations sites with a score of 400–499 points on their 2025-2026 rating will receive a second notification about the changes to site improvement planning requirements that will go into effect in the fall of 2027. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sites who are not yet working with a state coaching partner will have the option to sign up for fall coaching, based on state coaching availability.
Winter 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meets Expectations sites with a score of 400–499 points on their 2025-2026 rating will receive a third notification about the changes to site improvement planning requirements that will go into effect in the fall of 2027. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sites who are not yet working with a state coaching partner will have the option to sign up for spring coaching, based on state coaching availability.
Summer 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sites who receive an Approaching Expectations rating are notified about required site improvement planning options for the 2027-2028 year. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ By August 31, site leader must (1) enroll in free, state-supported coaching services, or (2) opt-out of state coaching and submit a comprehensive Needs Assessment and Improvement Plan for review and approval by VDOE. ○ Publicly-funded sites who refuse to participate in either option will be notified in writing by VDOE are out of compliance with the law and will be given a timebound deadline to meet required

	improvement planning steps in order to maintain access to public funding.
Fall 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sites who receive an Approaching Expectations rating required to begin working with state coaching partner (or) on quality improvement plan activities approved by VDOE. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Approaching Expectation sites who are determined to be ineligible for VQB5 during the 2027-2028 registration process as outlined in Section 3.2 will participate in a modified quality improvement process. This may include Quality Consultant check-ins and/or Ready Region engagement in applicable trainings for future VQB5 participation based on site needs.

The VDOE will monitor and assess progress for Approaching Expectation sites at the mid and end of year. If an Approaching Expectations site does not meet the state’s established quality expectations for multiple years, the required level of support will be escalated to ensure improvement, which may include more frequent coaching, enhanced oversight, and other corrective actions as determined by the state. VDOE will also work with leaders from each public funding authority to determine if additional follow-up steps are needed with the goal of ensuring sites have support to improve.

VDOE may alter or adapt this process prior to the 2027-2028 year as needed to address the unique needs of “Approaching Expectations” sites.

7.4 VIRGINIA’S IMPROVEMENT PARTNERS – SUPPORTS AND STRATEGIES FOR COORDINATION

Virginia has multiple quality improvement partners that provide professional development support to birth-to-five educators in alignment with the goals and measured objectives of VQB5.

Through VQB5, the VDOE will continue to strengthen the coordination and alignment of all state- and federally-funded quality improvement efforts to ensure VQB5 programs have the support they need. This includes ensuring supports are available consistently across Ready Regions.

The following list includes the quality improvement partners that the VDOE is currently working with and provide funding arrangements for through either federal or state funding sources. These providers are currently responsible for working with birth-to-five programs to provide training, coaching, or coursework intended to improve the early childhood system. (See Appendix D for definitions of professional development terms used for VQB5 improvement partner services).

List of VDOE Quality Improvement Partners Anticipated for 2026-2027 VQB5 (List may be further updated in summer 2026, based on FY27 agreements.)

VDOE Quality Improvement Partners: <i>Classroom and Site Support</i>	Primary Purpose	Eligible Participants	Cost for eligible participants
Virginia Infant & Toddler Specialist Network (VA ITSN)	<p>The purpose of VA-ITSN is to support the experience and improvement of infant and toddler classrooms across all publicly-funded child care and family day homes in Virginia, to ensure every infant and toddler classroom meets expectations under VQB5.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coaching services targeted to VQB5 classrooms with the lowest Infant and Toddler CLASS scores. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ VQB5 programs ✓ Some trainings available to non-publicly-funded programs 	Free
Virginia Early Childhood Consultation (VECC)	<p>Coaching and consultation services for sites who receive a Needs Support rating. The VECC program supports the skills of leaders and teachers to improve the quality of interactions by 1) promoting healthy social-emotional environments, 2) teaching behaviors to help children develop behavioral regulation, positive relationships, and social skills, and 3) responding to behavioral challenges effectively in collaboration with families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ VQB5 Need Support Sites ✓ Lower performing VQB5 sites - determined by VDOE 	Free
VDOE Quality Improvement Partners: <i>Special Education Support</i>	Primary Purpose	Eligible Participants	Cost for Eligible Participants
Training and Technical Assistance Centers (TTAC)	<p>Provide professional development, technical assistance, and resources to school divisions, programs, and classrooms serving children ages 2-5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ School divisions ✓ VQB5 child care centers 	Free

	with Individualized Education Programs (IEP).	with children with IEPs	
VCU Autism Center for Excellence Early Childhood (VCU-ACE)	Provide professional development, technical assistance, and resources to school divisions, programs, and classrooms serving children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) ages 2-5 with IEPs and to families raising and supporting young children with ASD.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ School divisions ✓ VQB5 child care centers with children with ASD 	Free
Early Childhood Special Education Consortium (ECSE Consortium)	Partnership with Radford University and Lynchburg University to provide tuition assistance to Virginia preservice and in-service teachers pursuing the courses leading to licensure in Early Childhood Special Education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ College students seeking ECSE licensure ✓ Provisionally licensed teachers seeking ECSE licensure 	Free
VDOE Quality Improvement Partners: <i>Head Start Support</i>	Primary Purpose	Eligible Participants	Cost for Eligible Participants
Virginia Head Start Association (VHSA)	Provide training and advocacy support to enhance the growth of Head Start educators, agencies, partners, and others who impact the lives of Head Start children and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Head Start and Early Head Start programs 	Free Service Area Networks
VDOE Quality Improvement Partners: <i>Workforce Support</i>	Primary Purpose	Eligible Participants	Cost for Eligible Participants

Virginia Early Educator Scholarship Program (VEESP)	Provide tuition assistance for the early care and education workforce to complete undergraduate courses in early childhood education.	✓ All child care and family day home educators	Free
VDOE Quality Improvement Partners: <i>Focus on Principles of Early Learning and Development</i>	Primary Purpose	Eligible Participants	Cost for Eligible Participants
Early Learning Standards Microcredential	Online training courses on the learning guidelines for children ages birth-to-five, resulting in a microcredential. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special focus on supporting family day home and child care educators. 	✓ All birth-to-five programs	Free
STREAMin3 Curriculum Model and PD Support	Low-to-no cost comprehensive birth-to-five curriculum option. Online materials and PD tools available to all publicly-funded early childhood programs in Virginia. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaching services targeted to VQB5 sites/classrooms using STREAMin3 with low CLASS scores. 	✓ VQB5 programs	Free/Low-Cost
Wolf Trap Early Childhood STEM Learning Through the Arts Initiative	Provide on-site and online training in Early Childhood STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) and Literacy.	✓ School divisions, PK-1st grade	Free
VDOE Quality Improvement Partners: <i>Health, Safety, and Operations Support</i>	Primary Purpose	Eligible Participants	Cost for Eligible Participants

Better Kid Care - Penn State Extension	Online courses used to meet licensing and subsidy health and safety requirements.	✓ All child care programs	Free
Child Care Resource and Referral (Child Care Aware of Virginia)	Provide resource and referral services to connect families with high quality child care that is available and accessible in Virginia, and to provide professional development for child care programs on topics of health and safety (e.g., CPR/first aid and emergency preparedness training), strengthening business practices, and participating in the Child Care Subsidy Program.	✓ All child care programs	Free
Community College Workforce Alliance - Child Care Provider Training (CCWA)	Distance learning courses to meet health and safety requirements.	✓ All child care and family day home educators	Free

In addition to the many quality supports listed here, Virginia’s early childhood landscape has a history of working with various early childhood accreditation organizations. These include organizations such as NAEYC, NAC, NAFCC, NECPA, and Cognia, to name a few. While the function and requirements for each accreditation program varies, the primary purpose is to support professionalization and improvement. Accreditation organizations that provide improvement supports related to quality interactions and curriculum are also a key support for programs who have selected to seek accreditation.

7.4.1 SUPPORTING IMPROVEMENT PARTNERS

The Quality Improvement Partners listed above are essential to the success of VQB5. With the most direct access into birth-to-five classrooms, ensuring ongoing support for quality interactions and curriculum through the coordination of these critical groups will be essential in VQB5.

The VDOE has several strategies for supporting Improvement Partners to collaborate and coordinate approaches for using VQB5 data to support VQB5 participating programs:

1. **Coaching Collaborative:** Series of state and regional meetings to promote sharing/problem solving across Ready Regions and state coaching partners who provide coaching to VQB5 programs for improving the quality of teacher-child interactions as measured by CLASS.

2. **Improvement Partner Webinars:** Webinars for professional development providers to increase understanding about VQB5 and how improvement partners can support programs participating in VQB5. Webinars also provide ongoing opportunities for improvement partners to provide feedback to VDOE on approaches for supporting improvement efforts.
3. **Professional Development Resources:** Resources for supporting improvement are available for VQB5 program leaders and improvement partners through the [VQB5 Supporting Continuous Quality Improvement webpage](#).

7.4.2 ROLE OF READY REGIONS WITH IMPROVEMENT PARTNERS

Ready Regions also help sites connect with the specific improvement resources programs need. Through this regional structure, all programs have a regional source for finding and connecting to the improvement partners that will best support them, based on their needs as established through VQB5.

Ready Regions are required to collaborate with existing improvement partners to coordinate the implementation of professional development activities that support quality interactions and curriculum, which include:

- Attending Needs Support Site Progress meetings if applicable, in January and June, facilitated by VDOE, alongside Quality Consultants and VECC (See Section 7.3).
- Collaborating with improvement partners to coordinate interactions-support activities, prioritizing sites with a 400-499 rating, and other VQB5 classrooms and educators that need support the most (as defined in section 7.2.3a).
 - At a minimum, RRs must convene a quarterly meeting with Infant & Toddler Specialist Network (ITSN) and Virginia’s Training and Technical Assistance Centers (TTAC) to review VQB5 data together.
- Sharing information about professional development options and opportunities offered by state, regional, and local partners with VQB5 sites during fall and spring observation windows.

7.5 ADDITIONAL FOCUS AREAS FOR SUPPORT

7.5.1 SUPPORTS FOR CLASSROOMS THAT SERVE CHILDREN WITH DELAYS AND DISABILITIES

The CLASS tool assesses teacher-child interactions—a critical factor in the development of all learners, including those with developmental delays and disabilities. By focusing on Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support, CLASS captures foundational practices that align with special education priorities. The CLASS dimensions found within each domain are based on developmental research and demonstrated to be the most effective ways to

improve learning outcomes and promote development of young children, including those who are at-risk for or have been identified with developmental delays or disabilities. The Division for Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) provides Recommended Practices to bridge the gap between research and practice and offer guidance about the most effective ways to improve learning outcomes for these young children. Interactions is one of the eight Recommended Practices because these foundational practices are the basis for fostering all children's learning. For children who have or are at risk for developmental delays/disabilities, they represent a critical set of strategies for fostering children's social-emotional competence, communication, cognitive development, problem-solving, autonomy, and persistence.

The CLASS tool has been successfully used in inclusive and early childhood special education (ECSE) classrooms in Virginia and nationwide, yielding critical information to teachers and site leaders on the quality of the teacher-child interactions taking place. When observing in a classroom with children with delays and disabilities, it is helpful for observers to have a background in special education and to learn about the children prior to observing to better understand how the interactions might look when children have disabilities or developmental delays. For example, a child may use non-verbal communication, benefit from frequent sensory breaks, or require visual supports to follow directions.

- View guidance and resources for [using CLASS in classrooms that serve children with disabilities](#) on the Teachstone website.

The CLASS captures the relational and instructional core that drives progress for all learners and can be used with supplemental tools to assess the use of individualized supports and interventions. To identify additional quality improvements in inclusive classrooms, VQB5 sites in Virginia may also use the Inclusive Classroom Profile (ICP).

The ICP is a comprehensive, field-tested observational tool for classrooms serving children ages 2–5. It assesses 12 key practices with the strongest research base for supporting the education and development of young children in inclusive settings. In Virginia, the ICP has been used in many inclusive classrooms. Much of the current use of the ICP is facilitated through Virginia's Training and Technical Assistance Centers (TTAC). The ICP has been crosswalked to the CLASS tool and aligns to some of the practices examined by CLASS. The [ICP-CLASS Correlation Documents](#) developed by TTAC and VDOE demonstrate how the ICP complements the Toddler and Pre-K CLASS by providing a more in-depth look at the strategies that support young children with disabilities in inclusive settings.

The ICP is implemented by a trained observer. To increase the number of reliable users of the ICP, Virginia has developed a process to train individuals to become reliable observers at no cost to early childhood programs. ICP Virginia Reliable Observers are reliable and proficient users of

the ICP and are available to support the use of the ICP in classrooms in schools, child care, and family day homes. ICP Virginia Reliable Observer training is provided by TTAC once a year to a cohort of interested individuals. Applications for ICP Virginia Reliable Observer training open each fall with training taking place in January through April.

Ultimately, looking at CLASS data alongside the ICP will provide a more holistic view of what is happening in Virginia's inclusive classrooms. CLASS captures the quality of interactions, while ICP addresses structural and instructional elements critical for meeting the specific needs of children with disabilities. Together, these tools support dimensions of quality that ensure improvement efforts are responsive to the unique needs of all children in the classroom.

7.5.2 SUPPORTS FOR CHILD CARE AND FAMILY DAY HOMES

Equitable opportunity and access to quality improvements is central to VQB5. [VQB5 Quality Ratings data](#) from the past two years along with data from the [2024 Virginia ECE Workforce Surveys](#) demonstrate key differences between the dedicated educators who work in child care and family day homes as compared to those in settings such as public schools.¹⁴

VQB5 must recognize the disparate challenges that impact the early childhood workforce, with a focus on supporting sites that are accepting public funds. When comparing resources and opportunities for professional learning and development, there are stark inequities in what is traditionally available for private programs, such as child care centers and family day homes. In addition, when compared to public school educators, child care teachers and family day home providers consistently express a higher need and interest in having more professional development, particularly on topics related to the use of CLASS, curriculum, and social/emotional skill development to help address challenging behaviors¹⁵. Since these sites serve our most vulnerable and youngest learners and are often less resourced, investments and efforts related to improvement must prioritize access for Virginia's child care and family day homes.

During the 2026-2027 year, VDOE will fund the following efforts to specifically support publicly-funded child care centers and family day home providers to meet VQB5 legislative requirements and quality expectations.

- Ready Regions - Additional funding is provided to each Ready Region to engage and support family day home providers in each region.

¹⁴ Bassok, D. Profiles of Early Educators in Virginia in Spring 2024. (2024). Study of Early Education through Partnerships.

¹⁵ Bassok, D., & Fares, I. Spring 2024 Virginia Early Childhood Care & Education Workforce Survey Snapshot. (2024). Study of Early Education through Partnerships.

- VDOE-Sponsored Online CLASS Trainings – CLASS Observation training for program leaders and other local observers who specifically work at or conduct observations in child care centers and family day homes.
- Virginia Infant and Toddler Specialist Network (VA-ITSN) - training and technical assistance for publicly-funded child care centers and family day homes who serve children ages 0-3.
- STREAMin3 – Free/Low-cost curriculum and professional development for publicly-funded programs, prioritizing child care centers and family day home providers who are not using an approved curriculum.

7.6 ESTABLISHING PAYMENT RATES TO SUPPORT QUALITY

The General Assembly directs VDOE to establish payment rates for publicly-funded sites across all settings in Virginia—including public schools, child care centers, and family day homes—using best-in-class approaches based on the estimated cost of delivering high-quality ECCE services.

In line with prescribed best practices, per-pupil payment rates for the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) are “rebenchmarked” every two years using a formula similar to the formula supporting public K-12 education. The biennially recalculated per-pupil rate represents the totality of costs of delivering high-quality preschool services through VPI, including staffing, professional development, and classroom materials, as well as the broader resources necessary to operate a school building. VPI per-pupil rates have been calculated using this methodology since 2022, when first calculated for the 2023-2024 biennium. Costs for delivering VPI services are shared between the state and localities; a local match for each locality is based on the Local Composite Index (LCI) which is capped at 0.5000 (i.e., a locality with an LCI of .75 would be capped at .5 or 50% of the total per pupil funding).

VDOE also developed a cost of quality model in partnership with state and national experts to estimate the cost of providing high-quality ECCE services in private, community-based settings. Estimates of cost are based on the model and Virginia data and represent the cost to meet health, safety, and quality expectations for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. The model accounts for variation in costs based on program location and provider type. Virginia’s cost model generates annual estimates of cost per child by age group, program type (center and family day home), and Ready Region. Payment rates for sites participating in the Child Care Subsidy Program and Mixed Delivery Program are set proportionally to these estimated costs. In each program, reimbursement rates are set to a specific percentage of cost of quality and families are expected to make monthly contributions (copays) which are set based on family income.

Importantly, there are no mandatory costs associated with participating in VQB5 or achieving higher levels of quality. However, a core assumption VDOE made when developing the cost of quality model is that being able to attract and retain competent and competitive educators is the primary driver of quality and quality improvement. A supported, stable workforce is necessary to facilitate strong teacher-child interactions and child-focused, developmentally-appropriate instruction in the classroom. Research from Virginia's child care sector shows that competitive wages are a primary driver of staff retention, with staff in the lowest wage quartile being twice as likely to turn over in a given year relative to those in the highest wage quartile. As such, VDOE's cost of quality model assumes competitive compensation—defined as salaries prorated against elementary educator salaries—benefits, and instructional supports to meet quality expectations in VQB5.

VDOE is continuously monitoring the implementation of cost-based payment rates to understand the extent to which rates are driving quality improvement, increased compensation, and increased staff retention year over year. The VODE maintains the model and cost data, allowing for updated cost estimates to address technical corrections, inflation, and/or respond to major changes in state or federal policies. While the VDOE reports these updated estimates on an annual basis, payment rates are subject to appropriations set by the General Assembly.

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APPENDIX A: VQB5 DATA 2021-2025

VQB5 PARTICIPATION DATA

The VQB5 system operates on an annual cycle. All publicly-funded sites with at least one full-time classroom as of October 1 are required to complete annual registration in LinkB5 to be considered participating in VQB5. Sites that do not receive public funds have the option to complete registration for VQB5 participation. (See Section 3 for additional participation and eligibility information.)

Table A.1. Participation by Site Type

Site Type	PY1 2021-2022	PY2 2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026*
Centers	701	1,146	1,512	1,606	1,621
Public Schools	535	781	855	868	875
Family Day Homes	278	595	754	819	778
Total	1,514	2,522	3,121	3,293	3,274

**As of February 2026*

Table A.2 Site Participation by Ready Region

Ready Region	PY1 2021-2022	PY2 2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026*
Southwest	211	209	215	212	208
West	175	178	179	178	181
Southside	123	143	151	153	160
Central	198	354	414	434	419
Southeastern	181	340	465	487	484
Chesapeake Bay	83	174	222	225	218
Capital Area	314	572	794	877	865
North Central	72	362	467	511	518
Blue Ridge	157	190	214	216	221
Total	1,514	2,522	3,121	3,293	3,274

**As of February 2026*

VQB5 QUALITY RATINGS 2024-2025

VQB5 Quality Ratings are based on results from interactions and curriculum measurements gathered from every eligible birth-to-five classroom on an annual basis. (See Section 6 for details about quality ratings.)

- During the 2024-2025, 99% of 3,293 sites met or exceed the state's quality expectations.
- The statewide average across all VQB5 sites was 592 points.

Table A.3 Quality Rating Results

Quality Rating	# of Sites	% of Sites
Exceeds Expectations (700-800 points)	101	3%
Meets Expectations (400-699 points)	3,167	96%
Needs Support (100-399 points)	25	1%

Table A.4 Quality Ratings by Site Type

Site Type	# of Sites	# Exceeds Expectations	# Meets Expectations	# Needs Support
Public Schools*	868	39 (4%)	829 (96%)	0 (0%)
Family Day Homes	819	36 (4%)	768 (94%)	15 (2%)
Child Care Centers*	1,606	26 (2%)	1,570 (98%)	10 (1%)

*Includes Head Start grantees

Table A.5 Quality Ratings by Ready Region

Ready Region	# of Sites	# Exceeds Expectations (%)	# Meets Expectations (%)	# Needs Support (%)
1 - Southwest	212	9 (4%)	203 (96%)	0 (0%)
2 - West	178	8 (4%)	170 (96%)	0 (0%)
3 - Southside	153	7 (5%)	146 (95%)	0 (0%)
4 - Central	434	12 (3%)	421 (97%)	1 (<1%)
5 - Southeastern	487	12 (2%)	472 (97%)	3 (1%)
6 - Chesapeake Bay	225	1 (<1%)	219 (97%)	5 (2%)
7 - Capital Area	877	38 (4%)	826 (94%)	13 (1%)
8 - North Central	511	11 (2%)	498 (97%)	2 (<1%)
9 - Blue Ridge	216	3 (1%)	212 (98%)	1 (<1%)

NOTE: Percentages in this table may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

VQB5 HONOR ROLL DATA

In the fall of 2025, Virginia awarded VQB5 Honor Roll designations to sites across the Commonwealth based on three categories. A list of all honor roll sites can be found on the [VQB5 Profile Website's Download Data page](#).

- 497 unique sites received one or more VQB5 Honor Rolls based on 2024-2025 performance.
- 15% of all VQB5 rated sites were recognized on one or more Honor Roll.

Table A.6 Honor Roll Sites 2024-2025

Honor Roll Categories	Center	Family Day Home	Public School	Total All Sites
Excellence: Sites who receive an Exceeds Expectations Rating	26	36	39	101
Top Improvement in Interactions: Returning Sites in the Top 10% for Interactions Point Improvement (CLASS Score Improvement)	103	131	60	294
Top Infant and Toddler Quality: Sites in the Top 10% for Infant/Toddler Interaction Points (Infant and Toddler CLASS Scores)	103	113	0	216

Table A.7 Honor Roll Sites by Ready Region 2024-2025

Region	Center	Family Day Home	Public School	Total Sites on Honor Roll	Total VQB5 Sites	% of Sites on Honor Roll
Southwest	9	1	13	23	212	11%
West	12	7	9	28	178	16%
Southside	16	5	7	28	153	18%
Central	28	15	13	56	434	13%
Southeastern	36	25	8	69	487	14%
Chesapeake Bay	9	3	7	19	225	8%
Capital Area	51	132	18	201	877	23%
North Central	25	16	16	57	511	11%
Blue Ridge	12	3	1	16	216	7%
Virginia Total	198	207	92	497	3,293	15%

VQB5 CLASS DATA

VQB5 uses the Infant, Toddler, and Pre-K CLASS observation tools. Each tool is developed to assess and support the quality of teacher-child interactions needed to promote child learning and development within each specific age range.

VQB5 sites are required to complete two types of CLASS observations: local and external observations. These observations have different purposes and frequencies during the annual measurement and improvement cycle as described below. See Section 4 for details about CLASS measurement.

Table A.8 – Local and External CLASS Observation Completion Over Time

Type of Observation	PY1 2021-2022	PY2 2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026* (expected)
Local Observations	8,258	15,566	21,344	22,625	22,594
External Observations	667	3,461	7,060	8,633	8,473
TOTAL	8,925	19,027	28,404	31,258	31,067

**Based on number of VQB5 eligible classrooms in LinkB5 as of January 2026. External observations are to be completed in approximately 75% of all VQB5 eligible classrooms during the 2025-2026 year.*

Table A.9 Local and External CLASS Observation Averages and Ranges

Age-level trends and ranges across both types of observations are similar. Local scores on average are slightly higher than external scores across all age-levels, similar to previous years.

CLASS Tool	Number of Observations	Total CLASS Average	Total CLASS Range
Virginia - Local Observations 2024-2025			
Infant	2,973	5.30	1.88-7.00
Toddler	7,959	5.05	2.06-7.00
Pre-K	11,693	5.15	2.03-7.00
Total	22,625	5.13	1.88-7.00

Virginia - External Observations 2024-2025			
Infant	1,424	4.98	2.13-7.00
Toddler	3,140	4.73	2.22-6.63
Pre-K	4,071	4.78	1.90-6.60
Total	8,635	4.79	1.90-7.00

Table A.10 Local-External Score Comparison Data 2024-2025

In 2024-2025, there were 8,447 paired local and external observations that were compared at the domain level for consistency – See Section 4.7 for details about score replacement protocol.

Age-Level	Score Replacement*	No Score Replacement*	Total	Percent Consistent
Infant	517	864	1,381	63%

Toddler	1,458	1,617	3,075	53%
Pre-K	2,139	1,852	3,991	46%
Total	4,114	4,333	8,447	51%

**Score replacement means 1 or more domains were replaced. No score replacement means all domains were consistent and no local scores were replaced.*

Table A.11 Number of Domains Replaced in Local Observations 2024-2025

Age Level	No Replacement	One Domain Replaced	Two Domains Replaced	Three Domains Replaced
Infant	63% (864)	37% (517)		
Toddler	53% (1,617)	34% (1,043)	13% (415)	
Pre-K	46% (1,852)	36% (1,421)	12% (482)	6% (236)

Table A.12 Domain Specific Consistency Rates 2024-2025

Age Level	Domain*	How Many Domains Were Consistent?		
		Inconsistent (Score Replacement)	Consistent (No Score Replacement)	Percent Consistent
Infant	RC	517	864	63%
Toddler	EBS	666	2,409	78%
	ESL	1,207	1,868	61%
Pre-K	ES	629	3,362	84%
	CO	962	3,029	76%
	IS	1,502	2,489	62%

**See Figure 4.2.2 for Domain Descriptions; **Percent consistent means there were no*

Table A.13 Certified CLASS Observers in Virginia as of December 31, 2025

CLASS Tool Age-Level	PY1 2021- 2022	PY2 2022- 2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Infant CLASS	315	474	693	657	514
Toddler CLASS	493	686	883	840	678
Pre-K CLASS (2008)	1,172	1,471	1,681	1,429	1,061
Pre-K CLASS 2 nd Edition*	N/A	N/A	N/A	87	110

**Observers certified on Pre-K 2nd Edition are considered to be reliable on both Pre-K tools.*

VQB5 CURRICULUM DATA

VQB5 measures the optional use of a VDOE approved curriculum that aligns with Virginia’s early learning and development standards to ensure that all areas of learning and development are being covered in developmentally-appropriate ways. See Section 5 for details.

Table A.14 Use of Approved Curriculum by Site Type Over Time

Site Type	PY1 2021-2022	PY2 2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026*
Center	516	953	1,290	1,399	1,385
Family Day Home	161	331	478	528	448
Public School	523	763	850	858	867
Total	1,200	2,047	2,618	2,743	2,700

**based on curriculum use information as of fall 2025*

Table A.15 – Percent of Classrooms Using Approved Curriculum by Classroom Age-Level

Classroom Type	PY1 2021-2022	PY2 2022-2023	2023-2024*	2024-2025	2025-2026*
Infant	63.7%	68.5%	80.1%	84.4%	83.2%
Toddler	68.2%	71.8%	80.0%	80.6%	78.2%
Preschool	84.8%	82.8%	89.1%	89.4%	90.5%

**based on curriculum use information as of fall 2025*

Table A.16 - CLASS Averages by Curriculum Use – Fall 2025 Local Observations

Classroom Type	Classroom Using Curriculum	Classroom Not Using Curriculum
Infant	5.26	5.13
Toddler	5.01	4.93
Pre-K	5.16	4.92
State Average	5.13	4.96

VQB5 EDUCATOR PROFILE DATA

VDOE uses data collected through LinkB5 educator profiles to assist with statewide efforts to improve quality, support educators, reduce teacher-turnover, and increase access for young children and their families (See Section 3 for more information).

Table A.17 VQB5 Educators by Site Type and Ready Region 2025-2026*

Ready Region	Centers	Family Day Homes	Public Schools	Total
Southwest	856	36	433	1,325
West	701	28	375	1,104
Southside	722	14	406	1,142
Central	2,002	112	763	2,877
Southeastern	1,530	123	752	2,405
Chesapeake Bay	631	37	400	1,068
Capital Area	3,261	592	1,372	5,225
North Central	3,054	211	631	3,896
Blue Ridge	1,148	46	515	1,709
State Total	13,905	1,199	5,647	20,751

*As of February 2026

Table A.18 CLASS Training Experience and CLASS Scores - 2024-2025

LinkB5 Educator Profile Reported Information*	Average CLASS Score			Number of Educators
	Infant	Toddler	Pre-K	
Educator Reported Receiving CLASS Training	5.31	5.03	5.25	11,547
Educator Reported NOT Receiving CLASS Training	5.11	4.92	5.00	3,350

Table A.19 CLASS Scores by Retention Rate – 2024-2025

During the 2024-2025 year - CLASS scores were on average 0.30 higher for retained teachers across all age groups. By age group, the largest difference was in Pre-K classrooms (0.46).

	Teacher Retained		Teacher Not Retained	
	Average CLASS Score	Number of Classrooms	Average CLASS Score	Number of Classrooms
Infant	5.12	964	5.03	523
Toddler	4.91	2,702	4.70	1,023
Pre-K	5.12	5,086	4.66	1,021
All Classrooms	5.05	8,752	4.75	2,567

APPENDIX B: CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT FOR EXTERNAL OBSERVERS

A conflict of interest exists when there is evidence of or the appearance that an observer's personal interests have influenced or may influence the CLASS observation and scoring of a particular classroom or program or that the observer's personal interest would take precedence over the interests and goals of the external observation vendor or the requirements and objectives of the External VQB5 CLASS Observation Contract.

A conflict of interest may relate to the observer, the observer's spouse/partner, family member, or business interest in areas such as:

- The observer (or a party related to the observer) holds, directly or indirectly, a financial interest in an organization that operates or is affiliated with a Public School, Private School, or Community Based Educational Organization within the districts/jurisdictions in which the observer will be conducting observations.
- The observer (or a party related to the observer) renders or has rendered in the past directive, managerial, or consultative service or is or has been an employee of any Public School, Private School, or Community Based Educational Organization within the districts/jurisdictions in which the observer will be conducting observations.
- The observer (or a party related to the observer) renders services relating to conducting or coordinating the local CLASS observations for an identified Ready Region within the state of Virginia including any Public School, Private School, or Community Based Educational Organization within the districts/jurisdictions in which the observer will be conducting external CLASS observations.
- The observer has accepted gifts or benefits from any Public School, Private School, or Community Based Educational Organization within the districts/jurisdictions in which the observer will be conducting observations or an organization that operates or is affiliated with any Public School, Private School, or Community Based Educational Organization within the districts/jurisdictions in which the observer will be conducting observations.
- A party related to the observer (including but not limited to spouse/partner, family member, or business associate/interest) has received or continues to receive benefits, financial or otherwise, from any Public School, Private School, or Community Based Educational Organization within the districts/jurisdictions in which the observer will be conducting observations or an organization that operates or is affiliated with any Public School, Private School, or Community Based Educational Organization within the districts/jurisdictions in which the observer will be conducting observations.

The external observation contractor is responsible for knowing what conflicts may exist with its observers and to manage and eliminate any appearance of conflict. The key to handling these potential conflicts is full disclosure of any potential conflict or the appearance of conflict by all observers. External observers must disclose any family members that may be supported by, employed by, a vendor of, or a business associate of any Public School, Private School, or Community Based Educational Organization within the districts/jurisdictions in which an observer will be conducting observations.

APPENDIX C: DATA SECURITY

LinkB5 meets all Commonwealth standards, including the Virginia Information Security Standard ([SEC530](#)) and is in compliance with the *Code of Virginia* §2-2.2009 with additional oversight from the VDOE's Chief Information Security Officer. SEC530 specifies the requirements for features like encryption, access controls, authentication management, and more – all which LinkB5 has implemented. In addition to meeting all security standards, LinkB5 has received Enterprise Cloud Oversight Service (ECOS) approval for sensitive data through the Virginia Information Technologies Agency (VITA). To confirm ongoing security compliance, the VDOE scans LinkB5 for vulnerabilities regularly and a third party completes annual SOC2 Type II assessment reviews.

Because secure entry and storage of sensitive data is a top priority for the VDOE and LinkB5, the security of LinkB5 is mandated by more than 500 pages of rigorous security protocols with enforcement by VITA. In addition, any student data collected is compliant with the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99). To ensure the safety and security of data in transit and at rest, and of the system as a whole, several controls are in place. This includes:

Encryption and Encryption Key Management

- Cryptographic certificates, keys, and customer access keys used for communication between Azure services and other internal components are stored securely and are rotated on a periodic basis.
- Cryptographic controls are used for information protection within the Azure platform based on the Azure Cryptographic Policy and Key Management procedures.
- Keys must have identifiable owners (binding keys to identities) and key management policies.
- Cryptographic certificates, keys, and access keys used for communication between Azure services and other internal components are stored securely and are rotated on a periodic basis.
- Administrative access to the Service environment is controlled through defined interfaces that require authentication using appropriate credentials. Privileges (i.e., read, write) are restricted to authorized personnel through designated channels based on job responsibilities.
- Data communicated through Azure service interfaces (i.e., entering data) is encrypted during transmission over external networks.

Cryptography and Key Management

- Procedures and technical measures have been established for strong encryption and authentication for the transmission of data over networks.
- User data communicated through Azure service interfaces is encrypted during transmission over external networks.
- Location-aware technologies are implemented within the Azure portal to identify and validate authentication sessions.
- External access to Azure services and the user data stored in the service requires authentication and is restricted based on user configured authorization settings.
- External traffic to the virtual machine is restricted to customer-enabled ports and protocols.
- The private root key belonging to the Azure services is protected from unauthorized access.

APPENDIX D: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of VQB5, the following definitions apply to the terms used for improvement services. These definitions are modified from the [National Association for the Education of Young Children Professional Development Training and Technical Assistance Glossary](#) and are not exhaustive of all improvement services used in Virginia.

Coaching: is a relationship-based process led by an expert with specialized and adult learning knowledge and skills, who often serves in a different professional role than the recipient(s). Coaching is designed to build capacity for specific professional dispositions, skills, and behaviors and is focused on goal setting and achievement for an individual or group. It is focused on a performance-based outcome(s) and for the purposes of VQB5, uses CLASS and curriculum data to determine needs and measure progress at the site and classroom level.

Technical Assistance: is the provision of targeted and customized supports by a professional(s) with subject matter and adult learning knowledge and skills to develop or strengthen processes, knowledge application, or implementation of services by recipients. For purposes of VQB5, technical assistance refers to assistance resolving shorter-term processes or goals based, which could include focusing on programmatic routines, completion of required activities, or instructional competencies. VQB5 TA services use site, classroom and educator data to determine the most appropriate type of customized TA support.

Training: is a learning experience, or series of experiences that addresses a specific area of inquiry or related set of skills or dispositions, delivered by a professional(s) with subject matter and adult learning knowledge and skills. For purposes of VQB5, training services use site, classroom and educator data to identify and plan training content.

Consultation: is a collaborative, problem-solving process between an external consultant with specific expertise and adult learning knowledge and skills and an individual or group from one program or organization. Consultation facilitates the assessment and resolution of an issue-specific concern. For purposes of VQB5, consultation is typically focused on a staff-, educator or child issue and concludes with a summary process and an evaluation of the effectiveness of the consultation provided.

Peer-to-Peer Technical Assistance (Peer-to-Peer Learning Opportunities): fosters the development of relationship-based learning and support communities among colleagues, often in like roles. Peer-to-peer technical assistance is based on the premise that a significant expert knowledge base exists in the field and that peers who have solved challenges on the ground have developed tools and strategies that can be shared with their colleagues. For purposes of VQB5, higher performing sites and classrooms serve as models for peers and contribute to advancing effective practices across the state.

APPENDIX E: COMMON TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CASTL - Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (at UVA)
CCDBG - Child Care and Development Block Grant
CLASS - Classroom Assessment Scoring System
CQI - Continuous Quality Improvement
DLL - Dual Language Learners
ECAC - Early Childhood Advisory Committee
ED4 - Executive Directive Four
ELDS –Early Learning and Development Standards
ICP - Inclusive Classroom Profile
IDEA - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP/IFSP - Individual Education Plan/Individualized Family Service Plan
NAC - National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs
NAEYC - National Association for the Education of Young Children
NAFCC – National Association for Family Child Care
NCECDTL - National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning
NECPA - National Early Childhood Program Accreditation
PDG - Preschool Development Grant
QRIS - Quality Rating and Improvement System
TTAC - Training and Technical Assistance Centers
UVA - University of Virginia
VA ITSN - Virginia Infant & Toddler Specialist Network
VCU-ACE – Virginia Commonwealth University Autism Center for Education
VECC – Virginia Early Childhood Consultation
VECF - Virginia Early Childhood Foundation
VPI - Virginia Preschool Initiative
VQB5 - Virginia Quality Birth-to-Five System
VDOE - Virginia Department of Education