

PICCOLO™ Observation Considerations for for Babies and Preschoolers

in Parenting Interactions with Children: Checklist of Observations Linked to Outcomes

Originally designed to observe developmentally supportive parent interactions with children 10 – 47 months-old, PICCOLO™ can also be used to observe foster parents, grandparents, other kin and caregivers, child care providers in homes and centers, teachers, nannies, babysitters, older siblings, or anyone having regular interactions with a child or multiple children 3 to 73 months old.

Use these additional considerations—together with Table 2 in the [PICCOLO User's Guide](#)—to inform scoring of specific items. Use the infant considerations when the observation includes infants (3 to 9 months). Use the preschool child considerations for older children (48 to 73 months).

Item		Additional considerations for infant or preschool child
<i>Affection</i>		
1.	Speaks in a warm tone of voice	<i>Infant.</i> Addresses infant in a voice that gets his/her attention by using a variety of high and low pitches or soft to loud tones that show enthusiasm or tenderness. <i>Preschool child.</i> With preschool-aged child, voice tones may be more even but should reflect interest or enthusiasm.
2.	Smiles at child	<i>Infant.</i> Smiles appropriately at infant, especially when child is engaged, but when infant is distressed may offer small sympathetic or reassuring smiles. <i>Preschool child.</i> Smiles may be less frequent but more integrated into interactions that include positive verbal communication. Smiles at child as part of communication in transitions and routines.
3.	Praises child	<i>Infant.</i> May also express any positively toned vocalization that is contingent on infant behavior. Cheering or clapping counts for any age. <i>Preschool child.</i> Flat sounding generic responses like small "yea", "yes", "good job" may be more common than with a younger child. Praise should always be in a positive tone. If authentic positive tone and acknowledgement is missing (e.g. flat generic responses) code as a 1, even if frequent and consistent.
4.	Is physically close to child	<i>Infant.</i> Also include gentle touching and holding infant in comfortable position. <i>Preschool child.</i> Physical proximity may be closer and more frequent with infants, toddlers and younger child than older preschool-aged child.
5.	Uses positive expressions	<i>Infant.</i> Affectionate family nicknames for infants may sometimes seem negative ('fatso,' 'mushroom,' etc.) so watch for smiles and listen for warmth. <i>Preschool child.</i> Affectionate nicknames should not sound babyish or have negative connotations, and are generally less common as children get older. Preschool aged children may be embarrassed by nicknames around others.
6.	Is engaged in interacting with child	<i>Infant.</i> May blend play activities with caregiving routines and shares looks, attention, smiles, touch, and conversations while engaged with infant.
7.	Shows emotional warmth	[no additional considerations]

PICCOLO Observation Notes

Item	Additional considerations for infant or preschool child
<i>Responsiveness</i>	
1.	<p>Pays attention to what child is doing</p> <p><i>Infant.</i> Shows awareness of infant’s cues attention, interest, (e.g., body movements, gestures, vocalizations, gaze, and facial expressions). Also, may show awareness of when the infant is overstimulated or needs a break from the activities.</p>
2.	<p>Changes pace or activity to meet child’s interests or needs</p> <p><i>Infant.</i> Engages infant when alert, awake and ready to play. Ends or slows down the interaction when the infant seems overwhelmed or disengages. Discovers what sights, sounds, touches and movements bring infant pleasure, keep infant calm or foster infant’s attention.</p> <p><i>Preschool child.</i> Older child may not lose attention or need to be re-engaged like toddlers and tend to control the pace more. Caregiver adapting to the child’s pace may be more common, than changing the pace.</p>
3.	<p>Is flexible about child’s change of activities or interests</p> <p><i>Infant.</i> Accepts infant’s level of engagement or change of interest. Does not persist at play when the infant loses interest or try to wake a sleeping infant or put an active and engaged infant to sleep.</p> <p><i>Preschool child.</i> May also encourage child to engage in specific activities or routines if there is also flexibility at other times for child’s self-directed activities and interests.</p>
4.	<p>Follows what child is trying to do</p> <p><i>Infant.</i> Takes time to assist infant in play and exploration, to follow the child’s gaze, to make toys of interest available, or to join in an activity. Notices where child is looking or reaching and moves child closer to what they are interested in. Imitates infant’s action or expressions.</p>
5.	<p>Responds to child’s emotions</p> <p><i>Infant.</i> Anticipates and responds to the sounds, movements, gestures and facial expressions infant uses when expressing joy, distress, surprise, or any other feeling.</p> <p><i>Preschool child.</i> Labeling emotions was rarer than with toddlers. Child emotions may be less animated than younger child. Should still see behaviors like showing similar feelings as the child and shared smiles.</p>
6.	<p>Looks at child when child talks or makes sounds</p> <p><i>Infant.</i> Looks at infant when infant vocalizes and/or gestures (e.g., arms in air to signal up) for communication and attention.</p>
7.	<p>Replies to child’s sounds or words</p> <p><i>Infant.</i> Replies with vocalizations to infant’s communication attempts that include any sounds—cooing, whining, laughing, babbling, etc. May reply with gestures, particularly if either has hearing deficits.</p>

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<i>Encouragement</i>		
1.	Waits for child's response after making a suggestion	<i>Infant.</i> Suggestions may be nonverbal. May attempt to initiate play, such as by making a play face, doing the first step in a sequence (e.g., clapping hands), or by offering a toy, but then waits to see infant response before proceeding. Does not continue if infant does not respond or show interest.
2.	Encourages child to handle toys	<i>Infant.</i> Provides opportunities for infant to successfully reach out for, grasp or inspect toys or safe objects.
3.	Supports child in making choices	<i>Infant.</i> Offers choices of toys and activities and bases play on infant's positive response. May include any kind of play, but should truly offer a choice based on infant's initiation or infant's positive response. A choice can be a simple yes/no choice (e.g., holds rattle in infant's reach, but stops offering rattle if infant looks away) or a choice between toys or activities (e.g., holds rattle and ball for infant to choose).
4.	Supports child in doing things on his/her own	<i>Infant.</i> Encourages infant to try activities available such as setting up opportunities for infant to roll, sit, crawl or stand, reach for a rattle, pull a string toy, insert a puzzle piece, eat finger foods, or hold and turn pages in a book. <i>Preschool child.</i> Older children will do more things on their own like holding book, turning pages, directing play, so focus more on being positive about child doing things independently and letting child choose how to play.
5.	Verbally encourages child's efforts	<i>Infant.</i> Talks to infant using labels to describe child's motivation or interest (e.g. "Oh, you want the <i>ball!</i> ") and encourages infant's efforts (e.g., "You can get it!").
6.	Offers suggestions to help child	<i>Infant.</i> Helpful "suggestions" for infants may include adapting the environment by moving a toy closer, pointing to or touching an object, demonstrating what to do with a toy, or positioning the infant to make it easier to reach or to see something the child is <i>already</i> interested in. Physical guidance to help child use a toy they are trying to use can be helpful but <i>only if</i> not intrusive and does not interrupt the child's play.
7.	Shows enthusiasm about what child is doing	<i>Infant.</i> Responds to infant's efforts to do something by making a positive expression, either verbal or non-verbal.

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	Item	Additional considerations for infant or preschool child
<i>Teaching</i>		
1.	Explains reasons for something to child	<i>Infant.</i> Explains actions during play (e.g., “we need to move closer so you can reach the ball”) or daily routines such as diaper changes (e.g., “I have to change your diaper because you are so wet!”).
2.	Suggests activities to extend what child is doing	<i>Infant.</i> Helps infants extend a game like peek-a-boo (e.g., by showing the infant how to move from covering her face with a hand to pulling of a cloth off her face), or helps infant <i>add</i> new actions with objects (e.g., stacking 2 blocks instead to extend banging the blocks together) or <i>discover new actions</i> that can make things happen (e.g., turning different knobs on a busy box) or <i>extend</i> motor skills (e.g., assists infant in moving from prone to sitting during play).
3.	Repeats or expands words	<i>Infant.</i> Repeats infant’s early words, sounds or vocal inflections and voices meaning to them (e.g., if infant says <i>ba</i> , he or she may say, “Ball,” or put it in a sentence, “That’s right, it’s a ball!”) or simply reacts by expanding on the child’s sounds in a conversational style (e.g., in response to babbling, “That’s right, that’s exactly what happened.”) <i>Preschool child.</i> Repeating decreases as child get older, but should still be expanding on what child say.
4.	Labels objects or actions for child	<i>Infant.</i> Labels familiar object names (e.g. “book”) or actions (e.g., “Should we read the book?”) With younger infants, labels are often in the form of questions, “Is that a doggie?”
5.	Engages in pretend play with child	<i>Infant.</i> Early pretending may include playfully pretending to eat the baby, having dolls or stuffed toys hug or kiss the baby, ‘gonna get you’ games with self or objects (e.g., ‘here comes the bear to get you’), playing peekaboo or hide and seek with objects (e.g., saying “Where did the doggie go?”). May pretend to be the baby—for example by pretending to drink from the bottle—to make the baby laugh.
6.	Does activities in a sequence of steps	<i>Infant.</i> Assists infant with sequencing through game-like routines (e.g., peekaboo, or “gonna get you” games), action songs (e.g., “Pat-A-Cake”), sequential tasks (e.g., filling containers and dumping them) or implementing predictable steps within a daily routine (e.g., always changing diaper before going down to sleep). The sequence should be clear and consistent. Repeated sequences are usually clearer. Consider whether the infant could anticipate the next step in a sequence.
7.	Talks to child about the characteristics of objects	[no additional considerations]
8.	Asks child for information	<i>Infant.</i> Asks questions with pacing, timing and pauses long enough to allow a younger infant to communicate in some way, responding vocally, verbally and/or nonverbally (e.g., nodding head, looking or reaching in the direction of object asked about or pointing), even if the infant does not respond. This should not be just a pretend conversation but an actual request for communication (e.g., “Do you want up?” and waiting long enough for child to communicate in some way (e.g., reaching or otherwise indicating wanting up).