



Administrator-Classroom Observation Tool (A-COT)

Teacher Name:
School Name:
Date of Observation:
Length of Observation:

**Focus of Observation: Activity/Learning
Setting: (mark all that apply)**

- whole group lesson
- small group lesson
- learning centers
- unstructured
- transitions

Instructional Focus: (mark all that apply)

- Phonological Awareness
- Print & Letter Knowledge
- Read Aloud
- Written Expression
- Oral Language
- Math
- Science



ADMINISTRATOR-CLASSROOM OBSERVATION TOOL

HOW TO USE THE ADMINISTRATOR-CLASSROOM OBSERVATION TOOL OR A-COT

The A-COT captures targeted information across several key areas of early childhood practice known to influence children's success in preschool and their readiness for learning in kindergarten. Observations guided by the A-COT will be most beneficial when observations are: (a) targeted at specific activities, lessons, or daily routines of interest (b) occur frequently enough to provide information about how consistently behaviors are implemented (c) are scored based on a full lesson, and (d) are followed-up with feedback and planning. When scheduling time for the A-COT administrators should consider the level of expertise of their teachers, building in more frequent observations and opportunities for feedback with introductory level teachers than is necessary for more advanced practitioners.

The A-COT is designed to be completed at the beginning of the year and updated during subsequent observations. Administrators enter on the A-COT report form the date a specific behavior is first observed in a teacher's classroom. These dates will allow teachers and administrators to monitor progress and plan for additional professional development in areas of greatest need.

SCORING THE A-COT:

- When a behavior listed on the A-COT occurs, even if implemented at a lower level of the proficiency than desired, mark the behavior as *OBSERVED*. This will give an accurate record of behaviors the teacher knows something about, and will allow the administrator to look at consistency over time.
- Once a behavior is selected as *OBSERVED*, the *NEEDS SUPPORT* box should be checked if the teacher needs support to improve the quality of implementation in this area.
- At the end of the observation, the administrator should reflect on each of the A-COT sub-areas and record a summary rating documenting the level of support the teacher needs in the sub-area.

CREATING AN ACTION PLAN:

The action plan gives teachers and administrators an opportunity to explicitly describe *how* they are going to implement the changes needed in order to accomplish the goals set after the observation. Administrators will use the ratings to determine the area or areas of greatest need. Administrators need to remember that it is best not to overwhelm a teacher by selecting too many goals. While some goals do complement each other, others do not. The action plan should have at minimum two parts.

- Part one should identify how teachers will implement the changes in their rooms by a designated time (usually the next visit). Here the administrator should help the teacher identify *what* s/he can accomplish independently without the administrator's help.
- Part two should explicitly describe *how* the administrator will support the teacher in meeting the set goal or goals.

These steps of observing, scoring and creating specific actions to accomplish goals should be repeated regularly to ensure that teachers' and their students' needs are met. Additionally, as administrators observe in multiple classrooms across time, they should look for trends across teachers by tallying the ratings within sub-sections. These tallies will allow administrators to quickly spot areas of need for their staff as a whole, prioritize accordingly, and allocate resources for professional development and support. Finally, as with the individual teacher, administrators should repeat this process throughout the year as a way to ensure that their staff as a whole is performing at a desired level of proficiency and meeting their students' needs and the expectations of their administrators.

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FRAMEWORKS FOR ENVIRONMENTS, PLANNING & MANAGEMENT

Classroom Environment		
Observed	Needs Support	
		Classroom has a well-established area for conducting large group activities (e.g., adequate space for all children, shared writing materials, meaningful print, children’s daily schedule)
		Room has several clearly define areas (i.e. clear boundaries established by use of short shelves, bins, tables, and chairs) for learning and exploration in specified topics/areas (e.g., writing, ABC, dramatic play, math)
		Classroom has an easily identified center management system (e.g., centers/workstations are clearly labeled with words and pictures, system for switching/rotating centers is evident)
		Evidence of shared writing and/or class made print samples on display in centers or around the room
		Books linked to the current theme or topic are accessible in learning centers
		Children have access to a variety of writing materials
Planning and Management		
Observed	Needs Support	
		Orients children to the expectations in the classroom through discussion or reminders of established rules and expectations as needed (e.g., using a classroom rules poster, center limits on management chart, materials labeled).
		Lesson plans show strong connection between instructional standards and theme/unit-related activities (e.g., theme activities teach important objectives/standards rather than only linking to a theme).
		Implements lesson plan activities generally as planned to follow through with learning objectives.
		Duration of activities was appropriate for children’s attention span (e.g., whole group 10-15 minutes, small group 7-10 minutes, quick transitions)
		Children are able to move to centers and transition to other activities in well regulated manner.

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SOCIAL EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Observed	Needs Support	
		Responds promptly and sensitively (warmly and with genuine concern/understanding) to children’s verbal and nonverbal signals, values, feelings, interests, and needs
		Uses verbal or non-verbal behaviors to deliberately engage all children , not just those who volunteer or those with stronger speaking skills, stronger social skills, or students who are more shy/withdrawn
		Uses positive non-verbal behaviors (get on child’s eye level; smile; use affectionate/reassuring touch, as appropriate; allow children to move close to or sit with the teacher when appropriate)
		Models or teaches sensitivity to cultural differences and diversity including respect for children’s home languages, background, disability

EARLY LITERACY

Phonological Awareness			<input type="checkbox"/> Not Observed
Observed	Needs Support		
		Understands and incorporates different stages of phonological awareness (e.g., rhyming, alliteration, syllabication, elision, blending) into phonological awareness instruction. Note* teacher may emphasize a limited number of stages during a given observation but should focus on each of them across the school year.	
		Integrates phonological awareness activities/practice throughout the observation period (e.g., whole group, small group, transitions)	
		Provides an opportunity for children to use manipulatives (e.g., counters for say-it, move-it phoneme level activity) when engaged in phonological awareness activities	
Print & Letter Knowledge			<input type="checkbox"/> Not Observed
Observed	Needs Support		
		Discusses letter features (e.g., lines/sticks, round, curved)	
		Discusses letter names	
		Discusses letter-sound correspondence	
		Uses letter name/letter sound games/activities (ex., alphabet bingo, song about individual letter sound, fishing for names/letters, etc.)	
		Provides opportunities for children to use letter manipulatives (e.g., letter tiles, alphabet puzzles, magnetic letters, make letters with play doh, alphabet arc, etc.)	
		Teaches print concepts (e.g., text contain letter, words, sentences, spaces, punctuation, directionality)	

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EARLY LITERACY (CONTINUED)

Read Aloud			<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Not Observed</i>
Observed	Needs Support		
		Introduces and orients children to the book before reading (e.g., talks about title/author/illustrator, gives a purpose for listening, activates prior knowledge)	
		Reads with expression to capture children’s attention (e.g., dramatic tone, use special voices for characters, etc.).	
		Encourages children to be involved in the read aloud (e.g., asks questions, responds to comments/questions, asks children to join in on repeated parts, act out parts words/events described)	
		Discusses words from the book that children may not understand	
		Extends content of book into other activities (e.g., summarize/sequence the story, written response, center activity)	
Written Expression			<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Not Observed</i>
Observed	Needs Support		
		Engages children in shared writing opportunities in which the teacher elicits ideas for writing from children (e.g., dictation; charts related to science activity)	
		Provides an opportunity for children to write (e.g., journal entry, interactive writing/sharing the pen with teacher, sign-in sheets, center based writing activities)	
		Scaffolds children’s attempts at writing their names and/or other words as appropriate to the individual child’s writing skill	
Oral Language			
Observed	Needs Support		
		Uses rich language during discussions and activities (e.g., labeling, describing, comparing, explaining, linking)	
		Asks basic questions (e.g., recalling basic information, yes or no questions)	
		Asks complex questions (e.g., why, how, linking, explaining)	
		Deepens children’s understanding by responding to comments and questions, expanding on topics of interest, or simplifying questions/tasks that are too difficult	
		Helps children attach meaning to unfamiliar words (e.g., provides child-friendly definition, acts out word, uses word in familiar context, uses props/pictures)	

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MATH AND SCIENCE

Math			<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Not Observed</i>
Observed	Needs Support		
		Incorporates math into daily routines and experiences (e.g., attendance, lunch count, voting, class graphs)	
		Involves children in organized hands-on math activities that support one or more conceptual areas in math (e.g., number, arithmetic, space and geometry, patterns, measurement, and graphing)	
		Engages in math-oriented talk with children while using counting or other math manipulatives (e.g., edges on blocks, points on triangle, possible sorting attributes, more and less)	
Science			<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Not Observed</i>
Observed	Needs Support		
		Incorporates science into daily routines and experiences (e.g., describes changes in nature while on the playground, or the effects of heat/time on foods that melt, switch controls electricity and lights in classroom and music player)	
		Involves children in organized science activities and discussions that encourage scientific thinking through exploration, comparison and hands on manipulation (physical and life sciences, earth and space)	
		Engages in science-oriented talk with children while using materials related to science (e.g., uses specific vocabulary and descriptions for touch, taste, feel, cause and effect, reporting on observations, names for specific tools like magnifying glass or scale)	

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LEVEL OF SUPPORT NEEDED

Based on today’s observation, for each component of the A-COT listed below, mark the level of support needed as identified through your observations in the classroom.

Levels of Support				
N/A	1	2	3	4
Not observed at this time	None at this time	Limited Support: Discussion, Modeling & Demonstration (Is applying knowledge to practice but could benefit from observing another classroom at the school/center or from engaging in a conversation with a more advanced peer/colleague)	Ongoing Support: Mentoring & Coaching (needs ongoing support from an effective teacher or mentor to put what they know into practice)	Targeted Professional Development (Needs professional development in foundational knowledge and skills)

Frameworks for Environments, Planning & Management, and Social Emotional Development					
	N/A	1	2	3	4
Classroom Environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Planning & Management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social Emotional Development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Early Language & Literacy					
	N/A	1	2	3	4
Phonological Awareness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Print & Letter Knowledge	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Read Aloud	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Written Expression	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vocabulary Development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Math and Science					
	N/A	1	2	3	4
Math	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Science	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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GOALS

What is (are) the goal(s) that the teacher will work towards accomplishing before the administrator's next visit?

ACTION PLAN

What will the teacher do independently to accomplish the set goal(s)?

How will the administrator support the teacher to help meet the set goal(s)?