

COVID-19 IMPACTS

on Pre-K–K-3 CLASS Indicators

The following information outlines at the dimension and indicator level how the changes to classroom settings described in our post [Guidance for Conducting CLASS Observations of In-Person Teaching during COVID-19, Pre-K–K-3](#) may impact the evidence for each CLASS dimension. It also discusses some specific interactions to look for that meet the intent of these dimensions and indicators. Like the behavioral markers in the *CLASS manual*, the list provided here is not meant to be exhaustive, but rather, to help observers think about some different types of evidence they might be capturing.

These guidelines address only indicators that may be difficult to assess or simply not present due to new health and safety procedures. Indicators that are likely to be observable regardless of new procedures are not included. Read on for guidance around:

POSITIVE CLIMATE

TEACHER SENSITIVITY

REGARD FOR STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

PRODUCTIVITY

INSTRUCTIONAL LEARNING FORMATS

CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

QUALITY OF FEEDBACK

LANGUAGE MODELING

POSITIVE CLIMATE

Reflects the emotional connection between the teacher and students and among students and the warmth, respect, and enjoyment communicated by verbal and nonverbal interactions

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

RELATIONSHIPS

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

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

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

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

POSITIVE AFFECT

The use of masks by teachers and/or children may impact evidence for the behavioral marker of **smiling**.

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

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

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

POSITIVE COMMUNICATION

Social distancing protocols may impact evidence for the behavioral marker of **physical affection**.

However, there are many other ways that teachers can convey **positive communication** to children.

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

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

RESPECT

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

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

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

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

TEACHER SENSITIVITY

Encompasses the teacher’s awareness of and responsivity to students’ academic and emotional needs; high levels of sensitivity facilitate students’ ability to actively explore and learn because the teacher consistently provides comfort, reassurance, and encouragement

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

AWARENESS

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

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

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

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

RESPONSIVENESS

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

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

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

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

REGARD FOR STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

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

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

FLEXIBILITY AND STUDENT FOCUS

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

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

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

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

SUPPORT FOR AUTONOMY AND LEADERSHIP

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

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

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

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

RESTRICTION OF MOVEMENT

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

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

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

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

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

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

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

REDIRECTION OF MISBEHAVIOR

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

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

Other behaviors observers can look for:

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

PRODUCTIVITY

Considers how well the teacher manages instructional time and routines and provides activities for students so that they have the opportunity to be involved in learning activities

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

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

INSTRUCTIONAL LEARNING FORMATS

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

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

EFFECTIVE FACILITATION

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

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

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

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

VARIETY OF MODALITIES AND MATERIALS

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

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

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

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

CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

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

The use of masks and social distancing could impact teachers' ability to engage in instructional discussions and/or the observer's ability to assess these discussions. Teachers can promote higher-order thinking skills by asking children questions and making connections aloud, even when there is not an immediate opportunity to develop the topic into a discussion, and by taking advantage of

moments when they can work closely with small groups to have deeper conversations. Concept Development interactions specifically directed around conversations about COVID-19 and its effects can be an important part of helping children make sense of what is going on in the world around them.

CREATING

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

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

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

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

QUALITY OF FEEDBACK

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

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

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

LANGUAGE MODELING

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

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

REPETITION AND EXTENSION

Social distancing protocols may impact evidence for the behavioral marker of **repetition and extension**, or observers’ ability to assess it.

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

OTHER BEHAVIORS OBSERVERS CAN LOOK FOR:

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