



**Interactive Literacy/PACT Observation Tool
Instruction Manual and Tool**

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Contents

<u>Observer's Role</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>Notes and Details for the Observer</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Teacher's Role</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>Notes and Details for the Teacher</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>Observer's Tool</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>Teacher's Tool</u>	<u>13</u>

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The Observer's Role

An observer may be a fellow teacher in a family literacy program, a colleague from another program, or a supervisor/professional developer. Your job in this context is to conduct an objective observation in the Interactive Literacy/Parent and Child Together Time (IL/PACT) classroom for the purpose of reflection, not evaluation. In order to be an effective observer using this instrument you should have already established good rapport with the teacher(s) in the IL/PACT classrooms and explained that the purpose of the evaluation is to understand what goes on in the classroom on a day-to-day basis. It is important that you explain that you do not want the teacher to go out of their way to prepare something special for the observation. This tool is reflective not evaluative. As a result, you should discuss with the teacher(s) that you are not evaluating his or her performance, rather that it is your job to objectively record what you see happening in the classroom to the best of your ability.

The tool has been designed to provide the observer with areas to look for in terms of best practices that have been identified either in the research literature or through professional wisdom gained from extensive program practices. This list of prompts is not exclusive. As a result, there is a section on each page of the observation for observer's reflections. This may include other things that you notice in the classroom, but should be used primarily to comment on what you have already observed through the use of the instrument. Essentially it is a place for you, the observer, to make notes about things which you wish to discuss during the post-observation meeting.

Any observation conducted requires three steps:

1. **Pre-observation:** The observer should communicate to the teacher(s) that the notes from the observation are to assist in facilitating a discussion about the IL/PACT component and ways in which the component (and those involved in its daily execution) can grow. A copy of the teacher(s) objectives in writing should be obtained prior to the scheduled IL/PACT observation.
2. **Observation:** The observer is in the IL/PACT classroom from the beginning to the end of the session. The observer should arrive a few minutes before IL/PACT begins and should find a space in the room where he or she will not be too much in the way. Ask the teacher(s) where this place might be.
3. **Post-observation:** This is the key to using the tool the way it was intended. The post-observation step consists of a meeting between the teacher(s) and the observer. This meeting is reflective in nature, not evaluative. As a result the discussion should be guided by what the observer and teacher(s) have written in the tool. For example, the discussion during this meeting should be led by the teacher(s) discussing how they feel things went and where they might see ways to develop things or reasons why they might eliminate other things. The observer might find themselves asking questions about some of the things they observed. However, rather than criticizing these things or praising them, the purpose is to discuss them. The observer could ask questions like, "Why did you decide not to

get involved when you saw Donnie crying?” rather than statements like, “You should have gone over and said something to Donnie’s mom when you saw him crying.” There is no time limit on this meeting. The only restriction is that the meeting be scheduled the day of the observation or first thing the following day if necessary. The longer time passes between observation and post-observation the more difficult it will be to have a rich reflection.

Remember: You are a visitor in the IL/PACT classroom, and as such, you are not always aware of the background and dynamics of the class. Considering these things when reflecting with the teacher(s) may aid in a smother and more productive post-observation meeting.

Before you begin conducting an observation you should have:

1. obtained written objectives for specific IL/PACT session from the teacher(s)
2. designated a time to meet on the same day for the post-observation meeting

Finally, this tool was designed with the intent that multiple observations will be conducted over time. In other words, one observation of each classroom will not be as helpful as multiple observations of the same classroom over the course of a year.

Notes and Details for the Observer:

FACILITATION – *this section must be filled out during or after the observation*

1) Teacher(s) clarifies the purpose of IL/PACT activities

What is the evidence that the teacher(s) is explicit in some way about the activities purpose/s to the parent and child, whether this is done in a group or one-on-one?

E.g., The teacher says to parents, “remember to talk with your children about dinosaurs during your time with them today, because this is what they have been learning in school this week.”

2) Teacher(s) facilitates opportunities for parent and child to use literacy for a variety of purposes

What evidence is provided during the observation that communicates to the observer that the teacher(s) is actively facilitating these opportunities?

The definition of literacy here is broad and should be interpreted and defined by each program. A discussion of “what is literacy” may be beneficial to have with the teachers and staff before conducting observations. This may be a way for the program to begin a conversation about what literacy is.

3) Teacher(s) provides activities and environment that reflect diverse personal, family, and cultural backgrounds.

What is the evidence that the teacher(s) has provided activities that relate to the lives of the participating parents and children. This is not to say that the teacher(s) will be able to do this for every family during every session, but what type of evidence is observed which communicates that this is something that is addressed in the classroom?

E.g., Has the teacher attempted to learn about the families' homes? Has the teacher provided activities which build on the families' prior knowledge?

4) Teacher(s) facilitates activities to meet IL/PACT literacy objective(s)

What is the evidence that the teacher(s) is making it possible for the activities he/she has planned to meet the objectives?

In order to make observations related to this the observer must have received a copy of the teacher's LITERACY objectives. A discussion may occur after the session around why the teacher(s) feels they are in fact literacy objectives.

E.g., Parents and children arrive in classroom, sit at tables, and free-read for the first 20 minutes of class.

5) Teacher(s) reacts to parent-child behaviors

What is the evidence that the teacher(s) is reacting to different interactions, etc. between parents and children?

The observer needs to consider the multitude of ways that one can "react" to something. For example, a teacher who chooses to do nothing, but observe what is going on, is also reacting to behaviors. A reaction does not necessarily need to be an overt action. However, a teacher should be able to discuss why they did what they did in the post observation meeting

6) Teacher(s) makes accommodations for parent(s) with multiple children

What is the evidence that the teacher(s) has made some sort of accommodations for parents who have more than one child in the same IL/PACT classroom?

E.g., The teacher has set up a separate reading area for Maria and her three children to all view the book together.

7) Teacher(s) provides time and space for parent-child interaction to occur

What is the evidence that the teacher(s) makes available ample time for an interaction to occur where the families engage in some activity together? What is the evidence that the teacher(s) have provided ample space for the interaction to occur?

Space could be defined as the physical space where the parent-child(ren) are able to interact with each other. Additionally, space can be defined as the time that the parent-child(ren) spend alone without intervention or interaction with the teacher(s).

8) Teacher(s) utilizes routines during IL/PACT

What is the evidence that the teacher(s) uses routines during IL/PACT?

E.g., The parent-child(ren) arrive in the IL/PACT room and begin by finding a place on the rug where they can have some individual play time with their child for 20 minutes before the structured activity begins.

9) Teacher(s) assists parents on ways to transfer activities/skills to home environment

What is the evidence that the teacher(s) provide some guidance on how to do some similar types of activities at home? In other words, how does the teacher(s) help the parent learn how to transfer some of the IL/PACT activities to the home environment?

E.g., The activity required the parents to ask their children to bring over a certain amount of blocks from the block area for them to build with. Toward the end of the class, the teacher went around and individually worked with parents to think of ways they could do something like this at home. Some suggestions were to have the child gather amounts of food in the produce section of the store and ask them to get food from the cabinet to then help mom cook.

10) Teacher(s) provides guidance/instruction and checks for parental understanding of activity's purpose

What is the evidence that the teacher(s) provided enough guidance and instruction so that the parents understood the purpose of the day's activity? Additionally, how did the teacher(s) check to make sure that parents understood this?

E.g., After the teacher explained the activity to the parents and children, she then proceeded to go around to the individual families and watch them working together. Frequently she provided some additional instruction and guidance on an individual basis. For example, one mother and child were struggling with building a train track with the blocks. The teacher came over and suggested that maybe they could build more than one thing like a building or a car, and that if they wanted to that they could go over and get some little people to play or work in their buildings, etc.

The Teacher's Role

Your job in this context is to go about what you would normally do in class. You are not being evaluated, rather you are being asked to reflect on your practice as a teacher and the interactions that you have with the families. Please do not spend more time than you normally would planning for this lesson. The purpose of this tool is to capture how you prepare for PACT; what is happening during PACT, in terms of the role of the teacher; reflect on it; and build from there.

It is important that you spend the time to fill out the “planning” sheet before IL/PACT begins. In order for you to have an opportunity for rich reflection, it is important that you really try to capture your thinking before the IL/PACT time as well as you can.

Once class has completed you should find time to sit down, think about the day, and fill out the “Reflecting” portion of the tool. This must be completed before the reflection meeting with you and your observer.

Any observation conducted requires three steps:

1. **Pre-observation:** The teacher must provide a copy of his or her LITERACY objectives for the observer prior to the scheduled IL/PACT observation.
2. **Observation:** The observer is in the IL/PACT classroom from the beginning to the end of the session. The observer will arrive a few minutes before IL/PACT begins and should find a space in the room where he or she will not be too much in the way. You might suggest a good place for the observer to sit.
3. **Post-observation:** This is the key to using the tool the way it was intended. The post-observation step consists of a meeting between you, the teacher(s), and the observer. This meeting is reflective in nature, not evaluative. As a result the discussion should be guided by what the observer and you have written in the tool. For example, the discussion during this meeting should be led by you with a discussion of how you feel things went and where you might see ways to develop areas or reasons why you might eliminate other things. Consider reasons why you might or might not try something again. How is it that you came to some of the “on the spot” decisions that you made that day? Let your writing in the “Reflecting” portion of your packet be the catalyst for some of your discussion with the observer. The observer has been instructed to ask questions, not make criticisms. Clarifying a choice you made or a behavior to the observer may also help you clarify some of your choices for yourself. Additionally, and just as valuable, the observations made might bring some things to your attention that you were unaware of. You should collaborate with you observer at this time to develop new ideas and alternatives to aspects of your practice.

Remember: The observer is coming into your classroom, and may not be aware of the background and dynamics of the class. Considering these things when reflecting with the observer may aid in a smother and more productive post-observation meeting.

Before you begin IL/PACT you should have:

1. given the observer your objectives for the day.
2. designated a time to meet on the same day for the post-observation meeting.
3. filled out the “Planning” section of your portion of the observation tool.

Notes and Details for the Teacher:

PLANNING – *this section must be filled out before the observation*

1) Describe how you prepared for today’s lesson.

Describe what it is that has influenced you in the planning of today’s IL/PACT time. Some questions you may want to ask yourself in order to answer this might be: Have I collaborated with other teachers? Am I building on a previous class? Has something developed as a result of observations during previous IL/PACT class time that has contributed to what I am going to do today?

2) Describe how you have or will prepare parents and children for IL/PACT activities prior to IL/PACT class time

Some questions you may want to ask yourself in order to answer this might be: Have I shared IL/PACT activities with adult or parenting education instructors to share with their learners? Besides my classroom, in what other ways have I helped prepare the parents and children to participate in IL/PACT today?

3) Describe the literacy components of your lesson

First, explain what literacy means to you. Then explain the different components of today’s IL/PACT time that are engaging the parents and children in literacy.

4) Why do you believe today’s IL/PACT activities are literacy-based

Consider how today’s IL/PACT activities engage the families in activities which are grounded in engaging the children in literacy.

5) Describe some of the concerns that you have going into today’s IL/PACT session

Some questions you may want to ask yourself in order to answer this might be: Have some families been struggling recently? Do I sense that any of the children may have more difficulty with today’s activities? Will the parents be able to transfer some of what we do today to their home environment? Will the families stay until the end of IL/PACT today? Will today’s activities engage both the parents and the children?

REFLECTING – *this section must be filled out following the observation and before post-observation meeting*

1) What did you observe today during IL/PACT that you believe to be valuable information to share with other staff?

Describe some of the things that you saw in today's class that you feel would be helpful or informative for other teacher's or staff in your program to know.

E.g., During today's class I noticed that several parents were not really speaking to their children about the activity and highlighting the names of the colors or asking the children questions. This is something that I want to share with the parenting education teachers so they can address different ways parents can ask their children questions about what they are doing.

2) How might you share your thoughts and observations during IL/PACT with other staff in the program?

Describe some of the ways you might communicate what you see in IL/PACT with other teachers and staff.

E.g., At the next staff meeting I want to bring up the issue about working on questioning with parents. I think this is something that can happen in more than just the parenting education and the IL/PACT components. However, until then I could bring this up to the parenting education teachers this week so that we can get started on a plan to integrate it into class content.

3) What do you think went well today? How do you know?

Describe the aspects of today's IL/PACT that you thought were particularly successful and describe how and why you feel this way. What evidence do you have?

4) What happened today that surprised you?

Describe at least one thing that surprised you about today's IL/PACT time; it can be a positive or negative surprise.

E.g., Today was the first time that Luis was able to sit for 20 minutes with Maria, his mother, and read. I noticed that rather than Maria choosing the book to read that Luis did. Could this have made the difference? I will have to watch them tomorrow to see what happens. Are there other parents in the room who consistently are the ones choosing the books for their children? Perhaps this is something to discuss with the parenting educator?

5) If you did the same type of activity again, how might you do it differently? Why? Describe how you might change the activity in the future. This might mean that you add something, take something away, or perhaps you will never do it again. Then ask yourself why you made those decisions. Is it because something didn't work? Why didn't it work? Is it because something was successful? Why do you think it was successful?

E.g., The next time we do a building activity during IL/PACT I think I want to give the parent-child dyads their own building materials rather than have them choose what to build with (of course they could switch if they aren't happy with what they get). I say this because today I noticed that the children spent more time at the block area choosing the blocks than they did building something with their parents. This activity is designed to encourage discussion of shapes, colors, creative ideas, and imaginative play. Unfortunately, most of the time was spent with the children playing tug-o-war with the different blocks. In spite of this, when each child finally sat down with his or her mom or dad there seemed to be a lot of talk and literacy occurring. All the families were having fun and some even wanted to stay late to finish what they were building. It is because of things like this that I feel it is a worthwhile activity to do again.

6) How do you know parents and children engaged in literacy during today's classroom? (How do you know your objectives were met?)

Describe what you observed that demonstrates that the parents and children were participating in literacy-based activities during IL/PACT time today.

Facilitation (to be filled out by observer)

<p>1) Teacher(s) clarifies the purpose of IL/PACT activities <u>Evidence</u></p>	<p>2) Teacher(s) facilitates opportunities for parent and child to use literacy for a variety of purposes <u>Evidence</u></p>	<p>3) Teacher(s) provides activities and environment that reflects diverse personal, family, and cultural backgrounds. <u>Evidence</u></p>
<p>4) Teacher(s) facilitates activities to meet IL/PACT literacy objective(s) <u>Evidence</u></p>	<p>5) Teacher(s) reacts to parent-child behaviors <u>Evidence</u></p>	<p>6) Teacher(s) makes accommodations for parent(s) with multiple children <u>Evidence</u></p>

Reflections:

<p>7) Teacher provides time and space for parent-child interaction to occur <u>Evidence</u></p>	<p>8) Teacher(s) utilizes routines during IL/PACT <u>Evidence</u></p>	<p>9) Teacher(s) assists parents on ways to transfer activities/skills to home environment <u>Evidence</u></p>
<p>10) Teacher(s) provide guidance/instruction and check for parental understanding of activity's purpose <u>Evidence</u></p>		

Reflections:

Planning (to be filled out by teacher prior to being observed)

<p>1) Describe how you prepared for today's lesson.</p>	<p>2) Describe how you have or will prepare parents and children for IL/PACT activities prior to IL/PACT class time</p>
<p>3) Describe the literacy components of your lesson</p> <p>4) Why do you believe today's IL/PACT activities are literacy-based</p>	<p>5) Describe some of the concerns that you have going into today's IL/PACT session</p>

Reflecting (to be filled out by teacher after observation and before meeting with observer)

<p>1) What did you observe today during IL/PACT that you believe to be valuable information to share with other staff?</p>	<p>2) How might you share your thoughts and observations during IL/PACT with other staff in the program?</p>
<p>3) What do you think went well today? How do you know?</p>	<p>4) What happened today that surprised you?</p>
<p>5) If you did the same type of activity again, how might you do it differently? Why?</p>	<p>6) How do you know parents and children engaged in literacy during today's classroom? (How do you know your objectives were met?)</p>

NOTES