

VQB5 Participation Handbook for Program Leaders



This handbook provides information for VQB5 program leaders to help you, and your staff have a successful experience in the **Unified Virginia Quality Birth to Five System (VQB5)**. This information is based on the [VQB5 2025-2026 Guidelines](#). Sections from the VQB5 Guidelines document are referenced throughout this document for additional details.

2025-2026



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Updates for the 2025-2026 Program Year:

Most of the information about VQB5 required activities and program leader expectations within this handbook are the same as in 2024-2025. Updates and clarifications have been added to the following sections to help program leaders strengthen VQB5 implementation:

- Information about the migration of LinkB5 into VAConnects with other key systems. (Page 4)
- Clarifications to Primary Site Administrator Responsibilities. (Pages 5-6)
- Updated information about the required steps for completing student/child lists (formerly called ‘classroom lists’). (Pages 8-9)
- Information about the flexible/optional use of Pre-K CLASS 2nd Edition. (Page 11)
- Information about the curriculum change coming in 2026-2027. (Page 16)
- Updated information about the new VQB5 Quality Profile website, EarlyChildhoodQuality.doe.virginia.gov. (Page 17)

Note: Currently there are no funds for RecognizeB5 in the 2025-2026 state budget. This means that there will not be an incentive for educators in 2025-2026. More information can be found on the [VQB5 RecognizeB5 webpage](#).

VQB5 Introduction

Virginia's early childhood system must ensure that **all** children have quality teaching and learning experiences that meet their unique needs. To do this, Virginia has developed the [Unified Virginia Quality Birth to Five System \(VQB5\)](#) which recognizes the impact of every classroom, provides feedback to every educator, and supports all publicly-funded birth-to-five programs to improve.

VQB5 strengthens the quality of teaching and learning experiences in early childhood programs that serve infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, by setting shared expectations for measuring quality and supporting teachers for all birth-to-five programs. Through VQB5, teachers and leaders receive the feedback and support they need to help young children learn.

All [publicly-funded](#) programs that serve children ages birth-to-five are required by [state law](#) to participate in VQB5. Early childhood programs that do not receive any public funds will have the option to participate.

Measuring Quality (VQB5 Guidelines Section 2.3)

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

INTERACTIONS	CURRICULUM
Teacher-child interactions are measured in a developmentally-appropriate way using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) ®.	Curriculum is measured by recognizing programs that use VDOE-approved curricula that are aligned with Virginia's Early Learning and Development Standards.

Interactions and curriculum were chosen because research shows high quality teacher-child interactions and a quality early childhood curriculum promote children's learning and development, resulting in improved school readiness.

Ready Regions (VQB5 Guidelines Section 2.5)

Virginia has regional early childhood partners called [Ready Regions](#) who support the coordination of VQB5 at the local level across all communities in the Commonwealth. Ready Regions will support your site with registration, including providing instructions on how to set up a user account in LinkB5 starting in August.

Ready Regions also support the completion of local CLASS observations and are able to provide site leaders and teachers with information about how to access free CLASS training throughout the year. You can find your Ready Region and contact information [here](#).

VQB5 Required Activities

[Publicly-funded sites](#) must complete three activities annually to meet the legislative requirement. Non-publicly-funded sites who opt-in to VQB5 must also complete these activities in order to receive a public quality profile. (VQB5 Guidelines Section 3.1)

- 1** All VQB5 participants are required to use the [LinkB5](#) data portal to provide information about their sites, classrooms, educators, and child enrollment through the completion of various profiles. This includes using LinkB5 to:
 - Complete site, site administrator, educator, and classroom profiles during annual registration, August 15 – October 1.
 - Enter information about optional use of VDOE-approved curriculum for each classroom by October 1, with the option to update curriculum information by May 31.
 - Inform all parents 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.
 - The fall local observation window occurs from August 15 to December 22.
 - The spring local observation window occurs from January 20 to May 31.
- 3** In addition to the two local CLASS observations coordinated by Ready Regions, all participating sites must participate in external CLASS observations for each age-level served, between August 15 and May 31.

Publicly-funded sites who do not complete VQB5 registration and meet the participation enrollment minimum requirements 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. (VQB5 Guidelines Section 3.4)

Non-publicly-funded sites who choose to participate in VQB5 must complete all three VQB5 activities as outlined above in order to receive a public VQB5 quality profile.

Publicly-funded sites and classrooms that open or begin taking public funds after the October 1 annual registration deadline 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.

Helpful Resources:

- [Participation Requirements Webpage](#)
- [RecognizeB5 Webpage](#)
- [LinkB5 data portal](#)
- [Ready Regions Contact Information](#)

VQB5's Data System – LinkB5

In order to measure quality and drive improvement at scale, Virginia 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 as 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 in order to better understand the impact of public investments and ensure the growth and improvement of child outcomes at the classroom level.

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 ([VQB5 Guidelines – Appendix D](#)).

Coming in August 2025 - Transition to the new VAConnects platform for accessing LinkB5.

LinkB5 will be migrated into Virginia Connects for Kids (VAConnects), Virginia's new integrated data system. Virginia Connects for Kids (VAConnects) is a modern, integrated data system that connects LinkB5, the Virginia Language and Literacy Screening System (VALLSS), and the Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP).

Users will experience this migration as a system upgrade with minimal changes to information collected and user roles. **VQB5 requirements related to LinkB5 will not change.**

The first time LinkB5 users will log onto the VAConnects platform will be during VQB5 Registration in August of 2025. The educators, site administrators, and Ready Region staff that use LinkB5 for VQB5 can expect the following:

- No change in log-in or username.
- No change in LinkB5 data entry or reporting requirements or available technical support from LinkB5.
- Upgrades in the technology and interface, including a more mobile device-friendly website.
- Site Administrators and educators that use VKRP and VALLS as well as LinkB5 will have one profile that will be shared across the systems.

VQB5 Annual Registration

The VQB5 system operates on an annual cycle. All publicly-funded sites with at least one full-time classroom, that serves 3 or more unrelated children, as of October 1 are required to complete annual registration in LinkB5 in order to be considered participating in VQB5. Non-publicly-funded sites who choose to participate in VQB5 must also complete annual registration.

Required Registration Profiles (VQB5 Guidelines Section 3.2.1)

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

- 1) site profiles (sites will have a unique site ID)
- 2) site administrator profiles
- 3) educator profiles
- 4) classroom profiles (each classroom will have a unique classroom ID)

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

VQB5 Registration Resources and Step-by-Step Guides

Webpage: [LinkB5 Resources](#)

Email and phone number contact: linkb5support@virginia.edu; 1-833-554-6525

Designation of Primary Site Administrator (VQB5 Guidelines Section 3.2.1a)

Having a consistent primary point of contact for each site is critical for ensuring that sites receive VQB5 information in a timely and efficient manner. Therefore, every site must designate a Primary Site Administrator (PSA) in LinkB5 during registration. The Primary Site Administrator is responsible for ensuring the completion of all required VQB5 activities as follows:

- ✓ Primary Site Administrators must ensure information in LinkB5 is accurate and complete; this includes ensuring the following:
 - ✓ All site, site administrator, educator, and classroom profile information is accurate and reflects actual operations and enrollment as of October 1.
 - ✓ The appropriate staff are invited into LinkB5 during the registration window and staff who no longer work at the site are removed.
 - ✓ Current lead and assistant educators complete their LinkB5 profile during the registration window by the October 1 deadline.
 - ✓ Educator profile information is verified and updated if applicable in the spring, between April 1-May 31.
 - ✓ Student/Child lists are completed for each classroom by December 22 to better understand the impact of classroom experiences on child outcomes.
 - ✓ 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.
- ✓ Primary Site Administrators must ensure all CLASS Observations are completed; this includes ensuring the following:

- ✓ Ensuring all local CLASS scores from fall and spring observations are submitted and verified in LinkB5 within 10 business days of the local observation or by the end of the local observation window (See [CLASS Section](#)).
- ✓ Receiving and responding to CLASS observation scheduling and documentation requests related to local and external observations.
 - Local observation scheduling information will come from your Ready Region.
 - External observation scheduling information will come from vaexternalobservations@teachstone.com.
- ✓ Ensuring CLASS observation results, feedback reports, and other pertinent VQB5 information is shared with other appropriate site administrators and teachers in a timely manner.

If there is a change to the Primary Site Administrator contact information after October 1, sites must notify their Ready Region and VDOE at vqb5@doe.virginia.gov. Newly assigned Primary Site Administrators must also complete a profile in order to perform necessary and required tasks within LinkB5.

Sites who have multiple lead administrators will need to develop internal procedures for how Primary Site Administrators will share VQB5 information with applicable staff.

Classroom Registration for Family Day Homes (VQB5 Guidelines 3.2.1b)

In VQB5, family day home sites are also considered 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**. For most mixed-age family day homes, this means 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 as long as 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.

AM/PM Classroom Registration Requirements (VQB5 Guidelines Section 3.2.1c)

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 CLASS section for information about AM/PM observation requirements.)

Sites and Classrooms that *Open* after October 1 (VQB5 Guidelines Section 3.2.1d)

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 in order 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.

Sites and/or Classrooms that *Close* after October 1 (VQB5 Guidelines Section 3.3)

If a site or classroom closes during the 2025-2026 year and/or is no longer serving three or more unrelated children, the site administrator may request that the site or classroom 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, or for temporary closures longer than 30 days.

- 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 the VDOE of a Site or Classroom Closure by emailing vqb5@doe.virginia.gov.

Site Separation Request (VQB5 Guidelines Section 3.1.4a)

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.

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.

To support site leaders with the completion of student/child lists, VDOE has provided detailed guidance in the [VQB5 Student/Child Lists Toolkit \(Spanish\)](#) which will be updated annually. (VQB5 Guidelines Section 3.2.3)

Informing Families about 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 \(Spanish\)](#) resource with parents. Sharing this resource will meet the requirement to inform parents.

Parent Permission Requirements for Student/Child Lists (Guidelines Section 3.2.3b)

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 (or) the Fall Student Record collection as applicable.
- 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-In Parent Permission Form- Word Template \(Spanish\)](#)
- Opt-out is when parents are notified that their child’s information will be included in student/child lists, unless the parent denies permission.
 - [Opt-Out Parent Permission Form - Word Template \(Spanish\)](#)

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.

For public schools, student/child list information will be collected through the required Fall Student Record Collection, managed by the VDOE for all public schools. The information from this alternate process will then be uploaded in LinkB5, therefore public schools do not need to complete parental permission or enter information for student/child lists. Public schools should inform parents about participation in VQB5 (See Guidelines Section 3.2.2a).

Questions about VQB5 student/child lists can be directed to vqb5@doe.virginia.gov.

CLASS Observations in VQB5

The quality of interactions between teachers and children is measured in VQB5 through use of the nationally recognized CLASS tool. CLASS stands for **C**lassroom **A**ssessment **S**coring **S**ystem. [Research](#) shows that children in classroom with high quality interactions, as measured by CLASS, benefit academically, socially, and behaviorally across diverse settings. CLASS also provides actionable feedback for every classroom and can be used with all educators, regardless of background, setting, or credential.

VQB5 uses the [Infant](#), [Toddler](#), and [Pre-K](#) CLASS observation tools. Each tool is developed to evaluate the classroom characteristics and teacher-child interactions needed to promote child learning and development within each specific age range. (VQB5 Guidelines Section 4.2)

- Infant CLASS is used to observe classrooms that typically serve children birth-18 months.
- Toddler CLASS is used to observe classrooms that typically serve children 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.

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 Pre-K classrooms may request to use the Toddler CLASS based on the children’s developmental age and IEP goals. ECSE programs must notify VDOE at VQB5@doe.virginia.gov by October 1 to request the use of the Toddler CLASS tool.

VQB5 CLASS observations must be conducted with the age-level CLASS tool that matches the classroom type listed in LinkB5.

CLASS Tool Selection in Spring (Guidelines 4.2a)

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.

Understanding Children’s Experiences

In VQB5, CLASS observations happen in the **fall** and then again in the **spring** for every classroom.

This provides teachers with an opportunity to recognize growth and provides program leaders with a complete reflection of what children are experiencing throughout the year.

Use of Pre-K CLASS 2nd Edition in VQB5

During the 2025-2026 year, Virginia will continue to use the original versions of CLASS for all local and external observations, while providing the following flexibility for Pre-K 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.
- Local observers who become certified on Pre-K CLASS 2nd Edition are considered to be reliable on both editions. Local observers are not required to be certified on 2nd Edition.
- 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.

Types of CLASS Observations in VQB5 (VQB5 Guidelines Section 4.4)

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.

	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	Local observations are coordinated and scheduled at the local level through Ready Regions , with results recorded in LinkB5. Conducted by locally identified reliable observers.	External observations are 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.
Feedback Process	Local Observer schedules a feedback session with teacher or team of teachers within 10 days of the local observation.	Feedback from external observations is shared via a written report which is emailed to the Primary Site Administrator 10 days after the external observation.
Visit the Measuring Quality Interactions webpage for additional details about VQB5 CLASS observations.		

Local Observation Requirements (VQB5 Guidelines Section 4.5)

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.

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

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.

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, only the AM classroom needs to be observed, as long as the lead teacher, structure and instruction for both sessions is the same as outlined in Section 4.5.2a. Sites with AM/PM classrooms that meet the requirements must notify Ready Regions and VDOE by October 1. (Note: Both AM and PM classrooms must complete separate classroom registration profiles in LinkB5 as noted in registration section.)

Requirements For Local Observers (VQB5 Guidelines Section 4.5.1)

In addition to being certified by Teachstone, local observers must meet the following requirements:

- Local observers must be reliable for each age-level tool with which they observe.
- Local observers must maintain their certification each year by passing the recertification test.
- Local observers must follow all VDOE Local Observation Protocols (VQB5 Guidelines Section 4.5.3)
- Local observers may not serve as a VQB5 external observer in Virginia within the same region.

Ready Regions have discretion in who may serve as local observers. In order to strengthen CLASS understanding and guide improvement at the local level, local observers may have working relationships with the sites and/or teachers they are observing, such as site director, program coordinator, or principal.

Verifying Local Observation CLASS Scores in LinkB5 (VQB5 Guidelines Section 4.5.3 – Item C.3)

Once CLASS scores have been submitted by the local observer in LinkB5, the Primary Site Administrator, or other designated site administrator, must review and verify scores in LinkB5 within 10 business days, or by the end of the observation window whichever comes first.

Verification of scores in LinkB5 includes checking to make sure the following observation information is accurate:

- ✓ The name of the local observer
- ✓ The date the observation occurred
- ✓ The CLASS tool matches the classroom type listed in LinkB5
- ✓ The Negative Climate scores have been entered as the raw score (not reversed)

If the information listed above was not entered correctly, the site administrator should reject the scores in LinkB5 and contact the Ready Region so that corrections can be made.

If the site administrator rejects the CLASS scores due to a concern about the observation results, the site should immediately request a VDOE CLASS observation review by emailing vqb5@doe.virginia.gov. 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.

External Observation Requirements (VQB5 Guidelines Section 4.6)

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 classrooms. Considering VQB5 includes thousands of local observers who observe 10,000+ classrooms, VDOE must ensure the consistency, reliability, and accuracy of these local observations.

In VQB5, statewide 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 are required to participate and complete additional rigorous training to maintain their observation skills that go above and beyond what is expected of local observers.

During the 2025-2026 year, statewide 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. This 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 goal of providing an external observation to every age-level within each site during the program year.

In addition to observing randomly selected classrooms as described above, external observations will also be used to address unusual scoring patterns, late local observation score entry, and to respond to identified discrepancies or missing local observations.

- External observations conducted for additional circumstances are likely to result in an individual classroom receiving more than one external observation during the program year. There is no limit on the number of external observations a classroom may receive.
- External observations may also be completed outside of the designated fall/spring observation windows in order to fulfill legislative requirements.

Sites will receive a three-week window during which the external observation will occur. The external observation team will notify the Primary Site Administrator of this three-week window approximately two weeks prior to the first business day of the three-week window via the Primary Site Administrator's email as listed in LinkB5.

Sites will receive a written feedback report approximately 10 days after the external observation. Scheduling notifications and external feedback reports will be sent to the Primary Site Administrator from vaexternalobservations@teachstone.com.

Score Replacement Protocol (VQB5 Guidelines Section 4.7)

To ensure the consistency, quality, and credibility of ratings and performance profiles, VQB5 will use a score replacement protocol to address comparable observations with significantly different scores.

Throughout the fall and spring observation windows, the 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).

- Domain scores that are within one point are considered consistent, and there would be no replacement. (All local observation scores will be used.)
- Domains where the scores differ by more than one point will be replaced.
 - The external domain score will be used in place of the local domain score in calculating the quality rating for the site.
 - This will only impact domains where the score is off by more than one point. All other consistent domains will use the local observation score.
- If score replacement is necessary in one or more domains, observation scores for each dimension within the replaced domain occurs at classroom score calculation step.

Sites will receive notifications about classroom-level score replacement at the end of the fall and spring observation windows. Notifications will be provided via the LinkB5 Reports tab in each site's account.

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

- Replacing domains, instead of overall total scores, allows Ready Regions and program leaders to maintain local scores that are found to be consistent.
- Comparing scores at the domain-level allows VDOE to give more specific and targeted feedback to observers and program leaders, particularly in the domains related to learning and instructional supports.
- Reviewing scores by domain helps local observers identify strengths and areas where they can improve their observation skills.

VDOE has developed a 'Score Replacement Calculator' to help program leaders understand local-external score comparisons.

You can find the Score Replacement Calculator along with other CLASS information on the [Measuring Quality Interactions Webpage](#) on the VQB5 Website.

Accessing Your CLASS Scores

Local CLASS observation scores are entered in LinkB5. Program leaders who have a 'Site Administrator' account in LinkB5 can [access and download their local CLASS scores](#) within the LinkB5 data portal, via the 'Reports' tab. The CLASS export report will support data-informed decision-making when setting program and classroom improvement goals.

External CLASS observation scores are emailed to the Primary Site Administrator within 10 days after an external observation has occurred. If you need another copy of your external observation score report, please email vaexternalobservations@teachstone.com.

CLASS Observation Review Process (VQB5 Guidelines Section 4.9)

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.

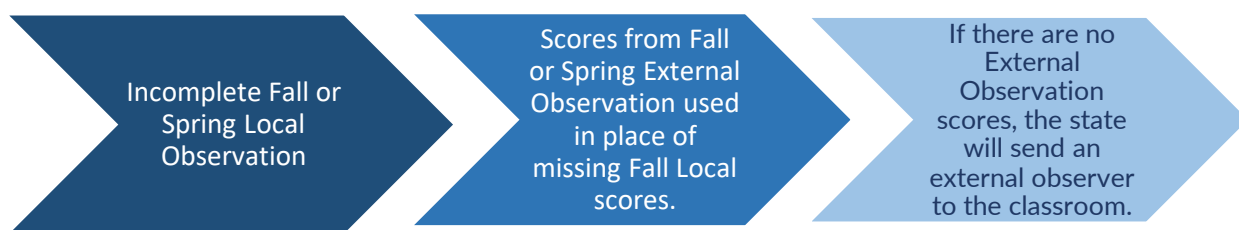
To the extent possible, CLASS Review requests should be submitted within 30 days of when the contested observation was completed and/or at least three weeks prior to the last day of school to allow for a thorough review and applicable follow-up if needed.

Once a request is received, VDOE will gather all relevant observation data, observation scoresheets with notes, feedback forms provided to sites/teacher, 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.

If discrepancies or concerns are found, the VDOE will address the situation, typically using an external observation to replace the original score.

Consequences for Not Completing CLASS Observations (VQB5 Guidelines Section 4.8)

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.



In addition to the consequences outlined above, publicly-funded sites who do not complete any external observation will be considered as refusing to participate and out of compliance with the law. Any publicly-funded site that does not have at least one external observation during the program year will automatically receive a rating of Needs Support.

Use of Curriculum in VQB5

Research shows that stimulating and supportive interactions between teachers and children, and effective use of quality curriculum promotes children's holistic learning and development, resulting in improved school readiness.

Curriculum is a key ingredient to helping teachers improve their interactions, providing ways to create nurturing and responsive practices and environments that foster trust, emotional security, and learning.

In VQB5, the use of a comprehensive curriculum in alignment with [Virginia's Early Learning and Development Standards \(ELDS\)](#) ensures that educators have access to high quality instructional material designed specifically for use in birth-to-five settings to promote school readiness.

In the 2025-2026 program year, VDOE will continue to recognize sites for choosing and implementing approved curriculum **in at least one classroom** with the goal of encouraging the use of VDOE-approved curriculum in all VQB5 classrooms beginning in 2026-2027. The use of an approved curriculum is **optional** in VQB5. **VQB5 does not require the use of any curriculum.**

The use of approved curriculum results in some additional points towards the rating displayed on VQB5 Quality Rating. However, curriculum use 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 70+ approved early childhood curriculum available, including Virginia's no-to-low-cost curriculum option, [STREAMin3](#), or
- 2) Request to have their curriculum of choice reviewed for possible approval.

Curriculum Use Reporting Requirement (VQB5 Guidelines Section 5.2.3)

Curricula use must be reported at the classroom level for every site on an annual basis. This information must be reported via the LinkB5 data portal as a part of each site classroom profile 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 in LinkB5 through May 31.
- If a classroom is using a VDOE-approved Curriculum, they must enter the name of the curriculum being used. (Use of an approved curriculum in VQB5 is not required).

Additional information about curriculum use in VQB5, including resources to support curriculum choice, the vetted and approved list, and information about the curriculum review process are available on the [VDOE Early Childhood Curriculum Website](#).

VQB5 Quality Profiles

VQB5 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, using the following point system.

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.

Calculating Site Results (Guidelines Section 6.2)

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.

Interactions Points (700 total points)	Average of all local CLASS scores from the fall and the spring (<i>all VQB5 eligible classrooms</i> at a site) x 100*
Curriculum Points (100 total points)	Sites using an approved curriculum in <i>at least one classroom</i> will receive 100 points added to their score
Total Points	Interactions Points + Curriculum Points = Total Points
VQB5 Quality Rating	Exceeds Expectations = 700 - 800 points Meets Expectations = 400 - 699 points Needs Support = 100 - 399 points
View VQB5 Quality Ratings User Guide for details and rating examples.	

**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 in the VQB5 Guidelines.*

Starting in the fall of 2025, VDOE will publish a statewide “Honor Roll” to recognize the top performing sites and sites who show significant improvement. Recipients will be recognized publicly and will receive certificates to document their achievements. Displaying the Honor Roll certificate will be optional.

Sites who receive a Needs Support rating on their VQB5 Quality Profile will be required to participate in improvement planning led by VDOE (VQB5 Guidelines Section 7.3).

VQB5 Quality Profiles (VQB5 Guidelines Section 6.3)

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.

VQB5 Quality Profiles 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 will be added beginning in the fall of 2025.

2) Site Information - This includes basic site information, such as location, age-levels served, type of public funding received, and hours of operation entered in LinkB5.

Data Verification (VQB5 Guidelines Section 6.4)

Before the publication of VQB5 quality profiles, data verification in LinkB5 provides sites with an opportunity to verify information, review any score replacements that have taken place, or request corrections prior to the information becoming publicly available. The data verification period begins on or around July 15 every year and will remain open for at least 10 business days.

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

To learn about ways to share your VQB5 Quality Rating, the VDOE has created a [Tips for Promoting Your Quality Rating \(Spanish\)](#) guidance document, found on the VQB5 Website.

Supporting Improvement

An important feature of VQB5 is that measurement and improvement are ongoing. Leaders and teachers have many opportunities to reflect on progress during the year using a continuous quality improvement cycle. (VQB5 Guidelines Section 7.1.1)

Using the results from CLASS observations and information about your use of approved curricula, site leaders and teachers should identify and access professional development supports that meet the unique needs of their program.

Using CLASS Scores to Guide Improvement

Use the CLASS Score Ranges below to determine next steps when focusing on classroom-level improvement. (VQB5 Guidelines Section 7.2.3)

- **CLASS scores in the High Range (score of 6-7) indicate areas of strength.** Classrooms with a total CLASS score 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 a total CLASS score in the mid-range should build upon the effective practices that they are already using to strengthen their teacher-child interactions.
- **CLASS scores in the Low Range (score of 1-2) indicate areas for improvement.** Classrooms with a total CLASS score in the low range should learn about effective teaching practice and participate in Foundational CLASS training and state-funded improvement supports that focus on improving teacher-child interactions.

Classrooms that receive a total CLASS score of 3.99 or lower will be prioritized for state-funded coaching services.

The following resources and strategies can be used by site leaders and teachers to help improve the quality of teacher-child interactions as measured by the CLASS tool.

Resource/Strategy	How to Use	Example/ Information
CLASS Dimension Guide	Refer to guide for practical strategies to improve interactions for each dimension.	Dimension Guides available online or from Ready Regions
Informal “Walk-Throughs” or “Focused Observations”	Conduct short (10-15 minute) observations in-between official fall/spring local CLASS observations.	Informal Observation form and instructions
Teacher Self-Assessments	Reflect on interactions in-between fall/spring local CLASS observations.	Infant , Toddler , and Pre-K Self-Assessment forms

Peer-to-Peer Learning	Share and discuss teacher-tips blog, or podcasts about CLASS during staff meetings.	Teacher-Tips ; Teaching with CLASS Podcasts ; Resources by Domain
Video Exemplars	Watch videos from real classrooms that align with CLASS domain and dimensions.	ECE Resource Hub: Classroom Strategy videos LA-Piccard Center CLASS Video Library
CLASS Score Averages	Reflect on strengths and areas for growth compared to other sites across the state and your region.	Public information about Virginia's CLASS score averages on the VQB5 Measuring Quality Interactions Webpage
Curriculum and CLASS Connections	Refer to curriculum materials for lesson plans and guidance that support CLASS dimensions.	ECE Resource Hub VDOE Early Childhood Curriculum Website
Foundational CLASS Training	Introductory level trainings about the age-specific CLASS tool, including domains, dimensions, and what to expect during a CLASS observation.	Trainings offered year-round by age-level through Ready Regions
CLASS Observer Training	Build internal capacity by becoming a certified CLASS observer in Infant, Toddler, and/or Pre-K.	Observer trainings offered year-round. Contact your Ready Region for information

VQB5 Improvement Partners

VDOE funds and works with a variety of improvement partners. These partners are responsible for working with birth-to-five programs to provide training, coaching, or coursework intended to improve the early childhood system, prioritizing supports for VQB5 programs. (VQB5 Guidelines Section 7.4)

For the full list of VDOE-funded improvement partners, along with additional details about quality improvement supports, visit the [Supporting Continuous Quality Improvement webpage](#).

To discuss professional development options in your area, please contact your [Ready Region](#).

2025-2026 Activities Calendar for VQB5 Sites

If the date listed falls on a weekend or holiday, it will be moved to the next business day.

SUMMER 2025	
VQB5 Required Activities	VQB5 Improvement Focus
- Complete VQB5 registration profiles in LinkB5 from August 15-October 1. - Site profile - Site Administrator profile/s - Educator profiles - Classroom profile/s - Enter information about the use of approved curriculum in classroom profiles by October 1.	CLASS – Prepare for CLASS observations by completing introduction or refresher training. Information about CLASS training options are available through your Ready Region. CURRICULUM – Optional use of an approved curriculum to promote children’s learning and development and to improve teacher-child interactions.
FALL 2025	
VQB5 Required Activities	VQB5 Improvement Focus
- Complete local CLASS observations in every infant, toddler, and preschool classroom and family day home between August 15 – December 22. - Ensure that scores from fall local CLASS observations are entered and verified in LinkB5 by December 22. - Participate in External CLASS observations for each age-level served. Primary Site Admin will be notified in advance regarding a three-week observation window. - Inform all parents about VQB5 and complete student/child lists by December 22 with all enrolled children for each VQB5 eligible classroom.	CLASS – As fall local observations are completed in each classroom, access your site’s local observation scores via the CLASS export reports in LinkB5. Review observation scores and feedback with your teachers to identify strengths and areas to work on. CURRICULUM – Optional use of an approved curriculum to promote children’s learning and development and to improve teacher-child interactions.
SPRING 2026	
VQB5 Required Activities	VQB5 Improvement Focus
- Complete local CLASS observations in every infant, toddler, and preschool classroom and family day home between January 20 – May 31. - Ensure that scores from spring CLASS observations are entered and verified in LinkB5 by May 31. - Participate in External CLASS observations for each age-level served. Primary Site Admin will be notified in advance regarding a three-week observation window. - Update curriculum use information in classroom profiles by May 31 (if needed).	CLASS – As spring local observations are completed in each classroom, access your site’s local observation scores via the CLASS export reports in LinkB5. Review observation scores and feedback with your teachers to identify growth from fall observations as well as additional areas for improvement. CURRICULUM –Optional use of an approved curriculum to promote children’s learning and development and to improve teacher-child interactions.
SUMMER 2026	
VQB5 Required Activities	VQB5 Improvement Focus
- Complete Data Verification for prior year’s data to confirm information prior to public posting of VQB5 Quality Profile July 15 –July 26. - Complete VQB5 registration profiles in LinkB5 between August 15-October 1.	CLASS and CURRICULUM – Using your site’s CLASS and curriculum results from the past year, reflect on what worked well and what your site will do to prepare for the upcoming annual cycle of measurement and improvement.

VQB5 Important Dates 2025-2026

This information is from the [2025-2026 VQB5 Guidelines](#) as noted in the section references below. **If the date/deadline listed falls on a weekend or holiday, it will be moved to the next business day.**

August 15

- VQB5 Registration Opens in LinkB5 (Section 3.2)
- Beginning of Fall CLASS Observation Window (Section 4.5.2)

October 1

- VQB5 Registration Ends (Section 3.2)
- Deadline for ECSE Classroom Option to Request to Use Toddler CLASS (Section 4.2)
- Deadline for AM/PM CLASS Observation Request in AM only (Section 4.5.2a)

December 1

- Deadline for Fall Site/Classroom Closure Requests, if applicable (Section 3.3)

December 22

- End of Fall CLASS Observation Window. (Section 4.5.2)
- Deadline to submit and verify fall local CLASS scores in LinkB5 (Section 4.5.2)
- Deadline for submission of Student/Child Lists in LinkB5 (Section 3.2.3)

January 12

- Deadline to submit a Fall CLASS Review Request, if applicable (Section 4.9)

January 20

- Beginning of Spring CLASS Observation Window (Section 4.5.2)

April 1

- Beginning of educator verification in LinkB5 (Section 3.2.1a)

May 10

- Deadline for Spring Site/Classroom Closure Requests, if applicable (Section 3.3)

May 31

- End of Spring CLASS Observation Window (Section 4.5.2)
- Deadline to submit and verify spring local CLASS scores in LinkB5 (Section 4.5.2)
- Deadline for submitting optional curriculum use updates in LinkB5 (Section 5.2.3)
- Deadline to verify educator information in LinkB5 (Section 3.2.1a)

June 7

- Deadline to submit a spring CLASS Review Request, if applicable (Section 4.9)

July 1

- Deadline for option to request Site Separation for upcoming year (Section 3.1.4)

July 13-24

- Data Verification in LinkB5 – Final opportunity to review and request changes to Site Information on VQB5 Quality Profiles before results are publicly posted in the fall of 2026 (Section 6.4)

For questions about VQB5 dates/deadlines, email vqb5@doe.virginia.gov.

VQB5 Participation Definitions

VQB5 Term	Definition from VQB5 2025-2026 Guidelines as noted in the Section references below.
Publicly-Funded program	“Publicly-funded program” 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. (Section 3.1.2)
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 or adoption. Publicly-funded programs that serve three or more unrelated children are required to participate in VQB5. Publicly-funded programs that only serve direct relatives are not required to participate in VQB5. (Section 3.1.2a)
Participant 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 provider that serves fewer than three unrelated children under age 5 at the time of the annual registration period (August 15-October 1) must inform the VDOE in writing that it does not meet the enrollment minimum by October 1 and are subject to annual verification or requests for documentation. (Section 3.2.2)
Full-Time	In VQB5, full-time refers to a program or classroom 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 and classrooms that provide early care and educational services on a regular and consistent basis. (Section 3.1.3)
Site	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 their 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. (Section 3.1.4)
Classroom	For VQB5, classrooms are places where children are supported to develop and learn. Classrooms in child care centers and public schools are typically organized by age-levels and/or needs of children. Each classroom will be assigned a VQB5 Classroom ID in LinkB5. Family day homes typically have one mixed-age classroom. (Section 3.2.1b)
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 three or more unrelated children permanently or temporarily during the fall or spring observation windows. (Section 3.3) • Permanently closed sites or classrooms are those sites that are no longer operating full-time and/or no longer serving at least three unrelated children <u>and</u> are not expected to reopen full-time or serve three or more unrelated children at any point during the fall or spring observation window. • Temporarily closed sites or classrooms are those that are not operating full-time and/or not serving at least three unrelated children for a short period of time. ○ Sites or classrooms not operating full-time and/or not serving at least three unrelated children for 30 days or more during the fall or spring observation windows will be eligible to request a classroom closure in VQB5.