June 27, 2019

The Honorable S. Chris Jones, Chairman
House of Delegates Appropriations Committee
Pocahontas Building
900 East Main Street, 13th Floor
Richmond Virginia, VA 23219

The Honorable Thomas K. Norment, Jr., Co-Chair
The Honorable Emmett W. Hanger, Jr., Co-Chair
Senate of Virginia Finance Committee
Pocahontas Building
900 East Main Street, 14th Floor
Richmond Virginia, VA 23219

Dear Sirs:

In accordance with Item 128.K of the 2019 Appropriation Act, please accept this report entitled: *Advancing Effective Interactions and Instruction in VPI Classrooms Progress Report* prepared by our team at the University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning. This report describes the progress of our work in partnership with the Virginia Department of Education to implement the investments the Virginia General Assembly made beginning in 2018-19 to understand and support quality teacher-child interactions and effective research-based curriculum implementation across every Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) classroom. This work included classroom observations to measure the quality of teacher-child interactions conducted in all VPI classrooms across a two-year period and provide VPI teachers with individualized feedback and professional development. In this report, we summarize key accomplishments during the first year of this initiative (July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019).

Please contact me should you have any questions about this report.

Respectfully,

Amanda P. Williford, Ph.D.
Associate Research Professor
Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning
Curry School of Education, University of Virginia
350 Old Ivy Way, Suite 100, Charlottesville, VA 22903
434-243-9553 (tel) 434-243-5480 (fax)
williford@virginia.edu

CC James Lane, VDOE
Jenna Conway, VDOE

UNIVERSITY of VIRGINIA
CASTL
CURRY SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Advancing Effective Interactions and Instruction in VPI Classrooms

Progress Report

Prepared for the Chairmen of House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees

By UVA-CASTL

June 29, 2019

Authors:
Amanda Williford, Jennifer LoCasale-Crouch, Jason T. Downer, Ann Lhospital, & Grace Funk

Acknowledgements:
This report was supported through a $350,000 appropriation from the Virginia General Assembly to the Virginia Department of Education provided to the University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (CASTL). The opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent views of the funding agencies.

Correspondence concerning this report should be addressed to Amanda Williford at williford@virginia.edu.

Table of Contents

Introduction *3*

Report Overview **4**

Early Adopter Process *5*

Rigorous Observation of Teacher-Child Interactions *7*

Background on the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) Tool **7**

VPI CLASS® Observer Requirements **9**

VPI CLASS® Observation Protocol **10**

Threshold Determination Process **11**

CLASS® Year 1 Data **11**

Early Adopter Sample **11**

CLASS® Dimension and Domain Descriptives **13**

CLASS® Domain Scores Relationship with One Another **14**

Distribution of CLASS® Domain Scores by Threshold **14**

Combined CLASS® Domain Scores by Threshold **16**

Year 1 CLASS® Reporting Process **17**

Classroom-Level Observation Report Overview **17**

Initial Teacher Feedback on CLASS® Reports **21**

Division-Level Reports **21**

Professional Development Supports Provided to Leaders Related to CLASS® Reports **21**

Professional Development for Teachers and Leaders Year 1: 2018-2019 ..... *22*

Professional Development Provided to Teachers and Paraprofessionals **22**

Professional Development Provided to Division Leaders/Feedback Providers **22**

Lessons Learned Year 1: 2018-2019 ..... *25*

Plans for Year 2: 2019-2020 ..... *26*

Introduction

In 2017, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) released the report "Improving Virginia's Early Childhood Development Programs" that reviewed state-supported early childhood development programs and made recommendations for improving children's school readiness through investments aimed at greater quality assurances. The General Assembly supported these recommendations through several investments beginning in 2018-19 aimed at understanding and supporting quality teacher-child interactions and effective research-based curriculum implementation across every Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) classroom. First, rigorous classroom observations were to be conducted in all VPI classrooms across a two-year period. Second, all VPI teachers were to receive individualized feedback and professional development. To that end, the University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (CASTL), Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) and VPI programs worked together to meet these goals. In particular, CASTL's work was defined through the budget language below (Item 128.K of the 2019 Appropriation Act):

> *Out of the appropriation in this Item, $350,000 the first year and $350,000 the second year from the general fund was provided through the Department of Education to the University of Virginia to ensure that all Virginia Preschool Initiative classroom programs would have the quality of their teacher-child interactions assessed through a rigorous and research-based classroom observational instrument at least once every two years using the CLASS® observational instrument for such assessment. All classrooms were to be observed no later than June 30, 2020. The University of Virginia, with input from the Department of Education and the use of its detailed plan for such assessments, would establish a statewide minimum acceptable threshold for the quality of teacher-child interactions for Virginia Preschool Initiative classroom programs, and classrooms that were assessed below the threshold would receive additional technical assistance from the Department of Education and the University of Virginia. The threshold would be established with the assistance of the University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning, using a rigorous and research-based classroom observational instrument. The threshold should be established no later than the beginning of the 2018-2019 school year and the classroom assessments should begin no later than spring 2019. The University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning should submit a progress report on such classroom observations to the Chairmen of House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees no later than June 30, 2019, and annually thereafter.*
>
> *Out of the appropriation in this Item, $300,000 the first year and $700,000 the second year from the general fund is provided through the Department of Education to the University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning to ensure that all Virginia Preschool Initiative classroom programs teachers receive appropriate individualized professional development training from professional development specialists to support quality teacher-child interactions and effective research-based curriculum implementation. Funding and professional development assistance shall be prioritized for teachers with Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) observation scores that did not meet the statewide minimum acceptable threshold standard established by University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning and the Department of Education. The University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning, assisted on an as needed basis, by the Department of Education, Virginia Early Childhood Foundation, and Elevate Early Education to hire and train specialists to provide such individualized professional development.*

Report Overview

CASTL prepared this report for the Chairmen of the House Appropriations Senate Finance Committees. The main purpose is to summarize key accomplishments during Year 1 (July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019), including:

- Recruitment of 50 Early Adopter VPI divisions
- Setting of CLASS® observation thresholds
- Design of CLASS® observation protocols and report templates
- Completion of external CLASS® observations in 544 classrooms
- Support for local leaders to provide teachers with individualized, CLASS®-based feedback
- Professional development to over 900 teachers and leaders

Each of these accomplishments will be outlined in more detail throughout the report, followed by initial lessons learned as well as plans for Year 2 (July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020).

Early Adopter Process

In partnership with the VDOE, CASTL recruited VPI programs to become Early Adopters for the 2018-2019 school year through a superintendent's memo and online application. The superintendent's memo notified school division leaders that CASTL sought to partner with divisions who were willing to participate in the first round of external CLASS® observations, receive training and technical assistance from CASTL, and provide formative feedback to CASTL in 2018-2019.

The online Early Adopter application was available from September-October 2018 and received 51 responses from divisions, all of which were accepted to be Early Adopters. CASTL followed-up with email notifications in October and set up individual kickoff calls with each VPI coordinator and their leadership teams for December 2018. In these kickoff calls, CASTL staff began building relationships with VPI coordinators and other leaders (principals, directors of instruction, etc.), provided an overview of the initiative, Advancing Effective Instruction and Interactions in VPI Classrooms, and responded to an array of individual questions. Common questions guided the creation of FAQ documents distributed statewide.

Following these individual kickoff meetings, CASTL worked with VPI coordinators to schedule Introduction to Initiative trainings for all teachers (see p.22 for details) and gather classroom information needed to schedule CLASS® observations for Spring 2019. One division opted out of participating as an Early Adopter, which led to a final number of 50 Early Adopter divisions (see Figure 1 and Table 1). These divisions demonstrated responsiveness to communications, engagement with the initiative components (observations, feedback, trainings) and offered constructive feedback through (post-training) surveys and communications across Spring 2019, meeting the objective of the Early Adoption process.

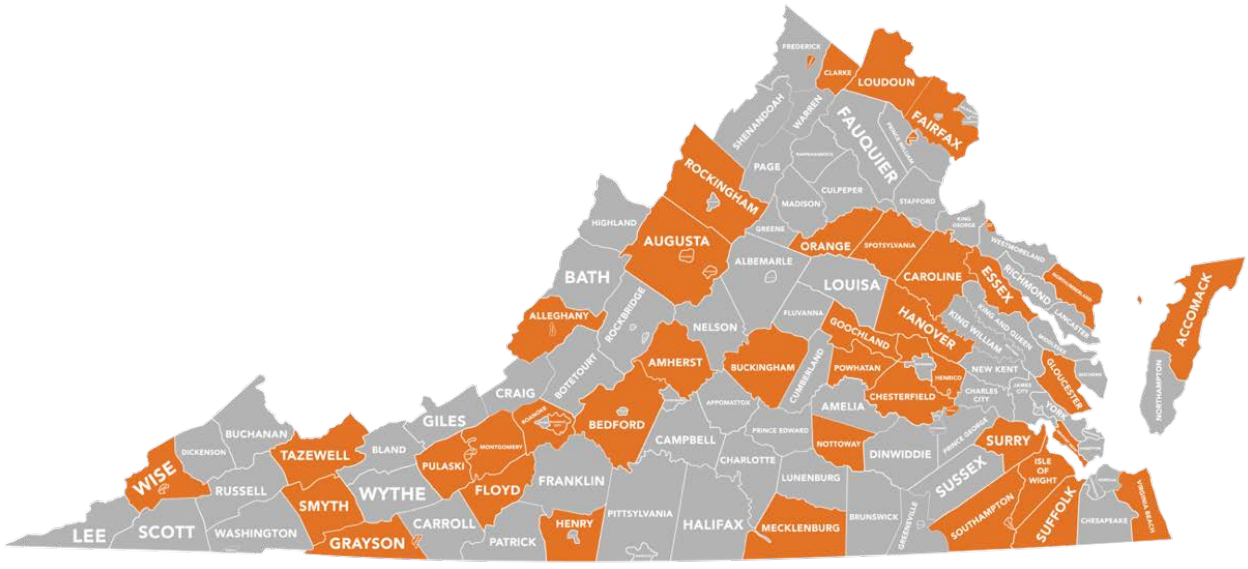


Figure 1. Early Adopter divisions electing to engage in the Advancing Effective Instruction and Interactions in VPI Classrooms initiative during the 2018-19 school year (shown in orange).

Table 1. Early Adopter Divisions Listed by Region

School Division Regions			
Central	**Tidewater**	**Northern Neck**	**Northern Virginia**
Powhatan County	Newport News	Colonial Beach	Winchester City
Chesterfield County	Suffolk Public Schools	Northumberland County	Loudoun County
Henrico County	Southampton County	Gloucester	Fairfax County
Goochland County	Virginia Beach City	Essex	Orange
Hopewell City	Franklin City	Spotsylvania	Clarke County
Hanover County	Isle of Wight County	Caroline County	Manassas City
Surry County	Accomack County		
Valley	**Western**	**Southwest**	**Southside**
Amherst County	Roanoke County	Grayson County	Buckingham County
Staunton City	Montgomery County	Galax City	Mecklenburg
Bedford County	Floyd County	Tazewell County	Nottoway
Waynesboro	Henry County	Wise County	
Augusta County	Covington City	Norton City	
Rockingham County	Roanoke City	Pulaski County	
	Alleghany County	Radford City	
		Smyth County	

Rigorous Observation of Teacher-Child Interactions

Background on the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) Tool

Effective, engaging interactions serve as the foundation for learning in early childhood classrooms. As such, measuring these interactions consistently and using them to provide feedback lies at the heart of offering high quality, enriching experiences for all children. The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®; Pianta, LaParo & Hamre, 2008) is a standardized, research-based observational protocol that assesses three key elements of teacher-child interactions – a well-organized and managed classroom, social and emotional support, and instructional interactions that stimulate children's thinking and skills (Hamre & Pianta, 2007). Figure 2 shows the CLASS® domains and dimensions. Table 2 describes the CLASS® dimensions, which are scored on a 1-7 scale, with higher scores reflecting higher interaction quality. The seven-point scale translates into three categories (Low, Mid, High), pictured in Figure 3. Scores are often reported at the domain level (Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, Instructional Support), although a few studies average all of the dimensions together to provide one overall score.

Figure 2. Domains and dimensions of the CLASS® Pre-K tool.

Table 2. CLASS® Domains, Dimensions, and Dimension Descriptions

Domain	Dimension	Description
Emotional Support	Positive Climate	Considers the comfort, warmth, and respect displayed in teachers' and students' interactions with one another and the degree to which they display enjoyment during learning activities.
	Negative Climate	Reflects the level of expressed negativity such as anger, hostility, or aggression demonstrated by teachers and/or children.
	Teacher Sensitivity	Encompasses teachers' awareness of and responsivity to students' individual academic and social-emotional needs.
	Regard for Student Perspectives	The degree to which teachers' interactions with students emphasize students' interests and ideas and promote child autonomy rather than being very teacher-directed.
Classroom Organization	Behavior Management	Encompasses teachers' use of effective methods to prevent and redirect misbehavior by communicating clear behavioral expectations and minimizing time spent reacting to behavioral issues.
	Productivity	Considers how well teachers manage instructional time, transitions, and routines so that students have maximal opportunities to learn.
	Instructional Learning Formats	The degree to which teachers maximize students' engagement by providing clear learning objectives, interesting materials, and facilitation.
Instructional Support	Concept Development	The degree to which instructional discussions and activities promote students' higher-order thinking skills versus rote learning.
	Quality of Feedback	Involves how teachers provide feedback focused on expanding children's learning and understanding versus correctness.
	Language Modeling	Involves teachers using language-facilitation techniques including: self- and parallel talk, open-ended questions, repetition and extension, and use of advanced vocabulary.

Table 3. CLASS® Domain Descriptions

Domain	Description
Emotional Support	The degree of warmth, respect, and evidence of close relationships; sensitivity and responsiveness to children's needs; support for children's autonomy; and lack of negativity.
Classroom Organization	The teacher's management of class time and attention to get the most learning out of every day; efficient routines and transitions; proactive behavior management; and active facilitation of learning.
Instructional Support	The teacher's use of strategies that support higher order thinking and connections between concepts; use of scaffolding (hints) and individual feedback to support learning; and use of strategies to promote language.

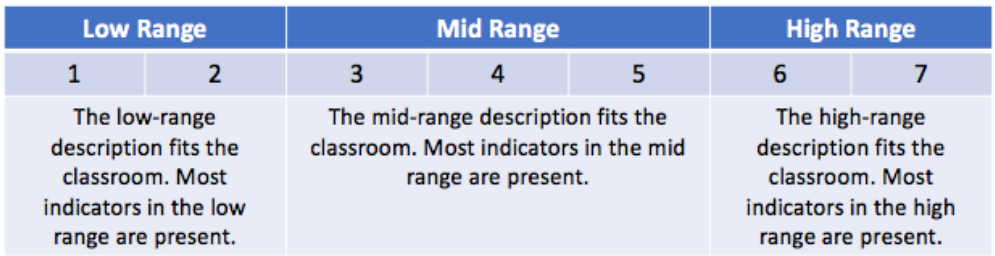


Figure 3. Range of Scores for CLASS® Dimensions

To date, dozens of observational studies utilizing *CLASS®* across a range of early childhood programs show that children who experience higher observed teacher-child interactions show higher levels of social-emotional and pre-academic development. There is also evidence that high-quality professional development can improve these classroom interactions (Hamre et al., 2012, Li Grining et al., 2014). As such, twenty-two states currently use CLASS® in their state or Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS), as a progress-monitoring tool, to inform professional development targets, and/or as part of a rating system (Teachstone, 2017). Within Virginia, CLASS® observations are already used as part of a voluntary Quality Rating Improvement System, called Virginia Quality, which is in place to improve the quality of child care and early learning programs. This system establishes quality-rating standards across five levels and participating programs are required to score at or above a certain level of CLASS® scores in order to achieve higher levels of the system. Because CLASS® offers a valid, reliable window into the critical interactions children experience within preschool classrooms, these observations are poised to contribute to quality improvement efforts in the Commonwealth of Virginia and therefore were selected to be used in VPI classrooms as part of this initiative.

VPI CLASS® Observer Requirements

Prior to conducting Pre-K CLASS® observations in VPI classrooms, CASTL worked with Teachstone, an education services company focused on the improvement of teacher performance in the classroom using the CLASS® methodology, to develop a set of requirements for external, independent observers that ensured standardized observations with high quality data integrity. First and foremost, observers had to be certified on the Pre-K CLASS® tool, which involves a multi-day training followed by participation in ongoing reliability checks, calibrations, and re-certifications (all involve watching preschool classroom video and providing codes that closely match a gold standard). Additionally, Teachstone set several other expectations for observers working in VPI classrooms, including the following qualifications:

- B.A. degree in relevant field, ideally Child Development or Education
- Experience using the CLASS® tool to conduct live observations (preferred)
- Experience conducting observations or administering assessments in school settings
- Experience in quantitative or qualitative data collection
- Fluent in English
- Complete Mandated Reporter and Human Subjects training

VPI CLASS® external observers are required to recertify on the CLASS® tool more frequently and at a higher standard than typical observers. If observers are within 60 days of their window for recertification, they will take a recertification test and must pass with a score of 85% overall and 80% at the domain level. If the observer does not meet these requirements, they will not be selected to observe.

During external CLASS® observations in Spring 2019, multiple approaches were used to ensure that observers were reliable (e.g., if two observers were in the same classrooms, then they would provide the same CLASS® scores) and adhered to the standardized observation protocol. Before beginning live observations, all observers were required to recertify with a pass rate of 85% overall, which is higher than the standard set by the creators of the tool. Additionally, during the first two weeks of data collection, all observers participated in a paired double coding observation with a Teachstone staff member. If the observer was not in 80% agreement with the Teachstone double coder, the observer would not observe the following week and would receive additional reliability support and score 80% on another calibration video before returning to live observations. Across the remainder of the observation window, inter-rater reliability checks occurred through regular double-coding sessions as well as weekly video coding calibrations, and 10% of the Spring 2019 CLASS® observations were double-coded.

Altogether, these robust approaches promoted inter-rater reliability, safeguarding the value and utility of baseline external CLASS® ratings.

VPI CLASS® Observation Protocol

CLASS® observers followed a standardized observation protocol during the Spring 2019 observations, which included specified steps for observers to take before, during, and after each observation. The observation protocol was developed taking into account best practices from other large-scale observation projects, including input from CASTL, Teachstone and the VDOE. The VPI Observation Protocol is similar to the protocol used for the Virginia Quality ratings (described on p. 9), such that scores from either can serve as external CLASS® observation data. The full VPI observation protocol was adapted into a set of frequently asked questions that have been made available to division leadership and teachers. Key items from the FAQs are highlighted in Figure 4 below.

External observer observation window:

- There is a window of 2 weeks for each classroom observation.
- Teachers receive an email from their observer a week ahead of the 2-week observation window notifying them of the window (VPI coordinators and site leaders are copied on these emails).

Teachers present during observation:

- The lead teacher (not a short-term substitute) must be present. Any new lead teacher or substitute lead teacher that has been in the classroom for 10 consecutive school days may be observed. Substitute teaching assistants may be observed.

Teachers observed impacting scores:

- CLASS® observations provide a classroom-level score that includes overall teacher-child interactions including the lead teacher and any other adults (e.g., assistant, paraprofessional). Observers follow the CLASS® manual, which states that observers watch children's interactions with all teacher/adults in the room/area. The focus on each teacher's interactions are weighed based on the number of students with whom they are working, the amount of time they spend with the students, and their responsibility for the activities.

Rescheduling an observation:

- Observations will be rescheduled in the case of inclement weather or if the lead teacher or more than 50% of children are absent.

Activities observed and not observed:

- Observed - activities, transitions and routines in the morning or afternoon.
- NOT observed – "specials" outside of the classroom (e.g., PE, music class, library visit), cafeteria-based meals, toileting where whole group visits the restroom, and recess.

Length of observations:

- Observations are approximately 2 hours long. CLASS® data is collected in four 20-minute observation cycles followed by 10-minute coding sessions. An observer may be present longer than 2 hours if an activity occurs that may not be observed or if additional breaks are needed for the observer.

Observer steps:

- There will typically be one observer per classroom, except in the cases of paired/double coding – which is used to ensure reliability.

- After checking in at the school/center, observers will enter the classroom, briefly check in with the teacher, and find a place in the room to site where they are able to see and hear without being disruptive. They will move discretely as needed to see and hear interactions.
- Observers will try to minimize their interactions with teachers and children in order to remain focused and objective and minimize any disruptions to the classroom.

Process after the observation:

- Within three weeks of the observation, CASTL will compile scores and notes into a classroom-level observation report and send to the VPI Coordinators. The VPI coordinator, and any other team leaders who serve as feedback providers, will provide teachers individualized feedback within three weeks of receiving the classroom-level observation report.

Figure 4. Sample items from the observation FAQ shared with division leaders and teachers.

Threshold Determination Process

Based on research evidence of what matters for children's outcomes, CASTL recommended the following thresholds denoting minimum standards of high-quality, effective classroom interactions: 5 on Emotional Support and Classroom Organization and 3.25 on Instructional Support (found by averaging the dimension scores within each domain). These thresholds come from research that indicates such levels are necessary to ensure positive impacts on children, and align with thresholds needed to meet Level 4 in the Virginia Quality system. Results from available studies and other large-scale initiatives suggest that a large percentage of classrooms may initially fall short of these benchmarks, particularly in the domain of Instructional Support. Nonetheless, the VDOE identified these thresholds in its Plan to Ensure High-Quality Instruction in all Virginia Preschool Initiative Classrooms and plans to revisit them once robust, statewide data are available in Summer 2020.

CLASS® Year 1 Data

Early Adopter Sample

Table 4 indicates the number of VPI classrooms with completed CLASS® observations during the Spring of 2019. In some cases, divisions decided to move some of their classrooms to Fall 2019 (84 classrooms), due to the large size of the division, classrooms already having been observed by Virginia Quality, or due to illnesses or other personal reasons for lead teachers being on extended absences. CASTL partnered with Teachstone to complete 544 classroom observations in Spring 2019 and sent out 544 corresponding classroom-level reports.

Table 4. Early Adopter Regions, School Divisions, and Classrooms Observed

Region	School Division	Number of VPI Classrooms with completed CLASS® Observations Spring 2019	% of VPI Classrooms per Division with completed CLASS® Observations Spring 2019
Central	Powhatan County	2	100%
	Chesterfield County	7	100%
	Henrico County	43	100%
	Goochland County	2	100%
	Hopewell City	8	100%

	Hanover County	3	100%
	Surry County	2	100%
Tidewater	Newport News	72	100%
	Suffolk Public Schools	24	100%
	Southampton County	6	100%
	Virginia Beach City	39	93%
	Franklin City	4	100%
	Isle of Wight County	5	100%
	Accomack County	7	100%
Northern Neck	Colonial Beach	2	100%
	Northumberland County	2	100%
	Gloucester	4	100%
	Essex	2	100%
	Spotsylvania	11	100%
	Caroline County	3	100%
Northern VA	Winchester City	2	25%
	Loudoun County	10	100%
	Fairfax County	63	52%
	Orange	3	100%
	Clarke County	3	100%
	Manassas City	10	100%
Valley	Amherst County	5	100%
	Staunton City	3	100%
	Bedford County	11	100%
	Waynesboro	5	100%
	Augusta County	18	100%
	Rockingham County	18	100%
Western	Roanoke County	22	100%
	Montgomery County	11	100%
	Floyd County	4	100%
	Henry County	16	100%
	Covington City	2	100%
	Roanoke City	27	96%
	Alleghany County	3	100%
Southwest	Grayson County	1	50%
	Galax City	2	100%
	Tazewell County	7	100%
	Wise County	9	100%
	Norton City	2	100%
	Pulaski County	9	100%
	Radford City	2	100%
	Smyth County	8	100%
Southside	Buckingham County	6	100%
	Mecklenburg	10	100%
	Nottoway	4	100%
TOTAL		**544 VPI Classrooms with Completed CLASS® Observations**	**87% of Early Adopter division classrooms**

CLASS® Dimension and Domain Descriptives

The following summary statistics reflect CLASS® dimension and domain averages across the 544 VPI classrooms observed in Spring 2019 (see Table 5). Each classroom observation resulted in scores for the ten CLASS® dimensions across four observation cycles (each involving 20 minutes of observation, followed by 10 minutes of scoring) during a typical school day. Those dimension scores were averaged and then the three domain scores were calculated from a composite of the dimensions.

Please note that these preliminary data only represent the sample of 50 divisions who volunteered to be Early Adopters in the Advancing Effective Instruction and Interactions in VPI Classrooms initiative. These Early Adopter classrooms were not chosen at random and are likely different in multiple ways compared to the statewide population of VPI classrooms. Therefore, these data are not representative of the VPI program as a whole and must be interpreted accordingly (i.e., within the constraints of the Early Adopter sample).

Each dimension below includes the mean (or average) across the 544 classrooms, the standard deviation, and the range of lowest observed to highest observed within the sample. As a reminder, CLASS® scores range from 1-7, with higher scores reflecting higher interaction quality (except in the case of Negative Climate where higher scores indicate more conflict and thus lower quality interactions).

The Emotional Support domain score includes the average of the dimensions of Positive Climate, Negative Climate (reversed), Teacher Sensitivity and Regard for Student Perspective. The Classroom Organization domain score includes the average of the dimensions of Behavior Management, Productivity and Instructional Learning Format. The Instructional Support domain score includes the average of the dimensions of Concept Development, Quality of Feedback and Language Modeling.

Table 5. CLASS® Dimension and Domain Descriptive Statistics for Early Adopter Sample

CLASS® Domains/Dimensions	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range
Emotional Support Domain Average	**5.85**	**0.77**	**2.88 – 7**
Positive Climate	5.89	0.98	2.25-7
Negative Climate[+]	1.16	0.35	1-3.75
Teacher Sensitivity	5.75	1.02	2.25-7
Regard for Student Perspectives	4.93	1.19	1.25-7
Classroom Organization Domain Average	**5.62**	**0.91**	**2.09 – 7**
Behavior Management	5.84	1.06	2-7
Productivity	5.94	0.89	2.5-7
Instructional Learning Formats	5.05	1.09	1.5-7
Instructional Support Domain Average	**2.78**	**0.94**	**1-6.34**
Concept Development	2.21	0.88	1-6.25
Quality of Feedback	2.69	1.12	1-7
Language Modeling	3.43	1.06	1-6.75

[+]Note: Higher scores represent more Negative Climate.

CLASS® Domain Scores Relationship with One Another

The following summary of statistics reflect the associations among CLASS® domains across the 544 VPI classrooms observed in Spring 2019. Emotional Support and Classroom Organization are correlated at .88, Emotional Support and Instructional Support are correlated at .70, and Classroom Organization and Instructional Support are correlated at .68 (the closer a correlation is to 1.0, the higher the relationship between two domains). This suggests that the three domain scores are closely linked. Classrooms scoring higher on one domain also tended to score higher on the other two domains.

Distribution of CLASS® Domain Scores by Threshold

The following summary of statistics reflect the proportion of the 544 VPI classrooms observed in Spring 2019 that fell below the VDOE thresholds (see Table 6). The threshold for Emotional Support is 5, Classroom Organization is 5, and Instructional Support is 3.25. The majority of classrooms met or exceeded the thresholds for Emotional Support and Classroom Organization, with only a few falling below (13% and 21%, respectively). In contrast, the majority of classrooms (71%) fell below the threshold for Instructional Support. The fact that the majority of classrooms fell below the threshold for instructional support indicates the need for a broad strategy to improve instruction (assessment of PD, implementation of a comprehensive curriculum, etc.) in VPI classrooms. We do note that these lower Instructional Support scores are similar to what is seen in other state-funded preschool and Head Start classrooms.

Table 6. Proportions of Classroom Domain Scores below CLASS® Thresholds for Early Adopter Sample

Domain	Threshold	Proportion Below Threshold
Emotional Support	5.00	.13
Classroom Organization	5.00	.21
Instructional Support	3.25	.71

These patterns are also evident in the density graphs below (see Figures 5-7), which provide a visual representation of the proportion of 544 VPI classrooms observed in Spring 2019 that fall below the threshold for Emotional Support, Classroom Organization and Instructional Support (the red shaded area). In addition, the peak of the curve in each graph represents the mean (or average) domain score across classrooms (details reported previously in Table 4) and the dashed vertical lines represent percentiles. Percentiles indicate a break in the distribution of CLASS® scores wherein a certain percentage of the sample falls below. For example, the 50th percentile for Emotional Support is a point in the distribution where half of the sample falls beneath the identified value (in this case 6.00). Alternatively, the 25th percentile for Emotional Support is a point in the distribution were 25% of the sample falls beneath the identified value (in this case 5.55). In total, these graphs indicate that on average VPI Early Adopter classrooms are scoring relatively high on the Emotional Support and Classroom Organization domains, though there is still considerable variability that places smaller percentages below the VDOE threshold. On the other hand, Instructional Support scores are much lower on average, with the vast majority of VPI Early Adopter classrooms falling below the VDOE threshold. This overall pattern across the three domains closely parallels other data from similar samples of state- and federally-funded preschool classrooms.

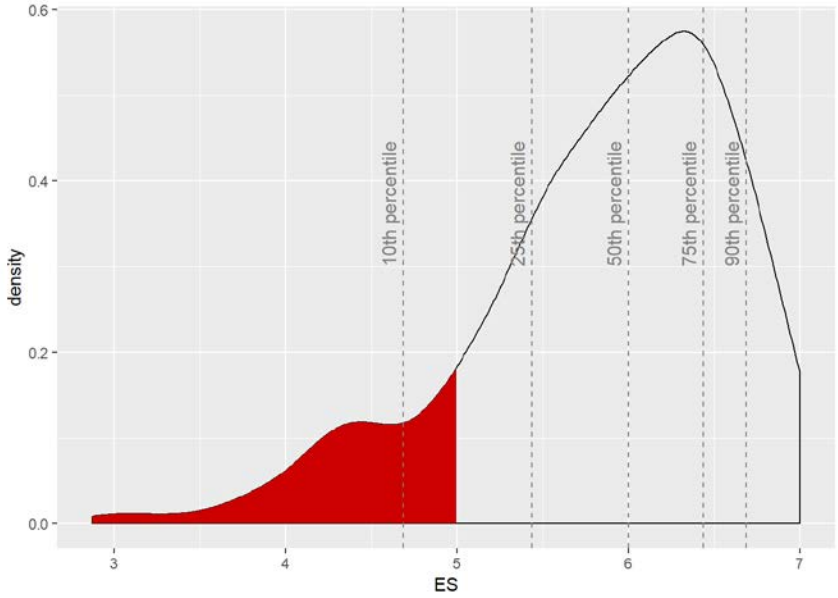


Figure 5. Density graph of classrooms below the CLASS® Emotional Support threshold for Early Adopter Sample (red shaded area represents classrooms below the threshold of 5).

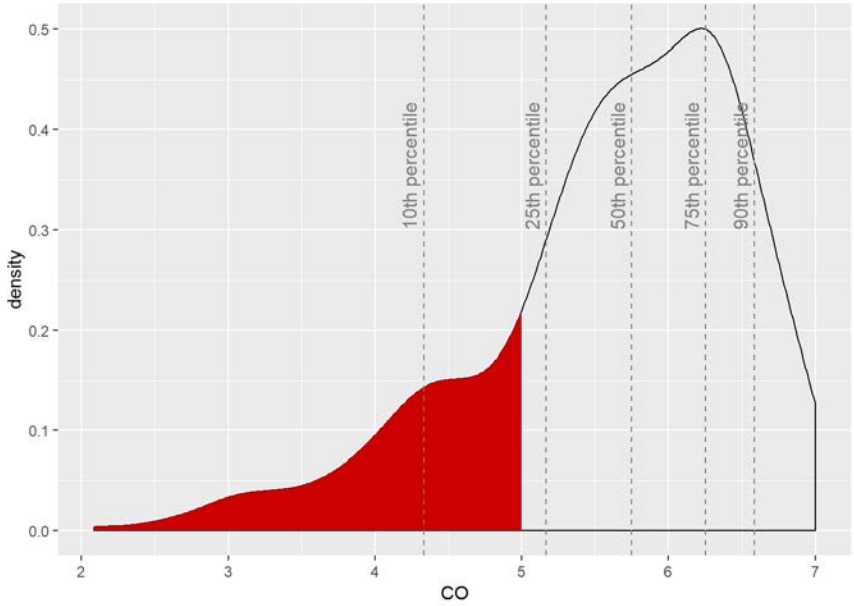


Figure 6. Density graph of classrooms below the CLASS® Classroom Organization threshold for Early Adopter Sample (red shaded area represents classrooms below the threshold of 5).

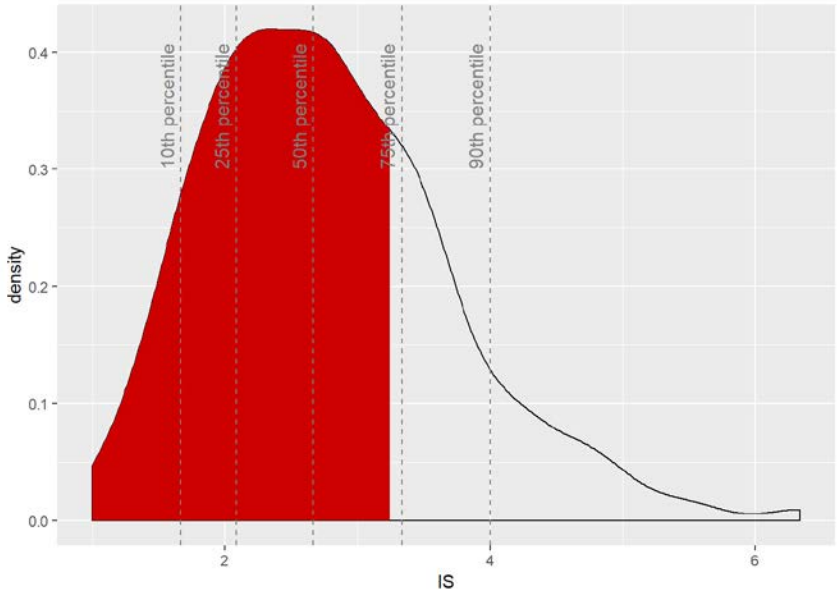


Figure 7. Density graph of classrooms below the CLASS® Instructional Support threshold for Early Adopter Sample (red shaded area represents classrooms below the threshold of 3.25).

Combined CLASS® Domain Scores by Threshold

In addition to examining the thresholds independently for each CLASS® domain, it is important to take into account ways that classrooms met the VDOE thresholds across the three domains in tandem (see Table 7). First and foremost, about a third (29%) of observed classrooms met or exceeded the VDOE threshold across all three domains. In addition, about half (~50%) of classrooms met two out of the three thresholds, though the vast majority of these classrooms met the thresholds for Emotional Support and Classroom Organization (49%) and not Instructional Support. This would indicate that most classrooms had responsive interactions and well-managed classrooms, but had less cognitively stimulating instruction (see CLASS® Domain descriptions in Table 3 on p. 8). While the majority of classrooms (88%) met or exceeded at least one of the domain thresholds, about 1 in 10 classrooms (12%) that were observed in Spring 2019 did not meet the threshold for any of the three CLASS® domains. While the percentage of classrooms not meeting the threshold in any domain of teacher-child interactions is small, it is important to stress that these classrooms have significant and widespread needs in terms of responsiveness, classroom management, and stimulation of children's thinking skills that must be addressed.

Table 7. Combined Threshold Analysis across the Three CLASS® Domains for Early Adopter Sample

CLASS® Domain Threshold Status	↑ = Met or Exceeded threshold	↓ = Below threshold	
Emotional Support	**Classroom Organization**	**Instructional Support**	**Proportion of classrooms with combinations of threshold status**
↑	↑	↑	.29
↓	↑	↑	< .01
↑	↓	↑	< .01
↑	↑	↓	.49
↓	↓	↑	< .01
↓	↑	↓	.01
↑	↓	↓	.08
↓	↓	↓	.12

Year 1 CLASS® Reporting Process

Classroom-Level Observation Report Overview

CASTL created an individualized Classroom-Level Observation Report for each VPI classroom observed in Spring 2019 and provided these reports to VPI coordinators to support the provision of individualized feedback to teachers. The intention for these reports was to go beyond simply sharing scores, provide more context for the scores, and focus on individual strengths and areas for growth. CLASS® data and notes were gathered from Teachstone's online platform (myTeachstone) and integrated into a template with explanatory text and supporting visuals designed by CASTL.

The reports provided in Spring 2019 consisted of the following sections (screen shots of a sample report are provided on the following pages):

- **Page 1: Introduction page explaining the CLASS® Domains and Dimensions**

Classroom: Room 1 | Observation Date: 2/27/19 | Virginia Division
Virginia Elementary | Teacher 1: Jane Smith | Teacher 2: Anne Jones

Classroom-Level CLASS Observation Report

You were recently observed using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)® as part of your participation in the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) Plan to Ensure High-Quality Instruction in All VPI Classrooms, administered by the Virginia Department of Education. The CLASS® is a measure of teacher-child interactions. Using the CLASS®, observers note the evidence of warmth, engagement, and cognitive stimulation in each classroom, and use their observations to assign scores.

The CLASS® assesses teacher-child interactions in three domains:

- Emotional Support (ES): The degree of warmth, respect, and evidence of close relationships; sensitivity and responsiveness to children's needs; support for children's autonomy; lack of negativity
- Classroom Organization (CO): The teacher's management of class time and attention to get the most learning out of every day; efficient routines and transitions; proactive behavior management; active facilitation of learning
- Instructional Support (IS): The teacher's use of strategies that support higher order thinking and connections between concepts; use of scaffolding (hints) and individual feedback to support learning; use of strategies to promote language

The three domains of the CLASS® are broken down into 10 different dimensions of teacher-child interactions.

- **Page 2: Interpreting Your Pre-K CLASS® Scores, includes:**
  - VPI Thresholds by Domain
  - Scoring scale/range
  - Note regarding Negative Climate

Interpreting your Pre-K CLASS® Scores

On the following page, you will find the dimension scores by for each of the four, 20-minute observation cycles completed, the formula for creating a domain score from these, and a graph showing the classroom average by domain relative to the state benchmark set by the Virginia Department of Education.

Emotional Support (ES) – 5
Classroom Organization (CO) – 5
Instructional Support (IS) – 3.25

These goals were set based on research suggesting the importance of reaching levels of quality that ensure positive impacts for children on key school readiness outcomes.

Following that chart, areas of strength and room for growth within each domain are highlighted. Regardless of whether the classroom average met the state benchmark, the two dimensions that scored highest within each domain are identified as the areas of strength, and the dimension that scored lowest within each domain is identified as an area for growth**. Here you will also see a few specific examples from the observation that reflect each CLASS® dimension.

Remember, there is always room to grow! Even if a dimension is categorized as one of your areas of strength, you can still work on getting the most out of every moment with children. When a dimension is categorized as one with room for growth, you may want to spend extra time working on those interactions and planning how to get the most out of the time you spend with children in your classroom.

Dimensions are scored on a seven-point scale, with higher scores indicating more effective interactions. (The exception is Negative Climate, for which lower scores indicate more effective interactions).

The seven-point scale translates into three categories, pictured below.

Low Range		Mid Range			High Range	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The low-range description fits the classroom. Most indicators in the low range are present.		The mid-range description fits the classroom. Most indicators in the mid range are present.			The high-range description fits the classroom. Most indicators in the high range are present.	

- **Page 3: Observation Report Data**
  - Dimension Scores by Cycle, and Averages Across Cycles
  - Domain Scores, Averaged Across Cycles
  - Domain Scores Relative to VPI Goals Chart

Observation Report Data

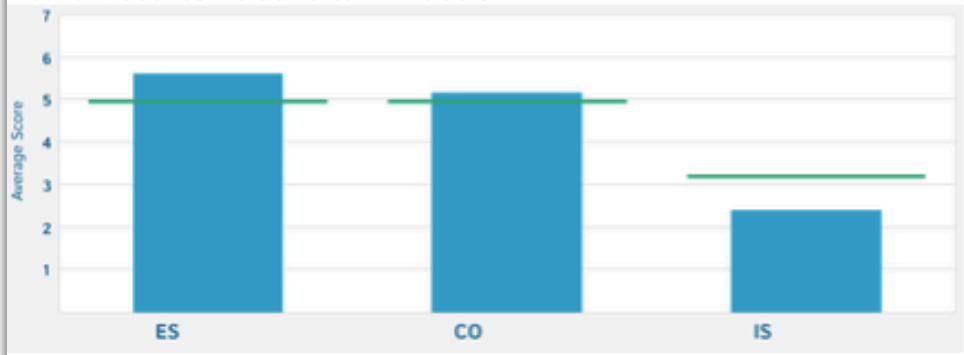
Dimension Scores

	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	Cycle 4	Average
PC	7	7	5	5	6.00
NC	1	1	1	1	1.00
TS	5	5	4	5	4.75
RSP	5	5	4	5	4.75
BM	5	5	3	5	4.50
PR	6	7	6	7	6.50
ILF	5	5	3	5	4.50
CD	1	1	2	2	1.50
QF	2	2	3	2	2.25
LM	4	4	3	3	3.50

Domain Scores

Emotional Support	Classroom Organization	Instructional Support
PC + reversed NC + TS + RSP / 4	BM + PR + ILF / 3	CD + QF + LM / 3
5.63	5.17	2.42

Domain Scores Relative to VPI Goals[1]



[1] The Virginia Preschool Initiative set statewide goals for each domain, represented above in green lines. (Emotional Support= 5, Classroom Organization=5, Instructional Support= 3.25).

- **Pages 4-6: Observation Areas of Strength and Areas with Room for Growth**
  - Emotional Support – two areas of strength, one area with room for growth
  - Classroom Organization – two areas of strength, one area with room for growth
  - Instructional Support – two areas of strength, one area with room for growth

INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT (IS)	
Two Areas of Relative Strength Within Instructional Support	
Language Modeling (LM) 	Your classroom scored in the **MID** range for **Language Modeling**, which measures teachers using language-facilitation techniques including: self- and parallel talk, open-ended questions, repetition and extension, and use of advanced vocabulary. Example from the observation: • The teacher uses a variety of language forms and novel words, connecting them to familiar words or giving the meaning to the children.
Quality of Feedback (QF) 	Your classroom scored in the **MID** range for **Quality of Feedback**, which measures how teachers provide feedback focused on expanding children's learning and understanding versus correctness. Example from the observation: • The teacher provides hints for children when figuring out beginning sounds of words.
One Area with Room for Growth Within Instructional Support	
Concept Development (CD) 	Your classroom was rated in the **LOW** range for **Concept Development**, which measures the degree to which instructional discussions and activities promote students' higher-order thinking skills versus rote learning. Example from the observation: • The teacher provided children with few opportunities to answer how and why questions while comparing, such as with the plants. • However, there were also positive examples of this dimension during the observation. The teacher provided time for children to plan where and how they would play and make comparisons between their plants, measuring with a variety of methods. The teacher also connected previous knowledge about insects to new information introduced in activities.

Initial Teacher Feedback on CLASS® Reports

After all 544 teachers from the 50 Early Adopter divisions received their CLASS® Observation Reports, CASTL sent lead teachers a survey asking about their experiences being observed with the CLASS® tool, receiving their observation reports, and participating in feedback meetings with a local feedback provider. Of the 223 respondents (41% of teachers) as of June 18, 2019, trends are emerging related to their experiences of the CLASS® reporting and feedback process. The majority of teachers reported that their CLASS® Observation Report was easy to understand (84%). Additionally, 87% reported that they will use the CLASS® data in the report to inform how they can grow their teaching practice. Most reported that they found the CLASS® Observation Report to be a useful tool for understanding their strengths and room for growth (77%).

When asked to rank order the sections of the CLASS® Observation Report from least to most useful, 60% of respondents rated the Observation Areas of Strength and Areas with Room for Growth to be the most useful. In contrast, only 17% found the Observation Report Data to be the most useful. CASTL will synthesize feedback from teachers (including additional surveys that are collected) and division leaders (through a survey and consultation calls) and use this combined feedback to guide planning for 2019-2020.

Division-Level Reports

Following completion of the Spring 2019 CLASS® Observations for Early Adopter divisions (as of May 2019), CASTL is producing a data table for each VPI Coordinator with the combined classroom-level data as well as site-level and division-level averages. CASTL will provide leaders a compendium document to guide use of their division-level data with a particular emphasis on identifying areas of focus for professional development in the coming year.

Professional Development Supports Provided to Leaders Related to CLASS® Reports

Local division leaders/feedback providers were expected to meet with teachers to go over the CLASS® data in the classroom-level reports, yet many of these individuals had not provided CLASS®-based feedback before. Therefore, CASTL provided an array of professional development to division leadership and feedback providers to support their use of the Classroom-Level CLASS® Observation Report to provide feedback to teachers (each described in more detail in the next section):

VPI Coordinator Meetings. One of the primary objectives of the VPI Coordinator Meetings was for participants to build knowledge and skills of effective feedback delivery, both in general and specifically tied to the CLASS® observation reports and feedback process.

CLASS® Reporting and Feedback Webinars. Similar to the VPI Coordinator Meetings, these reporting and feedback webinars were made available to all VPI divisions. The 1-hour webinars provided a deeper in-depth review of the CLASS® reports and their use in providing interactions-focused feedback to teachers.

Access to Effective Classroom Interactions (ECI) Online PD Modules. CASTL granted access to a series of online modules to division leaders/feedback providers to deepen their CLASS® knowledge.

Professional Development for Teachers and Leaders Year 1: 2018-2019

During Spring 2019, CASTL provided professional development to teachers and VPI leadership in a variety of formats. In this first year of the initiative, the focus of professional development was for division leaders and teachers to gain an understanding of the initiative including the purpose of external observations. Though the majority of CASTL's supports were provided at the leadership and feedback provider level, CASTL also interacted directly with teachers to kick off the initiative.

Professional Development Provided to Teachers and Paraprofessionals

Introduction to the Initiative Trainings. CASTL staff provided each of the 50 Early Adopter divisions with Introduction to the Initiative Trainings that took place between mid-January and mid-February. Divisions were able to choose between a 2-hour in-person meeting or a 1.5-hour webinar meeting. Some larger divisions asked CASTL to hold multiple meetings. Divisions were encouraged to include VPI Coordinators, all VPI teachers, assistants/paraprofessionals, early childhood special educators, coaches, school/site leaderships (principals, assistant principals, center directors), and any other participants they wanted to invite. Across the 50 division Intros, there were approximately 900 attendees. 36 of the meetings were held in-person, and 18 were held via webinar.

"I think that the initiative is very necessary as it will be another tool that can be used in the total education of our students."

The trainings were focused on the following learning objectives, targeted primarily to teachers:

- Understand why Virginia is focusing on increasing teacher-child interaction quality
- Learn about the timeline for the initiatives for Early Adopters and the remainder of Virginia
- Build initial knowledge about the CLASS® Pre-K Observational tool and how it will be used in Virginia

Of the approximately 900 attendees, 668 participants (~74%) completed a feedback survey after the Introduction to the Initiative Trainings. When asked about their satisfaction overall with the session, almost all respondents agreed or somewhat agreed that they were satisfied with the session (99%) and agreed or somewhat agreed that the session effectively provided an overview regarding important information and specifics about the CLASS® (99%). Most respondents (63%) indicated that their knowledge level regarding the CLASS® tool increased as a result of the brief CLASS® overview presented during the Intro training. Finally, 96% of respondents agreed or somewhat agreed that the Commonwealth's recent investments in CLASS®/PD will be beneficial for Pre-K programs.

"So grateful that opportunities for Early Childhood are being offered and that the importance of early learning is being recognized."

Professional Development Provided to Division Leaders/Feedback Providers

Following the kick-off calls (described previously in the Early Adopter section of this report), CASTL supported leadership through a number of other types of professional development, outlined below.

Introduction to the Initiative Trainings. As explained above, Introduction to the Initiative trainings took place across Virginia in January and February in order to build buy-in for teachers and leaders to the initiative, Advancing Effective Instruction and Interactions in VPI Classrooms, and provide teachers and leaders with key information about the initiative and what to expect over the coming months.

VPI Coordinator Meetings. In partnership with VDOE, CASTL developed and led four meetings across Virginia during March and April 2019. The 1-day meetings were focused on the following learning objectives:

- Build knowledge of the Advancing Effective Interactions and Instruction in VPI Classrooms initiative and the role of the CLASS®
- Build knowledge/skills of effective feedback delivery
- Build knowledge of effective professional development and consider strategies for planning PD with limited time/resources
- Build community across division leadership

"This was a content rich training experience. One of the most meaningful and organized trainings I've attended in a long time."

These VPI Coordinator Meetings were provided to all VPI divisions, not just Early Adopter divisions. A total of 248 participants from 118 school divisions were represented across the four meetings, with an average team size of 2-3 people per division. CASTL asked divisions to include VPI coordinators along with those in their division who also play a role of providing feedback directly to VPI teachers. Coordinators, principals, assistant principals, coaches, and early childhood special educators were all represented during the meetings.

Participants received relevant handouts related to planning for and providing effective feedback, freely accessible video clips of feedback sessions to analyze and review, and solutions to common professional development challenges (e.g., limited time and resources). Two handouts, called CLASS® Feedback Protocols (Part 1 and Part 2), focused explicitly on the principles and steps for using the CLASS® reports in the context of a feedback session between feedback providers and teachers.

"It was very informative, and I think that the videos were super helpful and the handout with the 6 Principles of Effective Feedback and really using it to talk through the videos was a true learning experience for me."

CASTL sent a survey to participants and received responses from 154 out of the 248 attendees (response rate of 62%). Attendees noted that they enjoyed the session (100%), were engaged by the learning formats (100%), and that the facilitators were responsive to their needs as learners (100%). Additionally, 99% of respondents agreed or somewhat agreed that the session helped them grow their knowledge and skills regarding delivering feedback. 95% agreed or somewhat agreed that the session helped them grow knowledge and identify solutions to common challenges regarding planning professional development. 98% agreed or somewhat agreed that the session helped them grow their knowledge of the role of the CLASS® in the current VPI initiative. And, 98% agreed or somewhat agreed that the session helped build community across VPI divisions.

Both in the survey as well as in-person during the VPI Coordinator Meetings, CASTL received feedback from participants that they are eager for more CLASS® knowledge and building their local knowledge and skills related to the provision of CLASS®-based feedback.

"I enjoyed moving around to share ideas with others room across the state. I took away ideas from colleagues that I may be able to use in my district."

CLASS® Reporting and Feedback Webinars (Including Feedback Protocols). CASTL developed and led four CLASS® Reporting and Feedback Webinars across the last two weeks of April 2019. Division leadership as well as local feedback providers were invited to attend. Similar to the VPI Coordinator

Meetings, the reporting and feedback webinars were made available to all VPI divisions. The 1.5-hour webinars provided an in-depth review into the CLASS® reports and their use in providing interactions-focused feedback to teachers. The webinars were focused on the following learning objectives:

- Understand the structure and components of the Classroom-Level VPI CLASS® Observation Reports
- Explore how to use the CLASS® Reports to provide effective and meaningful feedback
- Learn about additional resources to deepen CLASS® Pre-K knowledge in order to provide effective feedback

The webinars were focused on how to use the CLASS® Classroom-Level Observation Report to provide feedback and next steps to teachers. Following the structure of the Feedback Protocols, the webinars were organized around what feedback providers should do before, during and after feedback meetings with teachers and were focused on best practices in providing effective feedback parallel to one of the areas of focus of the VPI Coordinator Meetings.

Feedback Protocol: Part 1 – Giving CLASS® Feedback: Quickstart Guide. This resource, developed by CASTL and distributed to division leadership and feedback providers, is focused on the recommended steps to take before, during, and after a CLASS®-based feedback session. It includes a Teacher-Child Interactions Self-Assessment that is recommended for teachers to complete ahead of feedback meetings in order to come to the meetings prepared in their thinking about their own practice. It also includes a sample VPI Classroom-Level CLASS® Observation Report and a sample Feedback Session Planning/Note-taking Form.

Feedback Protocol: Part 2 – CLASS® Feedback Best Practices: Six Principles of Effective Feedback. This resource outlines the principles of effective feedback and walks feedback providers through each of them, articulating why each principle is important and specific strategies for incorporating each strategy into their feedback sessions.

The four CLASS® Reporting and Feedback Webinars included a total of 115 participants (from 27 Early Adopter divisions and 24 other VPI divisions). Of the 47 participants who responded to a survey, 98% responded that they either agreed or somewhat agreed that the webinar was useful. A number of respondents commented that even more differentiation of supports would be valuable given the many backgrounds of the divisions and variability in CLASS® knowledge.

"As an Assistant Principal, I provide feedback to teachers on a regular basis. This tool [CLASS®] aligns nicely with our process and supports our desire to provide effective and targeted feedback."

Effective Classroom Interactions Online PD Modules. CASTL granted access to a series of online modules to division leaders/feedback providers who provide feedback directly to teachers. The *Effective Classroom Interactions PD Modules* (ECI Online PD Modules) are professional development suites focused on effective classrooms interactions and their impact on children's development and learning. The modules are organized around the domains and dimensions of the CLASS® and are intended to help feedback providers deepen their CLASS® knowledge in order to better support their teachers. As of June 2019, 252 feedback providers from VPI divisions have registered for access to the modules, with plans to open registration for a second time in Fall 2019.

Lessons Learned Year 1: 2018-2019

CASTL in partnership with VDOE and Early Adopter VPI programs met the objectives for the Initiative to Advance Effective Instruction and Interactions in VPI Classrooms during the 2018-2019 school year. In completing CLASS® observations and providing support to Early Adopter division leadership and teachers, CASTL and VDOE increased their collective understanding of what works well and what improvements are needed as the initiative expands across all of Virginia in the coming school year.

The engagement levels of the 50 Early Adopter divisions remained high throughout the process. Division leadership and teachers consistently provided feedback about the work, showing high levels of buy-in, commitment to the initiative, and desire to help Virginia improve its supports for its youngest citizens. Across core aspects of the work, feedback was regularly positive – about the initiative, the work of CASTL, and the CLASS® reports and feedback processes.

Though initial CLASS® data across these 50 Early Adopter divisions must be interpreted cautiously (and not be generalized to VPI classrooms as a whole), it is worth noting that the general pattern across the three CLASS® domains reflects what has been consistently found in other similar state- and federally-funded preschool samples. Namely, Emotional Support and Classroom Organization are both strengths, with the majority of classrooms meeting the VDOE threshold. In contrast, Instructional Support is an area of growth for the vast majority of classrooms, with only 29% meeting the VDOE threshold. Children's learning depends upon cognitively stimulating interactions and so improving the instruction in VPI classrooms must be a priority. In looking across CLASS® domains, there is a small group of classrooms (12%) that met none of the VDOE thresholds, representing a high need for support to improve children's classroom experiences. CASTL and VDOE will work in the coming year to support all divisions in their professional development planning in order to ensure that programs and classrooms receive individualized professional development to improve the quality of interactions in all VPI classrooms. More intensive and targeted support to improve the quality of interactions across all domains must be provided to divisions who have classrooms that did not meet the threshold across all CLASS® domains.

In terms of the process of engaging in this work with the Early Adopters, it became quickly evident that there is high variability across divisions in terms of their needs, as well as the types of professional development currently being provided to teachers. Many teachers have limited access to quality professional development resources that are aligned with local needs. High degrees of variability were noted across the state in terms of current CLASS® knowledge, current professional development experiences, and the size and capacity of the systems in which they work. For example, in some divisions, VPI coordinators play many roles with provision of direct, individualized supports to teachers being one of many responsibilities, whereas in others there are dedicated coaches with time to provide regular, individualized feedback to teachers.

There is much work to do in building local capacity for this initiative. Significant classroom quality improvements will come when divisions align their existing resources and professional development activities to improving the quality of teacher-child interactions and instruction within their preschool classrooms. In Year 1, divisions reported limited funding resources to add CLASS® professional development trainings (provided via Teachstone). VDOE provided some additional funding through the Early Childhood Quality Grants to 14 divisions starting in May 2019 for CLASS® related trainings to those divisions. There is a clear need to help divisions identify and access funding to increase local capacity to improve the interactions and instruction in their preschool classrooms.

Plans for Year 2: 2019-2020

Synthesizing the successes and lessons learned from the first year of the initiative, including feedback from Early Adopter divisions, CASTL and VDOE are working together to develop a plan for providing technical assistance and professional development and building local capacity to support classroom quality in the upcoming 2019-2020 school year across all VPI divisions. This will include taking what worked with the 50 Early Adopters and providing parallel start-up supports to the approximately 72[1] remaining divisions. CASTL will provide kickoff calls to engage division leaders and hold Introduction to Initiative trainings for VPI teachers and leaders before scheduling external CLASS® observations. It is anticipated that up to 750 observations will be conducted, including anticipated numbers of classrooms in the remaining divisions and additional classrooms from Early Adopter divisions[2].

Following the new CLASS® observations in the remaining division's classrooms, CASTL will provide each division coordinator with individualized classroom-level reports and accompanying technical assistance to build division leaders' capacity to provide teachers with effective feedback. These supports will be ongoing and multi-faceted, including monthly Feedback and Action Planning webinars and provision of supportive print and online resources. This approach will not only support the immediate need of scaffolding local providers' feedback on external CLASS® observations, but also set the stage for leaders conducting feedback sessions following ongoing local CLASS® observations and curriculum fidelity observations (critical levers for improving classroom quality going forward). CASTL will further provide coordinators data files with division-, site-, and classroom-level averages to support leaders in planning professional development.

In year 2, CASTL and the VDOE will conduct a statewide needs assessment of capacity for professional development (i.e., planning, implementing) and provide individualized consultation supports to divisions according to identified needs which in the majority of cases will emphasize improving the quality of instructional support. CASTL will work with VDOE to provide more intensive and targeted support to those sites and classrooms that missed CLASS® thresholds across all three elements of effective teacher-child interactions.

CASTL will also work with VDOE to ensure that all VPI divisions are using a comprehensive and integrated curriculum. A stronger focus on curriculum implementation is a component to improving the quality of cognitively stimulating teacher-child interactions in VPI classrooms. The goal is that by the fall of 2020 all classrooms are using a comprehensive and integrated curriculum approved by VDOE.

In summary, CASTL and VDOE will continue to work together to develop supports and communication strategies to improve the quality of effective interactions and instruction in every VPI classroom so that preschool children are engaged in experiences and interactions that will help prepare them for success in kindergarten and beyond.

[1] 76 is the maximum number of divisions; 4 have indicated to VDOE that they do not plan to use VPI slots. Final number to be determined by VDOE in October 2019

[2] Some divisions opted to complete external observations across the two years.