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The Pyramid Infant Toddler Observation Scale (TPITOS) (2009)
Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning
Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Interventions

This instrument focuses on the direct observation of adult behaviors/environmental arrangements specific to supporting the social emotional development of infants and toddlers. There are two types of items on this tool: Red Flags and Environmental Design/Key Adult Behaviors. The Red Flags are scored either a yes or a no. The other items are scored using the following 4-point scale:

Exemplary (4)**

- a. Observed consistently across the observation time
- b. Observed consistently across children in the classroom
- c. Practice is of high quality throughout the observation

Emerging (3)

- d. Practice is observed more often than not during the observation
- e. Practice is observed across multiple children
- f. Quality of the practice is acceptable and developmentally appropriate

Needs Improvement (2)

- g. Practice is observed infrequently or inconsistently across the observation time
- h. Practice is observed in some but few children
- i. Quality of the practice is minimal or inconsistent

Not observed (1)

- j. Practice is rarely observed
- k. Practice is used in a way that is developmentally inappropriate

Not Applicable (N/A)

- Use N/A when it is truly not possible to use the 4-point rating scale either due to the setting (center v. home) or due to developmental irrelevance such as with an item about toddlers when observation is limited to infants.

Observation Structure

The TPITOS observation consists of three main elements:

(1) Observing for Red Flags

(2) Observing specific routines and conducting engagement sweeps

- Observed routines for sweeps include: Free Play, Feeding/Mealtime, and Structured Group Activity
- At the beginning of Free Play, Feeding/Mealtime, and Structured Group Activities, an engagement sweep is conducted in which the total number of children in the activity (e.g., Feeding/Mealtime), and the number of children who are actively engaged in that activity are recorded

(3) Observing specific routines and rating behavioral and environmental items for each routine.

- All items are rated for each routine: (1) Free Play, (2) Feeding/Mealtime, (3) Physical Care Routine, and (4) Structured Group Activity.

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- For ease of rating during each routine, items are grouped together in the left hand column according aspects of behavior/environment within any given routine (i.e., General Environment and Interaction, Play Dimensions, Quality of Routines, and Transitions relevant to each routine).
- When assigning a rating consider all instances of the routine observed. For example, if you observed several Physical Care Routines, base your rating on the multiple routines observed.

Center Application

The purpose of the TPITOS in centers is to provide a classroom snapshot of adult behaviors/environmental arrangements specific to supporting the social emotional development of infants and toddlers. Observational data may be used to support professional development in the following ways: (1) identifying and making explicit the specific competencies that promote social-emotional development; (2) providing team and individual teacher feedback to reinforce teacher strengths; (3) guiding individual and team targeted goal-setting to strengthen teacher competencies; and (4) monitoring growth relevant to professional development competencies.

To complete this measure, the observer should observe for at least two hours in centers and should arrive prior to children's arrival if possible. Observation time should include arrival, snack or meal time, and activities when adults are interacting with children around toys, games etc. At least 3 children should be present during center observations. The TPITOS should be completed initially while focusing on the whole classroom with an eye toward children's general experience with all caregivers in the classroom. For the purposes of professional development, the user might also want to collect information on individual caregivers. In this case, the user could use a different form for each adult or could use different colored pens to rate multiple adults on one form.

Home Application

The purpose of the TPITOS in homes is to provide a snapshot of primary caregiver behaviors/environmental arrangements specific to supporting the social emotional development of all infants and toddlers at home. Observational data from the TPITOS may be used by home visitors to identify parenting strengths as well as parenting aspects that may be in need of strengthening. Such data can be used by home visitors to engage in focused reflective processes with parents to celebrate strengths, identify areas in need of strengthening, and focus on specific goals for strengthening caregiver behaviors and environmental arrangements for supporting social-emotional development in the home.

These applications of the TPITOS with families require that a strong home visiting program already be in place. For example, home visitors should be trained in recommended practices and have supervised experience in engaging families in reflective processes to support parenting goals relevant to promoting infant/toddler social-emotional development. For newer home visiting programs or programs without such professional development experience, it is advisable to first implement a mechanism for examining the extent of implementation of evidence-based and

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recommended home visiting practices and a professional development mechanism for strengthening such implementation prior to applying the TPITOS in homes.

The primary authors of this tool are Mary Louise Hemmeter, Judy Carta, Amy Hunter, Phil Strain, and Kathleen Baggett. While these individuals are responsible for the conceptualization and development of this tool, they would like to acknowledge others who provided input and feedback on earlier drafts including Lise Fox, Sarah Merrill, Janice Im, Linda Eggbeer, Donna Britt, Valeri Lane, and Lindsey Allard.

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OBSERVATION DESCRIPTION

Center	Home
Observed Teacher's Name: _____	Parent's Name: _____
Program Name: _____	Child's Name: _____

Date of Observation: _____ Start Time of Observation: _____ End Time of Observation: _____

Number of Adults Present: _____ Number of Children Present: _____ Age Range of Children Present _____

Complete the following grid to indicate what activities were observed and for how long:

Activity	Observed	Not Observed	Length of Time Observed
Arrival			
Diapering			
Play			
Feeding			
Transitions			
Group Time			
One on one therapy (OT, SLP, PT)			
Napping			
Departure			

Please describe any unusual circumstances or interruptions that may have affected the observation:

RED FLAGS

Circle Yes or No

1. The environment is setup such that children are isolated from each other for long periods of time*	Yes	No
2. Environment is arranged in a way that prevents children from engaging with materials, toys and/or activities.	Yes	No
3. Children spend large amounts of time disengaged without assistance from caregivers to become engaged **	Yes	No
4. Adults do not speak to and/or engage children.	Yes	No
5. Children who are distressed are left unattended	Yes	No
6. Routines are not predictable for toddlers.	Yes	No
7. Infants and young toddlers are expected to be on a similar schedule for activities such as feeding diapering to other children in the program instead of responding to individual children as needed.**.	Yes	No
8. Adults are more likely to tell children what <u>not</u> to do rather than what <u>to</u> do.	Yes	No
9. When problem behaviors occur, adults uses punitive practices (e.g., ignoring the child, using time-out; asking the parent to take the child home; ridiculing the child; speaking in a harsh tone; yelling; pointing out the child's behavior to other adults or children)	Yes	No
10. Adults use flat affect when talking with infants and toddlers.	Yes	No
11. Adults do not refer to children by name.	Yes	No
12. Adults speak harshly to children	Yes	No
13. There is no evidence of regular communication with families about the individual needs of their children** .	Yes	No
14. There is no evidence of materials or activities that were designed to honor the different cultural/linguistic background of individual children and families in the program**	Yes	No
**This item can be scored based on observation (O), interview (I) or both (B). Note in the column to the right what you used to score this item by circling the appropriate letter. See <i>technical guide for interview questions</i> .		

Engagement Sweeps

At the onset of each activity listed in the row to the right:
 Scan the classroom to see how many children are in the activity

- Count the number of children in the activity and list the number under 'Total Count'

Spend 5 seconds on each child in the activity

Count the number of children Engaged in the activity and list the number under 'Engage Count'. If children are participating through their attention, movement or manipulation of materials, they are "engaged." If they are passively waiting or just doing nothing, they are "unengaged."

Free Play	Feeding Mealtime	Structured Group Activity
Total Count	Total Count	Total Count
_____	_____	_____
Engage Count	Engage Count	Engage Count
_____	_____	_____

Rate each item under General Environment/Interaction,

General Environment & Interaction

Note: Structured Group Activity involves at least 3 children in a structured activity (e.g., circle time, story time, game, organized pretend play, etc.)

	Free Play	Feeding/Mealtime	Phys. Care Routine	Structured Group Activity
15. Adults provide children with opportunities to make choices (e.g. "this book or this book" or "you can sit and listen to a story or play with the toys." NOTE:	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
16. Interactions between adults (e.g., between classroom staff, families, administrators) provide appropriate models of social interaction (e.g., supportive, respectful, using emotion words). NOTE:	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
17. Adults immediately respond to children in distress to assess child status and provide support in a manner appropriate to the situation (e.g. a child fussing while beginning to nap is not picked up, but offered a back rub). NOTE:	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
18. Adults show physical affection toward children and smile at them. NOTE:	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
19. Adults use gestures, words, facial expressions, and physical positioning to respond to children's cues that they are ready to engage (e.g., child looking at an object, child looking at another child, child looking at the caregiver, reaching for an object) in order to maintain and extend the child's interest and engagement. NOTE:	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A

General Environment & Interaction	Free Play	Feeding/ Mealtime	Phys. Care Routine	Structured Group Activity
<p><i>KEY: 4 = Exemplary Practice; 3 = Emerging Practice; 2 = Needs Improvement; 1 = Not Observed.</i> For any item followed by **, there are clarification notes in the technical manual.</p>				
<p>20. Adults acknowledge and appropriately respond to children’s verbal and non-verbal cues Note:</p>	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
<p>21. Adults talk often to individual children. Note:</p>	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
<p>22. Adults respond to children’s communication attempts and extend conversations (e.g., scaffolding language and experiences). Note:</p>	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
<p>23. Adults verbally comment on children who are engaging in pro-social behaviors (e.g., smiling at another child, taking turns, giving a toy to another child) Note:</p>	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
<p>24. Adults make positive and varied attempts to engage children who are not engaged. Note:</p>	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
<p>25. Adults follow the child’s lead when engaged in interaction (e.g., adults talk about what the child is doing, interact with the child around a toy or play activity the child has selected; allow the child to direct the play and its pace). Note:</p>	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A

General Environment & Interaction	Free Play	Feeding/ Mealtime	Phys. Care Routine	Structured Group Activity
<p><i>KEY: 4 = Exemplary Practice; 3 = Emerging Practice; 2 = Needs Improvement; 1 = Not Observed.</i> For any item followed by **, there are clarification notes in the technical manual.</p>				
<p>26. Adults encourage children to appropriately express their feelings (e.g., adults validate children’s feelings and experiences, adults use a variety of feeling words to describe their own and children’s experiences). Note:</p>	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
<p>27. Adults comment on children’s feelings/thought perspectives to encourage children’s expression of thoughts, feelings, and needs (e.g., caregiver uses ‘talk aloud’ strategy to communicate child’s feelings/thoughts and model appropriate social actions/requests— “You’re so hungry, let’s tell Annie. Annie, I’m hungry, I need some cereal, could you pour me some cereal”). Note:</p>	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
<p>28. Adults redirect children engaging in challenging behavior** Note:</p>	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
<p>29. Children seem happy and content and are engaged in exploring their environment. Note:</p>	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A

PLAY DIMENSIONS	Free Play	Feeding/ Mealtime	Phys. Care Routine	Structured Group Activity
<p><i>KEY: 4 = Exemplary Practice; 3 = Emerging Practice; 2 = Needs Improvement; 1 = Not Observed.</i> For any item followed by **, there are clarification notes in the technical manual.</p>				
<p>30. A variety of developmentally appropriate toys and materials are available- (all of following must be present to score a 4) **</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Variety b. Developmentally appropriate c. Duplicates of highly preferred toys are available d. Toys that can be used by multiple children at the same time are available <p>NOTE:</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 N/A</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 N/A</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 N/A</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 N/A</p>
<p>31. Adults guide children in their play with peers as appropriate to the child's developmental level by describing child interest (e.g., "He wants to look at the book with you") and guiding simple interactions ("Push the car to her.")</p> <p>NOTE:</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 N/A</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 N/A</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 N/A</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 N/A</p>
<p>QUALITY OF ROUTINE</p>				
<p>32. Adults individualize their care based on each child's needs (e.g. infants eat on their own schedule, diapers are changed as needed rather than on a fixed schedule, infants are soothed in different ways, not all toddlers sit in circle time).</p> <p>NOTE:</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 N/A</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 N/A</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 N/A</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 N/A</p>
<p>33. Adults use feeding, mealtimes and other caregiving routines (e.g., diapering) as opportunities to interact socially with infants and toddlers.</p> <p>NOTE:</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 N/A</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 N/A</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 N/A</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 N/A</p>
<p>34. Adults promote interactions between toddlers in the context of activities and routines.</p> <p>NOTE:</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 N/A</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 N/A</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 N/A</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 N/A</p>
<p>35. Adults embed social emotional teaching (e.g., talk about feelings in books, look at pictures of different emotional expression, adult's label their own emotions) into routines throughout the day.</p> <p>NOTE:</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 N/A</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 N/A</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 N/A</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 N/A</p>

TRANSITIONS	Free Play	Feeding/ Mealtime	Phys. Care Routine	Structured Group Activity
KEY: 4=Exemplary Practice; 3=Emerging Practice; 2=Needs Improvement; 1=Not Observed. For any item followed by **, there are clarification notes in the technical manual.				
36. Classroom staff greets children and adults who enter the room. NOTE:	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
37. Transitions are short and individualized, and wait time is kept at a minimum. NOTE:	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A
38. Adults use verbal, object, gestural and/or visual cues to prepare children for upcoming transitions. NOTE:	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A	1 2 3 4 N/A