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**Procedural Handbook for the
Narrative Record of
Early Childhood Classroom Observations
With adaptations for use in the *Tools of the Mind* curriculum evaluation
Digital Recording Version For Use with a Tablet Computer**

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The Narrative Record Form is an open-ended format for recording narrative data notes about the activities occurring in the classroom. It consists of the following:

- Episodes of Time: By tracking the time of events in the classroom, a record of segments of time can be kept.
- Brief Description of “What’s Happening in the Classroom”: A running account and description of events provides a reference source for the observation.
- Codes for Type of Activity (Learning Setting) during the episode: A simple code for the structure or type of activity describes categorically the **mode** of instruction during the episode.
- Codes for Content of Instruction (Learning Focus) occurring during the episode: A code for the **content** of instruction provides a label of academic content.
- Codes for Level of Instruction provided by the teacher across an episode.
- Codes for Engagement Level of Students across an episode.

The categorical variables for Type of Activity and Content of Instruction, and the ratings of Level of Instruction, and Engagement Level, combined with the Duration of Time of each episode provide critical information that can be easily analyzed.

- Counts of the following by segment are recorded in “tap boxes”:
 - Positive Behavior Reinforcement
 - Behavior Reminders
 - Choral Responses
 - Teacher Paired Activities
 - Individual Scaffolding
 - Teacher Directed Private Speech
 - Intentional Teacher Mistakes
- Codes for **Tools** Time Block paired with an episode.

Upon Arrival in Classroom

- Arrive earlier than your observation is scheduled to begin.
- Ask any preliminary questions of the teacher to get a sense of the day and the schedule. (For *Tools of the Mind* classroom ask teacher what *Tools* time schedule they are following -- 3, 4 or 6 hour)
- Begin Narrative Record at start of school day (e.g. 8:00 am) – that is when students are expected to be in class. For some programs, like Head Start, this can be a window of time that lasts 30 minutes or more, in which case observations begin at the beginning of the window.

Opening Page Directions

- Select observer's initials. (Number of children etc. can be added at end of observation)
- Select name of teacher observing. (ID number and teacher name will then be showing on screen)
- Enter date of observation
- Ask the teacher (if not already provided) what is the length of the school day.
- For *Tools of the Mind* classrooms record what schedule block they are using. (3 hour, 4 hour or full day (6 hour)). If control classroom mark n/a.

The remainder of the questions are documented throughout the observation period and completed at the end of the observation.

- **Indicate start time of the observation** (This should be the time the children arrive in the classroom.)
- **Number of children present:** this includes only the children present during the observation. **Number of Teachers, Number of assistants, Number of parents/volunteers:** those that actually stay and help for some portion of the observation.
- **Teacher left the room for a significant amount of time.** Note in the comments section if the teacher leaves classroom (without children) and for how long he or she is gone. If the teacher leaves and returns several times- extending over 10 minutes or is gone for 10 minutes or more mark yes on the opening page. Do not note comings and goings of Assistant.
- **Note any significant events/behavior problems that affect the observation.** These are incidents that involve whole class disruptions that will affect the observation's validity. Include fire drills etc.

Narrative Record Manual

Adapted for evaluation of the *Tools of the Mind* curriculum

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- **Indicate end time of observation by entering the actual classroom time when the observation is complete.**

Timing Episodes

Begin a new episode or segment of time:

1. When the mode of the activity (Activity Type) changes (e.g., from Whole Group to Small Group at tables.)
2. When the content of the activity changes. Most of the time there will be a recorded transition between the two.
3. When the academic content proceeds neatly without transition from one instructional content to the next, code each content area separately.
4. Continuity Rule: Continue to code the current activity type until 75% of the students have become engaged in a new activity or transition.

General principle: Continuity. If an activity is ongoing and is briefly interrupted, then resumes, allow the principle of continuity to prevail and do not score an interruption. If the interruption results in a delay of a minute or more in getting back to the ongoing activity, count it as an interruption and score as a transition. If an activity does not actually get going, because the teacher is still giving directions on how to do something or how to behave, or does not have materials ready, etc. continuity of the transition prevails. Keep the transition going until the children actually have something to do and at least 75% of the children have begun the new activity.

Brief Written Description of Activities

Write an ongoing description of the activity, including:

- What the teacher is doing
- What the children are doing
- If multiple small group activities running concurrently, list who is leading/involved in the activity. Each of the small groups will have the same start time and perhaps the same mode code (depending on whether each of them has an adult involved), but could receive different codes for content and different ratings for instruction, engagement and affective tone. Each small group will be described in a separate segment.
- The notes are to help you make accurate and reliable ratings and codes.

Codes for Activity Type (Mode of Instruction)

- **WGT** = Whole Group with teacher. Whole Group Teacher (WGT) can be the Mode of Instruction when children are seated on Whole Group rug or at tables or desks. If the teacher is the center of attention and is instructing the entire group of children, code WGT. This includes times of transitions when the teacher has the group line up, etc.
- **WG** = Whole Group without teacher. Whole Group (WG) can be the Mode of Instruction when children are seated on floor or at tables or desks. If they are all working on the same activity or in transition and the teacher is not with them, code WG.
- **SGT** = Small Group instruction with a teacher instructing that group. This code is reserved for teacher-led small group instruction. Record Small Group Teacher when all children are in small groups led by a teacher, assistant or other adult (SGT) (T or A is the center of attention). Even if the activity is similar, if there is a teacher or assistant at tables with the children providing individual assistance, code SGT. For example, in Tools classrooms, Play Planning would be coded SGT.
- **SG** = Small Groups of children working at tables and or in areas of the room (teacher may be roaming but not actually engaged in teaching a small group). Small Groups may involve the children working together on an activity, either helping each other or producing something collectively. Children in a small group may be working on the same activity but producing their own product. SG differs from WG in that each SG is working on a different activity. If children are arranged in small groups but each group has the same task (e.g., finishing work sheets), code WG.
- **SGTC** = At least one Small Group with a Teacher and at least one Center is open and available for choice. This includes times that have Small Group with a Teacher, Small Group without a Teacher, and at least one Center. Teachers sometimes employ this mode when they wish to cycle children in and out of an instructional group during center time.
- **SGC** = At least one Small Group without a Teacher and at least one Center. (No SGT is occurring.)
- **Note:** If more than one small group activity is taking place within the same time episode (happening concurrently) the activity code will be the same for each activity. Use the code that defines what is happening in the classroom as a whole.
- **C** = Center = Children are working at centers (or table top centers) with choice of activities. When children are working independently or with some guidance from teacher or assistant at a table or area in which there is a choice of activity, code C.

- **TRN** = Transition. Anytime the teacher and students are waiting for the next activity, going to the bathroom, lining up for lunch, etc., code T.
- **TRNI** = Transition with Instruction- Anytime during a transition the teacher/assistant leads an instructional activity. This can include making patterns with children (girl girl boy) in line, singing a song while waiting to leave classroom, pretending to be an animal while moving from activity to activity, or having children count children waiting in line. **If instruction occurs within a transition, switch to a new episode and code TRNI; when instruction ceases, switch back to TRN. This may happen several times but each time must occur for at least a minute for it to be coded.**
- **M** = Meal = Mealtime – use only if children are having a meal **INSIDE** the classroom.
- **Out** = Children are **OUT** when they leave the classroom. This includes any of the following:
 - Out of the school building, e.g., Recess.
 - In gym.
 - In special classes when teacher leaves the students, e.g., Art Class
 - Meals in the cafeteria or a separate room from the classroom.

When OUT is coded for Activity, please specify the destination or purpose (e.g. recess).

Stop coding until Teacher and Students return to the classroom from the “OUT” activity.

- **END** = The last entry is your ending time (e.g. 12:00) and is coded END. You **MUST** code this even if your last episode is an OUT. Say an OUT begins at 11:45 and the children are not due back until 12:30, and you are concluding the observation at 12:00, at 12:00, you must put END.

Codes for Content of Instruction

Include the following content areas:

- **Morn** Morning Meeting = welcoming game or song, attendance (when not instructional such as how many boys, how many girls and how many all together?), morning announcements, pledge of allegiance, discussion of the schedule of the day.
- **R** Reading = connected text with meaning
- **LA** Language Arts = Learning letter and letter sounds, writing, spelling, etc.
- **L** Literacy = Reading and Language Arts are occurring during the same lesson.
- **M** Math = Number, counting, comparing quantity, sorting, graphing, patterning, shape, space, and measurement
- **SC** Science = Health, nature, physical properties, and biology, including botany and zoology
- **SS** Social Studies = community helpers, getting along with others, socio-emotional concepts, geography, history,
- **AM** Art = art projects, painting, coloring and drawing with crayons,
- **M/M** Music/Movement music and movement, playing instruments
- **MIX** Mixed content = Mix usually occurs during center time or small group time. Multiple types of content are occurring simultaneously.
- **O** Other. This includes many early childhood activities such as blocks, toys, games, gross motor activities.
- **N** None = Directions with no content, transitions with no content, behavior management talks.

General notes on Coding Content of Instruction and Segment Changes

- When SG, SGTC, or SGT occur, note what each group is doing on a separate line, recording the same start time in the break out column for each activity. (The overall Start Time row will be used to average the codes across the small groups. See below.

Example:

Start Time	Break Out Time	Description	Activity Type	Content	Instruct	Engage
9:36		Three small groups simultaneously	SGT	Mix	2	3.0
	9:36	Art activity- teacher led, children making snowmen at table	SGT	A	1	4
	9:36	Book reading with assistants in book center	SGT	R	2	3
	9:36	Journaling-related to book reading child writing observed	SG	LA	2	2

- Reading a book (even a math book) is coded as R, except if you are in middle of a content lesson and a book is read about that content, then the content code stays the same.

General Rules for Coding Activity and Content when Teachers and Students Leave the Classroom.

- Code students and teacher continuously in the classroom. If the class leaves the classroom continue to code until 75% of the children are out of the room. Then code Out and specify the destination (bathroom, lunch, gym, library etc.)
- When the class returns change to TRN (transition) when they enter the classroom, and end TRN when they are settled back into the room and when 75% of the children have started a new activity.
- If half the class leaves the room (e.g., to use hallway bathrooms), code the activities of those who remain. Note the smaller number in your narrative notes.

Codes for Level of Instruction across a Narrative Episode

Code highest level of instruction across an episode (primarily instruction directed by the teacher).

0-None:

No instruction is occurring in the classroom during the episode, if you have coded a content type, the level of instruction can not be a 0-none.

Examples: lining up to go outside (teacher just tells children to line up), teacher is scolding children, transition without instruction

1-Low Level of Instruction:

When there is a low level of instructional demands in the classroom it is hard to identify a specific learning/academic skill being learned

Example: fine motor, gross motor, songs without a set learning focus, free play at center time.

2-Basic Skill Instruction:

Classroom or children are focused on learning specific skills, children are learning a skill with a pre-set answer, or the teacher asks low level questions: what letter is this?

Example: Counting, alphabet, songs with a learning focus, teacher reading a book without asking questions, puzzles

3-Some Inferential Learning:

Children are interacting and participating with the teacher, the teacher is using some open-ended questions as well as closed ended questions, teacher asks questions with more than one answer.

Example: What do you think the bears are going to do next? How many bears are on this page? What would you do, if you were one of the bears? Teacher reads a story and questions children throughout. Children are enacting roles with role speech in center time.

4-High Inferential Learning:

Instruction, interaction and discussion are occurring in the classroom with open-ended questioning, and connections are being made to the child's world and the outside world, conversations are occurring with several turns. The class is exploring a topic and children are actively involved. Children are enacting dramatic play during center time with defined roles and multiple turn taking within roles; clear story line is evident.

Codes for Engagement Level of Student across a Narrative Episode

Code the average engagement level of the children across an episode. Engagement for this instrument is defined as children's engagement in *instructional* activities. Engagement is coded at the whole class level. If break out episodes have been coded separately, the engagement for the entire episode is the average of the break-out sessions.

Code Low when there is no instruction (e.g. traditional transitions).

(1) Low

***No instructional activity occurring* OR if instruction is occurring, children exhibit the following behaviors:**

- Children are not interested or engaged
- Brief indications of attention
- Sitting quietly
- Fiddling with clothes or other children
- Eyes not focused

(2) Medium Low

- Children show lack of interest and little engagement, distracted
- Inconsistent attention, interest can wane
- Flat affect
- Looking bored
- Lack of body tension
- Lack of persistence
- Most children following lesson
- Children doing task asked to do

(3) Medium

- Children show some interest in the activity, they seem to be listening and watching
- On-task
- Eye contact with teacher or materials
- Participating in activity
- Interest can wane but comes back to task
- Center time children participate but some are unoccupied

(4) Medium High

- Children are consistently interested and engaged
- Volunteering, responding, and active with the materials or activity
- Eager expressions, Positive affect
- Leaning forward, tension in body
- Persistence

(5) High

Children are showing the indicators for MH and have intense concentration, are highly active in the learning activity

All children occupied.

Definition for Tallying Behavior Reinforcers

(The following definitions and guidelines come from TOP, Behavior approving and Behavior Disapproving)

- **Positive Behavior Reinforcers (Tally once in a segment when a reminder is observed):**

Teacher uses approving verbal comments or gestures in response to behaviors. These can include: Kiss your brain, I like how you did that! Give yourself a cheer! High fives, a hug, Great job! These are reinforcers meant to maintain a behavior or encourage its recurrence.

- **Negative Behavior Reminders (Tally once in a segment when a reminder is observed):**

Teacher uses verbal comments, gestures and/or physical contact **to stop** a child or children's behavior. These can include: criss cross applesauce, shhh, put a marshmallow in your mouth, picking up a child to remove him from the situation, teacher shaking her head no. (Does not include directions to *do* something, e.g., "pick up that book.")

Definitions for Teacher Instructional Activities Related

The definitions of the Individual Tally boxes were taken from the *Tools of the Mind* curriculum manuals.

- **Choral Responses (intentional)** - Children are allowed to call out answers to questions, teacher does not require children to raise hands to be called on. This does not include whole group singing. Tally one time for each segment in which choral responding is allowed. For example if in morning meeting/opening group in the calendar activity the children can call out the day of the week, and then the month, tally one time. Then during whole group they are allow to respond together what the weather is, tally once again.
- **Teacher Paired Activities**-The teacher creates instructional activities where children work in cooperative pairs, where each child has a different role in the interaction. The paired activity can be an entire instructional segment all done in pairs or a portion of an activity where the teacher encourages the children to discuss a question with each other. The child pairs can be intentionally organized by the teacher Tally one paired activity for a paired activity observed in a segment.
- **Individual Academic Scaffolding**- Individual scaffolding is when a teacher modifies an activity or gives additional support to a child in order for that child to participate in an instructional activity and participate at their developmental level. Scaffolding can include using hand-over hand support to write their name, giving child a schedule card so they know what activity comes next, or a help from a peer to complete the activity. Tally one if you observe an individual academic scaffold in a segment.

- **Teacher Directed Private Speech**-Private speech is speech designed to tell yourself what to do. To code teacher or assistant must encourage/prompt the child/children to say the private speech as they act. Tally private speech that is directed or prompted by the teacher.(not if children do so spontaneously) Tally once for large group activity, for example in Tools Graphic Practice children are directed to say “up, down up, down” as they draw a zig zag. Tally one time if you observe the teacher encourage private speech directed toward an individual child or group in a segment.
- **Intentional Mistakes by Teacher**-An intentional mistake is made by the teacher to enhance the children’s learning or for other instructional purposes. The teacher can allow the children to identify the mistake or s/he can point it out for the children to see. Tally one time if you observe an intentional mistake enacted by the teacher in a segment. Make sure the mistake was actually intentional.

Codes for Tools of the Mind Timeblocks:

The descriptions of the Tools timeblocks were taken from the Tools of the Mind curriculum manuals.

This code identifies the portion of the day during which an episode is taking place as specified by the Tools of the Mind curriculum. This is only coded when observing Tools of the Mind classrooms.

LG = Opening Group. This portion of the day is usually done in whole group and includes activities such as Message of the Day, Share the News, Attention Focusing, Timeline Calendar, Weather Graphing, and Story Labs.

MBPL = Make Believe Play Planning. This portion of the day is usually done in two small groups with one being led by the teacher and the other group being led by the assistant. Each child chooses a center, takes the correct clip and marker, says what he/she is going to do, and then draws and/or writes something to help the child remember. Scaffolded writing is used here when children are ready.

MBP = Make Believe Play. This portion of the day involves children playing in center with center play themes. Teacher scaffolds make-believe play. Length of time increases across the school year.

MBPCI = Make Believe Play Clean-up. Teacher begins “clean-up” song music and the children immediately begin to clean up their play areas.

MBPP = Make Believe Play Practice. This portion of the day can involve a teacher creating and modeling a play scenario using action and role prompts as well as the children brainstorming roles and actions with the teacher. Length of time varies across the school year and when new play themes are introduced.

Lit = Literacy. This portion of the day is usually done twice per day with one time being in whole group and one time being in small groups. Examples of literacy activities include Buddy Reading, Graphics Practice, Attention Focusing, and Story Labs.

M/SC = Math/Science. This portion of the day is usually done in small groups and includes activities such as Remember and Replicate, Making Collections, Science Eyes, Attention Focusing, Math Memory, Venger Drawings, I Have Who Has, Attribute Game, Numerals Game, and Learning Facts.

ATD = Activities Through the Day. This portion of the day is usually done in whole group and includes activities such as Community Building, Physical Self-Regulation Games, Attention Focusing, Freeze Games and other movement games.

PRT= Pretend Transition. This is coded when a transition involves gestures, pretending, and private speech by children in order to practice self-regulation.

FC= Free Choice. This portion of the day, children choose to play in the center of their choice. A variety of centers are open including computer. Manipulatives, puzzles, etc. can be available. *Tools of the Mind* activities such as Mystery Question Game that children answer independently and Number Line Hopscotch are accessible to the children. Length of time and number of sessions of Free Choice per day varies across the year.

NOT= Not a Tools Activity. This is coded when an activity observed is not a Tools of the Mind activity as specified by the curriculum. NOT is also coded for overall small group breakout lines when all activities within the breakout are non-Tools. (Ex. FC & NOT occurring together).

TM = Tools Mixed. This is a code for an overall small group breakout line when all breakout activities are Tools activities. (Ex. MBP & M/Sc small group occurring together).

TNT = Tools Not Tools. This is a code for an overall small group breakout line when both tools activities and non-tools activities are occurring at the same time. (Ex. Lit & FC occurring together).

Final Notes on Coding Narrative

Upon Returning from the Field:

Before saving observation to thumb drive:

- Check all brief description segments for typing errors and correct.
- Make sure all times, segments, and codes are entered.
- If break out times were used for small groups, make sure totals are calculated in actual start time segment.
- Complete opening page information