

How to Conduct an Internal Assessment Using the Teaching Pyramid Infant-Toddler Observation Scale (TPITOS)

NOTES: Although the TPITOS can be used for the purpose of internal assessment, it can also be conducted as an external assessment by a TPITOS trained and reliable Pennsylvania Key Program Quality Assessor (hereinafter referred to as “Assessor”).

When using the TPITOS for an internal assessment to meet the expectations for one of the Keystone STARS Standards, please consult the [Keystone STARS Performance Standards](#) and the [Keystone STARS Program Manual](#) for additional information.

How to conduct an objective, authentic classroom assessment

The Keystone Stars Standards expect programs to conduct internal assessments annually and, once every three years, engage their internal assessment team in discussion of their internal assessment results with a Program Quality Assessor from the Pennsylvania Key.

- The internal assessment should be an **observation**; therefore, someone who has knowledge of the selected Program Observation Instrument (POI) and its expectations should plan to observe for the recommended amount of time (for the specific POI) in the classroom. Keep in mind, the internal assessment is not something to be given to the classroom teacher to complete as a checklist of things that the teacher feels occur in the classroom. Teachers cannot observe themselves in action and may not provide an objective picture of their classroom. The observer should be able to commit to observing and taking notes and should not have any classroom responsibilities during the observation.
- The observation should occur when most of the children are present and actively engaged in the classroom so interactions with peers, teachers, and materials can be observed; therefore, no part of the observation should occur during naptime unless naptime is a required component of the POI.
- The internal assessment should be viewed as an integral part of a program’s commitment to continuous quality improvement rather than just another piece of paperwork to be completed to meet an expectation. Information from an objective internal assessment can yield much information about the program’s practices, providing a foundation for the program to celebrate their successes and build upon existing practices.

TPITOS assessment at-a-glance:

- Use in center-based infant and toddler settings serving children 0 - 3 years of age. (Although the TPITOS is specifically designed to be used in classrooms where teachers are implementing the Pyramid Model, it is relevant in a variety of infant and toddler classroom settings.)
- Assessment is based on observation and interview. The focus is on one specific teacher, but other adults will be considered. No documentation is needed.
- At least two hours are needed to conduct the TPITOS.

Required materials:

- Teaching Pyramid Infant-Toddler Observation Scale ISBN 978-1-68125-241-4 (TPITOS scoring form sold in packs of five)
- Overview of the [Pyramid Model for Promoting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children](#) and the practices associated with the Model

Supplemental materials:

- Teaching Pyramid Infant-Toddler Observation Scale for Infant-Toddler Classrooms Manual, ISBN 978-1-68125-242-1

Purchase the POI:

- There are several sources where the required books/forms 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 the materials.
- The TPITOS scoring form is sold in packs of five; one form should be used for each classroom observed.
- Ordering one TPITOS Manual per program is sufficient.

Conducting Internal Assessment with the TPITOS

1. Learn about the TPITOS:

- It would be helpful for each program staff involved in the internal assessment to have an understanding of the [Pyramid Model for Promoting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children](#) and the practices associated with the Model
- Register for the Online self-paced: PA Foundations of the Teaching Pyramid Infant Toddler Observation Tool (TPITOS) on the [Professional Development \(PD\) Registry \(papdregistry.org\)](#) (available sometime in 2024/2025).
- Request a [Facilitated Program Observation Instrument Orientation \(FPO\)](#). This one-hour session with an Assessor provides time to learn some of the basic information about the TPITOS and an opportunity to ask specific questions. The FPO is structured to meet each individual's or program's specific needs and each person attending receives one hour of PQAS (Pennsylvania Quality Assurance System) credit. **Please note the FPO is not a substitute for the online self-paced ROSIE course, but rather provides a basic overview.-**
- Access [additional information](#) on the TPITOS.
- It is recommended that each program staff involved in the internal assessment becomes familiar with the expectations of the TPITOS:
 - 13 Items and 11 Red Flags; the introductory video provides an overview of each section. Red Flags describe teacher behaviors that may compromise children's social-emotional development.
 - Some Items require observing a practice a certain number of times; Appendix C in the TPITOS includes a list.
 - Because the scale is designed for infant and toddler classrooms, some Items and Indicators are not relevant for both age groups and are noted in the scale.

2. Prepare to conduct the internal assessment with the TPITOS:

- If time has elapsed since your purchase, review, or use of the TPITOS or Pyramid Model, or if it has been a while since you attended a training on either, re-familiarize yourself with the scale expectations.
- Gather all materials needed: TPITOS scoring form, pen/pencil, notepad, and timekeeping device (a visible classroom clock is sufficient).
- Set aside at least two hours of time for the observation; more time may be necessary if only two routines have been observed (see section three below about routines).
- It may be helpful to tell the children that a guest will be visiting their classroom for a special project. They will watch them play and do their work but will not be able to play with them while doing their work.

3. When to conduct the internal assessment:

- Conduct the assessment when you have at least two to three hours of uninterrupted time. Consider the following:
 - At least three of the following routines should be observed: free play, structured group activities, personal care, and outdoor activity. Each routine should be observed for a minimum of 15 minutes per routine.
- At least three children should be present.
 - Ask for input from the teacher being observed about the best time in the schedule to view these activities when the suggested number of children are present.

4. Conduct the internal assessment:

NOTE: The chosen classroom should maintain a typical schedule while the observation is occurring.

- Be as unobtrusive as possible and refrain from interacting with children.
- Position yourself where you can view the activities of the teacher being observed.
- Record observation notes on a notepad or on the Notes section of each Item on the TPITOS scoring form:
 - Focus on what the teacher is doing (instead of watching the children)
 - Keep a running record of notes about actions that are related to the Items.
 - Record the schedule of classroom activities observed including type of activity and start/end time of each activity on the Schedule of Activities sheet.
- Do not score the Indicators during the observation. Indicators should be scored after the observation and interview are completed. Red Flags should be scored as they occur and after the observation and interview are completed.
- Stop recording notes when the two hours of classroom observation time are over unless only 2 routines have been observed; continue the observation until a third routine is observed.
- Meet with the teacher to conduct the interview.
 - Should occur on the same day as the observation
 - Ask the questions exactly as stated on the scoring form

5. Determine your TPITOS score

- Score the assessment immediately after the observation and interview are completed. All Indicators will be answered Yes or No (unless they are not relevant to the age group being observed as indicated in the scale).
 - Items 1 – 7 - Each Indicator is scored for each type of observed routine. The overall Indicator score is based on the score most frequently given across the routines.
 - Items 8 – 11 - One score is given for the overall observation period (not within specific routines).
 - Some Indicators in Items 3 – 8 and 11 may be scored by observation or interview if the observation does not provide enough information; the scale specifies Indicators where questions may be asked.
 - Items 12 – 13 are based on interview only.
- Full scoring instructions can be found on the TPITOS scoring form and in the Manual.

6. Review the findings

- Conducting a TPITOS assessment is only the first step of the process toward growth. Review your assessment findings with your Internal Assessment Team, PQA, and Quality Coach (when applicable). Discuss and celebrate strengths in the practices that support social and emotional learning and Pyramid Model practices.

- Identify goals to achieve growth and include them in your Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CQI).
- **NOTE about Red Flags:** They signify problematic practices that may need immediate attention; they may represent issues related to teacher training and support or to program policies and procedures. These may need to be reviewed with the classroom teacher and program leadership before the meeting with the IA team and PQA.

Next steps

- Ensure everyone has contributed ideas and ensure everyone knows the next steps to take toward improvement.
- When planning for CQI goals, focus on those areas where you want to improve.
- Start small. Focus on one change 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.