

Fall 2020 Observation Protocol Guidance for K-12 Schools

Statutory and Policy Requirements: The Louisiana Regulations for the Evaluation and Assessment of School Personnel, [Bulletin 130](#), require all schools to conduct personnel evaluations. The purposes for which personnel evaluation will be used in Louisiana are as follows:

1. to support performance management systems that ensure qualified and effective personnel are employed in instructional and administrative positions;
2. to enhance the quality of instruction and administration in public schools;
3. to provide procedures that are necessary to retain effective teachers and administrators while strengthening the formal learning environment; and
4. to foster continuous improvement of teaching and learning by providing opportunities for targeted professional growth and development.

Observations are an effective way to understand the quality of instruction and interactions, as well as support educators. This support and feedback is even more important during the COVID-19 pandemic. During these uncertain times, students require supportive and thoughtful instruction more than ever, and teachers will benefit greatly from helpful feedback around instruction and interactions. The Louisiana Department of Education has determined that all approved rubrics for K-12 (Compass, NIET, and alternate rubrics with approved waivers) are suitable for observations independent of delivery format. It is recommended that any unannounced formal observation occurs in the traditional in-person/analog setting when possible. Formative evaluations should happen in both in-person/analog and virtual/digital settings where safe and appropriate. Schools and school systems should plan an evaluation cycle that is supportive formatively and summatively for teachers and leaders, and that meets the required number of formal observations for 2020-2021.

For the 2020-2021 school year, this plan should also be sensitive to the impacts of COVID-19 and include protocols for conducting observations following the Louisiana Department of Health - Office of Public Health (LDH-OPH) and Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) guidelines. If you have questions or need assistance, contact LDOECOVID19Support@la.gov. For Early Childhood protocols, please see the [Fall 2020 Local Observation Protocol Guidance for Early Childhood Community Networks](#).

COVID-19 Considerations

Essential Visitors: Per the [School Reopening Guidelines](#) approved by the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH)-Office of Public Health (OPH), essential visitors are allowed to enter schools to carry out essential functions in support of the implementation of state/federal law and Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) policy. **Essential visitors are individuals who must enter schools in order to conduct visits in accordance with Louisiana law or policy.** Essential visitors include, but are not limited to, individuals who:

- conduct observations
- observe teacher candidates as part of the teacher preparation quality rating system
- provide essential supports and services including, but not limited to, early intervention services, special education services, or mental health consultation

Public Health Considerations for In-Person Observations: The Department recognizes that the ability for in-person observations will be affected by COVID-19 factors within each school system. In partnership with the LDH-OPH, LDOE has established the following criteria that should be used when determining whether in-person observations can safely be conducted by external observers:

Public Health Consideration Types	When to Stop In-Person Observations	Suggested Guidelines for when to Resume In-Person Observations
Site-level considerations	If there are any documented cases of COVID-19 at the site (inclusive of staff, children and parents) or any evidence of community spread within the site, in-person observations at that site should stop immediately and virtual observations can commence.	In-person observations at that site may resume 14 days after the individual(s) with a documented case of COVID-19 has been isolated. (Guidance on how sites should isolate children and staff who become sick is found in the OPH Guidelines for Child Care and the OPH School Isolation/Quarantine Recommendations).
Observer-level considerations	If an observer exhibits symptoms of COVID-19 or tests positive for COVID-19, they should stop conducting in-person observations immediately.	The observer may resume conducting in-person observations after: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 days with no fever without use of fever-reducing medication AND • Respiratory symptoms have improved (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) AND • at least 10 days since symptoms first appeared.
	If an observer resides with a household member exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 or who tested positive for COVID-19, they should stop conducting in-person observations immediately.	The observer may resume conducting in-person observations 14 days after household member with COVID-19 has been: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • without fever without use of fever-reducing medications AND • respiratory symptoms have improved (e.g. cough, shortness of breath) AND • at least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.
	If an observer is exposed to COVID-19 through close contact with someone confirmed to have COVID-19 other than a household member, but the observer is not exhibiting symptoms and has not tested positive, they should stop conducting in-person observations immediately. (NOTE: A close contact occurs when a person is within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes starting from 48 hours before illness onset until the time the infected patient is isolated.)	The observer may resume conducting in-person observations 14 days after last known close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19.
	If an observer is sick with an illness other than COVID-19, they should stop conducting in-person observations immediately.	The observer may resume conducting in-person observations when recovered from their illness.

Live Video Conference & Recorded Video Protocol Requirements: In addition to the Public Health Considerations for In-Person Observations from page 2, the Department has also provided additional COVID-19 minimum requirements and protocols observers should implement when conducting in-person/analog or virtual/digital video observations in 2020-2021.

VIRTUAL OBSERVATIONS

Observers should develop protocols to ensure virtual or video recorded observations are conducted in a manner that:

- provides observations of teacher and administrator practice sufficient to gain a complete picture of performance and impart individualized feedback;
- considers individual sites' virtual and video recorded policies and capacity;
- establishes best practices for capturing and ensuring video quality, audio quality, and minimally invasive capturing techniques; and
- aligns with Louisiana children's privacy laws and best practices ensuring that schools provide parental notification and obtain parental consent or the opportunity to opt-out if school board policy allows before capturing footage from classrooms that may include children's images or audio if being transferred outside of the school observation debrief process

In accordance with local policies around video storage, it may be helpful for school systems to develop protocols for the safe storage and disposal of recorded video footage.

Virtual & Recorded Observations should ensure:

- the video length is sufficient to gain a complete picture of performance and impart individualized feedback;
- the video angle enables the ability to see and hear all teacher and student interactions;
- the video quality is tested for clarity (format, sound, and picture) work for school system technology, etc.; and
- information is procured regarding lesson format as synchronous/asynchronous and /analog and/or /digital.

Additionally, it is recommended that observers conducting virtual observations:

- place the device in an area of the classroom where the observer can see the interactions/actions of both the teacher(s) and the children;
- determine the best way to signal that the observation cycle has started and when it has ended; and,
- determine the best way to signal if the device being used to conduct the virtual observation needs to be moved to capture the best audio and video quality possible during the observation.

References & Additional Resources

- Louisiana Department of Education. (2018). Louisiana's data governance and student privacy guidebook. Retrieved from [https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/data-management/student-privacy-planning-guide-\(web\).pdf?sfvrsn=16#:~:text=Children%27s%20Online%20Privacy%20Protection%20Act%20\(COPPA\)%20assures%20that%20children%20under,express%20approval%20of%20their%20parents](https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/data-management/student-privacy-planning-guide-(web).pdf?sfvrsn=16#:~:text=Children%27s%20Online%20Privacy%20Protection%20Act%20(COPPA)%20assures%20that%20children%20under,express%20approval%20of%20their%20parents)
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- Louisiana Department of Health. (2020). School isolation/quarantine guidelines. Retrieved from <https://ldh.la.gov/assets/oph/Coronavirus/resources/SchoolScenarios.pdf>.
- Louisiana Department of Education. (2020). Video conference guidance and consent form: Early childhood classrooms. Retrieved from https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/covid-19-resources/parental-consent-for-video-and-audio-conferencing-for-early-childhood-classrooms.pdf?sfvrsn=b7dc991f_2