FACE Technical Assistance Brief 2023-2024

**Strengthening Parenting Behaviors Using PICCOLO Observations**

**What information will I find in this brief?**

This TA Brief provides information about PICCOLO and assists FACE Parent Educators with understanding how to utilize the PICCOLO tool to observe parent-child interactions and support parenting behaviors in their FACE Home-based program’s implementation of the Parents as Teachers model.

**What is the PICCOLO?**

PICCOLO is an acronym for Parenting Interactions with Children Checklist of Observations Linked to Outcomes. It is a parent-child interaction observation checklist that measures developmental parenting and engages parents in supporting children’s early development. Developmental parenting is parenting that helps children develop by providing the early developmental support children need.

**How does using the PICCOLO benefit parents and children?**

As cited in both the Parents As Teachers curriculum Parent Educator Resource, *Parenting Behaviors,* and the book *Developmental Parenting,* there is solid research supporting positive developmental impact on children whose parents learn and use positive parenting behaviors. The parenting behaviors measured and ultimately supported by PICCOLO are affection, responsiveness, encouragement, and teaching. Outcomes for children whose parents regularly practice these behaviors include better cognitive, social and language development, fewer behavior problems, and increased school readiness.

**How is the PICCOLO used?**

As a parent-child interaction observation tool, PICCOLO helps Parent Educators and parents learn to observe parenting behaviors as parents play with their children. This increased awareness allows Parent Educators to offer support of parents’ use of the parenting behaviors and supports parents with being more intentional about incorporating them.

The checklist is composed of 29 items divided into the four parenting behaviors listed below:

* Affection – Warmth, physical closeness, and positive expressions toward child.
* Responsiveness – Responding to child’s cues, emotions, words, interests, and behaviors.
* Encouragement – Active support of exploration, effort, skills, initiative, curiosity, creativity and play.
* Teaching – Shared conversation and play, cognitive stimulation, explanations, and questions.

Each item has observations guidelines to support Parent Educators with what to look for and has a scale of 0-2 to score whether the item is absent, barely there, or clearly there in the parent-child interactions. The scores for the items in each domain are added for a total score for each item. Using the highest score(s), Parent Educators are able to identify the parent’s strongest behavior.

The next step is for the Parent Educator and the parent to explore how parents can “do more” of those strong parenting behaviors in their daily routines and in play with their child.

**When is the PICCOLO observation conducted with FACE families?**

After completing PICCOLO training, Parent Educators should complete PICCOLO observations during personal visits **three times each school year with each family.** Observations should take place **within 45 days of enrollment, by February 1st, and May 1st.**

**How are PICCOLO observation results used to strengthen parenting behaviors?**

Parent Educators can use information from the *PICCOLO* to guide their choices of Parent Educator Resources, Parent Handouts and Parent-Child Activities used for planning and conducting personal visits. Sharing information through Parent Handouts, and facilitating interactions focused on the identified parenting behavior during personal visits will support parents with building on their strengths.

The table below shows the four Parenting Behaviors observed using *PICCOLO*, and how they can be associated with the five Parenting Behaviors that we see in the Parents as Teachers curriculum.

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| --- | --- |
| ***PICCOLO* Parenting Behavior: AFFECTION**  **PAT Parenting Behavior**   * Nurturing | ***PICCOLO* Parenting Behavior: RESPONSIVENESS**  **PAT Parenting Behavior**   * Responding |
| ***PICCOLO* Parenting Behavior: ENCOURAGEMENT**  **PAT Parenting Behaviors**   * Designing/Guiding * Supporting Learning | ***PICCOLO* Parenting Behavior: TEACHING**  **PAT Parenting Behaviors**   * Communicating * Designing/Guiding * Supporting Learning |

To put the idea in context, consider a situation where the *PICCOLO* shows that a parent’s strongest parenting behavior is RESPONSIVENESS. The table below suggests Parent Educator Resources, Parent Handouts and Parent-Child Activities from the Parents as Teachers (PAT) curriculum that support parent understanding and practice of that positive parenting behavior.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  | | --- | | **RESPONSIVENESS –** includes parents responding to their child’s emotions and being flexible about their child’s interests during play | | **PAT Parent Educator Resources:**   * + - * *Responding to Babies and Young Children*       * *Responding* (Foundational 2 curriculum) * *Using Activity Pages Around Social-Emotional Development*   (Foundational 2 curriculum) | | **PAT Parent Handouts:**   * *Noticing and Responding to Cues* * *Responding to Your Child* (Foundational 2 curriculum) | | **PAT Activity Pages:**   * *Play to Learn: Observing and Responding During Floor Time* * *Cheer Up Game* (Foundational 2 curriculum) | |

Parents as Teachers Technical Assistants can assist Parent Educators with looking for additional examples of curriculum materials that may be useful in supporting parenting behaviors during personal visits.