

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

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 Classroom 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:

1. 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
2. Emerging (3)
  - a. Practice is observed more often than not during the observation
  - b. Practice is observed across multiple children
  - c. Quality of the practice is acceptable and developmentally appropriate
3. Needs Improvement (2)
  - a. Practice is observed infrequently or inconsistently across the observation time
  - b. Practice is observed in some but few children
  - c. Quality of the practice is minimal or inconsistent
4. Not observed (1)
  - a. Practice is rarely observed
  - b. Practice is used in a way that is developmentally inappropriate

In order to complete this measure, the observer should observe for at least two hours. This 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 the observation. The TPITOS can be completed while focusing on the behavior of an individual caregiver or all caregivers in a classroom. If the user needs data on the classroom as a whole, the items should be scored based on all adults in the classroom. For the purposes of professional development, the user might want to collect information on individual teachers. 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.

The primary authors of this tool are Mary Louise Hemmeter, Judy Carta, Amy Hunter, and Phil Strain. 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, Kathleen Badgett, Sarah Merrill, Janice Im, Linda Eggbeer, Donna Britt, Valeri Lane, and Lindsey Allard.

*Please do not disseminate or copy without written permission from Mary Louise Hemmeter ([ml.hemmeter@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:ml.hemmeter@vanderbilt.edu)). Copyright © 2009. All rights reserved.*

Teacher's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Program Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date of Observation: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of Observation: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Number of Adults Present: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Children Present: \_\_\_\_\_ Age Range of Children Present: \_\_\_\_\_

**RED FLAGS**

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 teachers 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

<b>RED FLAGS</b>		
7. Infants and young toddlers are expected to be on a similar schedule to other children in the program	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 timeout; 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

CLASSROOM DESIGN/KEY ADULT BEHAVIORS	Exemplary Practice 4	Emerging Practice 3	Needs Improvement 2	Not Observed 1
<p>15. 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"> <li>a. Variety</li> <li>b. Developmentally appropriate</li> <li>c. Duplicates of highly preferred toys are available</li> <li>d. Toys that can be used by multiple children at the same time are available</li> </ul> <p>NOTES:</p>	4	3	2	1
<p>16. Adults provide children with opportunities to make choices throughout the day (e.g. “this book or this book” or “you can sit and listen to a story or play with the toys” to encourage children’s feelings of control and to encourage growing responsibility for their behavior/self regulation).</p> <p>NOTES:</p>	4	3	2	1
<p>17. Transitions are short and individualized, and wait time is kept at a minimum.</p> <p>NOTES:</p>	4	3	2	1

*KEY: 4=Exemplary Practice; 3=Emerging Practice; 2=Needs Improvement; 1=Not Observed.*

<b>CLASSROOM DESIGN/KEY ADULT BEHAVIORS</b>	<b>Exemplary Practice 4</b>	<b>Emerging Practice 3</b>	<b>Needs Improvement 2</b>	<b>Not Observed 1</b>
18. Adults use verbal, object, gestural and/or visual cues to prepare children for upcoming transitions. NOTES:	4	3	2	1
19. Classroom staff greet children and adults who enter the room. NOTES:	4	3	2	1
20. Interactions between adults (e.g., between classroom staff, families, administrators) provide appropriate models of social interaction (e.g., supportive, respectful, using emotion words) NOTES:	4	3	2	1
21. Adults use feeding, mealtimes and other caregiving routines (e.g., diapering) as opportunities to interact socially with infants and toddlers NOTES:	4	3	2	1

*KEY: 4=Exemplary Practice; 3=Emerging Practice; 2=Needs Improvement; 1=Not Observed.*

<b>CLASSROOM DESIGN/KEY ADULT BEHAVIORS</b>	<b>Exemplary Practice 4</b>	<b>Emerging Practice 3</b>	<b>Needs Improvement 2</b>	<b>Not Observed 1</b>
22. 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) NOTES:	4	3	2	1
23. Adults immediately respond to children in distress to assess child status and provide support. Adult considers context in the assessment of a child's distress and responds appropriately (e.g. a child fussing while beginning to nap is not picked up, but offered a back rub). NOTES:	4	3	2	1
24. Adults show physical affection toward children and smile at them. NOTES:	4	3	2	1
25. Adults make positive and varied attempts to engage children who are not engaged. NOTES:	4	3	2	1

*KEY: 4=Exemplary Practice; 3=Emerging Practice; 2=Needs Improvement; 1=Not Observed.*

<b>CLASSROOM DESIGN/KEY ADULT BEHAVIORS</b>	<b>Exemplary Practice 4</b>	<b>Emerging Practice 3</b>	<b>Needs Improvement 2</b>	<b>Not Observed 1</b>
26. Adults talk often to individual children. NOTES:	4	3	2	1
27. 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). NOTES:	4	3	2	1
28. Adults acknowledge and appropriately respond to children's verbal and non-verbal cues. NOTES:	4	3	2	1

*KEY: 4=Exemplary Practice; 3=Emerging Practice; 2=Needs Improvement; 1=Not Observed.*

<b>CLASSROOM DESIGN/KEY ADULT BEHAVIORS</b>	<b>Exemplary Practice 4</b>	<b>Emerging Practice 3</b>	<b>Needs Improvement 2</b>	<b>Not Observed 1</b>
29. Adults respond to children’s communication attempts and extend conversations (e.g., scaffolding language and experiences). NOTES:	4	3	2	1
30. Teachers 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 teacher, reaching for an object) in order to maintain and extend the child’s interest and engagement. NOTES:				
31. Adults promote interactions between toddlers in the context of classroom activities and routines. NOTES:	4	3	2	1
32. Adults verbally comment on children who are engaging in prosocial behaviors (e.g., smiling at another child, taking turns, giving a toy to another child) NOTES:	4	3	2	1
33. 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.”) NOTES:	4	3	2	1

*KEY: 4=Exemplary Practice; 3=Emerging Practice; 2=Needs Improvement; 1=Not Observed.*



<b>CLASSROOM DESIGN/KEY ADULT BEHAVIORS</b>	<b>Exemplary Practice 4</b>	<b>Emerging Practice 3</b>	<b>Needs Improvement 2</b>	<b>Not Observed 1</b>
34. 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 NOTES:	4	3	2	1
35. 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). NOTES:	4	3	2	1
36. Teachers comment on children’s feelings/thought perspectives to encourage children’s expression of thoughts, feelings, and needs (e.g., teacher 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”) NOTES:	4	3	2	1
37. Adults redirect children engaging in challenging behavior to more appropriate behaviors. NOTES:	4	3	2	1
38. Children seem happy and content and are engaged in exploring their environment. NOTES:	4	3	2	1

*KEY: 4=Exemplary Practice; 3=Emerging Practice; 2=Needs Improvement; 1=Not Observed.*