

How to Conduct an Internal Assessment Using Parenting Interactions with Children: Checklist of Observations Linked to Outcomes (PICCOLO)

Assessment at-a-glance

- Approximately ten minutes to complete
- Ages 10-47 months of age
- Assessment is based on observation only
- Uses a 3-point scale
- Emerging research supporting observation of teachers in childcare centers
- Looks at four domains: Affection, Responsiveness, Encouragement, and Teaching
- Available in Spanish

Required materials

- Parenting Interactions with Children: Checklist of Observations Linked to Outcomes User's Guide (PICCOLO) ISBN-13 978-1-59857-302-2 or ISBN-10-1-59857-302-0
- PICCOLO score sheets ISBN-13-978-59587-303-9 or ISBN-10-59857-303-9

Supplemental materials

- The PICCOLO Training DVD ISBN 978-1-59857-304-6

Purchase the materials

- There may be several sources where the required and supplemental materials can be purchased. Searching online by resource name or ISBN may yield several options from which to choose.
- Be sure to allow adequate time for ordering and delivery of all resources.
- Score sheets cannot be duplicated and must be purchased.

Conducting the Internal Assessment (start to finish)

1. Learn about the PICCOLO

- The more you learn about the quality practices in each PICCOLO subscale, the more accurate your own internal assessment will be.
- It is recommended that the administrators and internal assessment team become familiar with the expectations of the PICCOLO, prior to the internal assessment.
- Using the [Program Quality Assessment Professional Development Catalog](#), access some of the professional development and learning options for the PICCOLO including articles, videos, and other resources.
- Read through the *PICCOLO User's Guide* to understand the basic information about PICCOLO and guidance on coding practices. Some information is also available on *The Piccolo Training DVD: Implementation and Scoring*.

- Watch video clips of parent-child interactions on *The PICCOLO Training DVD*. The videos offer an opportunity for scoring PICCOLO behaviors and comparing your scores to the author's scores for those clips, which are provided in Appendix C.
- Practice observing staff interactions. If you are comfortable and it is an approved program practice, video a staff person and child together for in house training. Practice scoring the video by watching it with someone else. Score the PICCOLO domains separately and then compare your ratings. Watch the video again and discuss the differences in your ratings until you can come to an agreement for all items.

2. Prepare to conduct the internal assessment

- Gather the materials needed to conduct the observation including digital device (if preferred), paper/pencil, copy of the *PICCOLO User's Guide* and a PICCOLO score sheet.

3. When to conduct the internal assessment

- When you have ten minutes of uninterrupted time to observe
- When the teacher has ten minutes to engage with a child uninterrupted
- A variety of activities can be observed, choose activities that
 - Fit program goals.
 - Can be done in a small space.
 - Engage both the adult and the child.
 - Lasts about ten minutes.

4. Conduct the internal assessment

- Spend approximately ten minutes per observation.
- Videotaping the observation is highly recommended for your internal use only.
- Collect notes for each item. Taking notes is extremely helpful for various reasons. First, note taking will help you score accurately. If you are reviewing the assessment to check your scores, looking back at notes will help. Second, note taking will help you and your teachers create goals based on observed data that was written. Anecdotal evidence is needed to support scoring decisions.
- Be objective. It might be second nature to give scores based on what you see your teachers do regularly. The PICCOLO is designed to look at quality in a set amount of time. If the practice is observed during your scheduled assessment time, count it; if it is not observed during that time, do not count it.
- Read every indicator of quality carefully. Refer to the *PICCOLO User's Guide* for specific examples for items.
- Read all supplemental information. Review the Observation Notes for the four domains in the User Guide.

5. Score the PICCOLO

- If scoring live observations, score right after the observation is completed.
- If scoring video observations, score after reviewing the videos.
- Score all four domains.
- The 29 items are scored on a three-point scale:
 - 0-Absent-no behavior observed
 - 1-Barely- brief, minor, or emerging behavior
 - 2-Clearly- definite, strong, or frequent behavior
- Add the item scores in each domain to get a domain score; add the domain scores to get a total PICCOLO score.

6. Review findings

- Review your assessment results with your Internal Assessment Team, Quality Coach and Program Quality Assessor and brainstorm areas for CQI (Continuous Quality Improvement) goals.
- The best way to interpret the PICCOLO scores is by looking at high domain scores or high item scores as strengths. All staff do some positive things when interacting with their children.
- It is important to celebrate strengths. Often improvements build upon strengths.
- Talk with the staff about their perceptions of observed interactions with the child.

7. Next steps

- Ensure everyone has contributed ideas and ensure everyone knows the next steps to take toward improvement.
- When planning for CQI goals, look toward implementing the next level in the indicators.
- Start small. Focus on one or two indicators at a time.
- Be patient. Do not be discouraged if your initial scores do not meet your expectations. Growth takes time.
- Change what you can and accept those things that are outside of your program's ability to improve.
- Share your plan for growth/CQI plan with everyone involved on your team.
- Plan to revisit your goals and program's administrative practices regularly to assess and update as goals are achieved. The CQI process is cyclical as you continuously reflect on your practices and your drive for growth.