Trauma-Informed Schools Classroom Observation Tool (Version 7.0)

Trauma-Informed Environment	Needs improvement (0)	Emerging (1)	Developing (2)	Proficient (3)	Exemplary (4)	No Opp. To Observe
Student expectations (i.e. class/school rules, values) are displayed and appropriate (criteria: age appropriate, specific and observable, stated positively, easy to understand, enforceable, 3-5 total)	Expectations not displayed	Expectations displayed and meet at least 1 criterion	Expectations displayed and meet 2-3 criteria	Expectations displayed and meet 4 criteria	Expectations displayed and meet all 5 criteria	
Classroom activities are structured and facilitated in predictable ways (i.e. explicit routines/procedures, clear directions, posted agenda, previewed transitions, precorrective statements, interactive modeling, attention signals,)	Classroom activities are not structured in predictable ways	Classroom activities are loosely structured and routines are rarely communicated	Classroom activities are clearly structured and routines are communicated inconsistently	Classroom activities are well-structured and routines are explicitly reinforced using various techniques	Classroom activities are structured and efficient. Routines are led or supported by students	
Positive behavioral interventions & supports are utilized to teach & reinforce positive behavior (i.e. active supervision, positive behavior praise, individual/class incentive system, logical continuum of consequences, environment/routine modifications, offer meaningful behavior alternatives, positive distractions, norming supportive class response, etc.)	PBIS strategies are not utilized	At least one PBIS strategy is utilized responsively (class wide or individualized)	Class wide PBIS strategies are utilized responsively	Class wide PBIS strategies are utilized to both respond to and reinforce behaviors.	Class wide and differentiated PBIS strategies are utilized with an emphasis on teaching replacement behaviors	
Intentional facilitation techniques are utilized to mitigate impacts of trauma on development (i.e. alignment with attention span, scaffolding, differentiation, integration of play, inquiry/project-based learning, cooperative learning structures, etc.)	Inconsistency in facilitation techniques utilized.	Facilitation techniques are utilized but misaligned to the developmental needs of students	Developmentally aligned techniques are utilized at least once to support the social OR emotional growth of students	Developmentally aligned techniques are utilized to support the social AND emotional growth of students	The social and emotional development of students is encouraged through a wide variety of techniques.	
There are multiple opportunities to respond and participate during instruction and/or activities (i.e. verbal & non-verbal feedback, relevant questioning & discussion techniques, individual/group responses)	No opportunities exist for student response/participation. Students are not actively engaged or interested.	Minimal opportunities exist for student response/participation. Most are limited to rote/recall engagement. Few students are actively engaged or interested.	A few opportunities exist for student response/participation. Most require minimal thinking or mainly compliance. Less than half of students are actively engaged or interested.	Several opportunities exist for student response or participation. More than half of students are actively engaged or interested.	An array of opportunities exists for student response, participation and/or leadership. Virtually all students are highly engaged or interested.	
Students are encouraged to make informed personal choices throughout the class (i.e. partners, use of materials, seating, meeting personal needs, activity selection, personalized learning, scheduling/planning)	Students are not allowed to make personal choices and/or have no information or skills needed to make informed decisions	Students have few opportunities for choice and/or have limited information/ skills needed to make informed decisions	Students have some opportunities for binary choice (i.e. partners, use of materials) and have sufficient information/skills to make informed decisions.	Students have opportunities to make significant, relevant and informed choices/decisions aligned with their personal needs and/or class expectations.	Students have opportunities to make significant, relevant and informed choices and can demonstrate the significance of their decisions. Students may also support one another in sound decision making.	
Opportunities are presented for student academic and/or behavioral self-awareness and self-monitoring (i.e. check for understanding, self-reflection, meta-moment, reviewing/reflecting, self-correction, goal setting, tracking personal progress, etc.)	No opportunities exist for students to monitor their behavior and/or academic progress	Students have few or limited opportunities to monitor their behavior and/or academic progress or do not understand how to monitor themselves accurately.	Students have some opportunities to monitor their behavior and/or academic progress and understand how to monitor themselves accurately.	Students have opportunities to monitor their behavior and/or academic progress and teachers communicate how efforts and decisions fit into their growth and development	Students have opportunities to monitor their behavior and/or academic progress and students articulate how their efforts and decisions related to their goals.	

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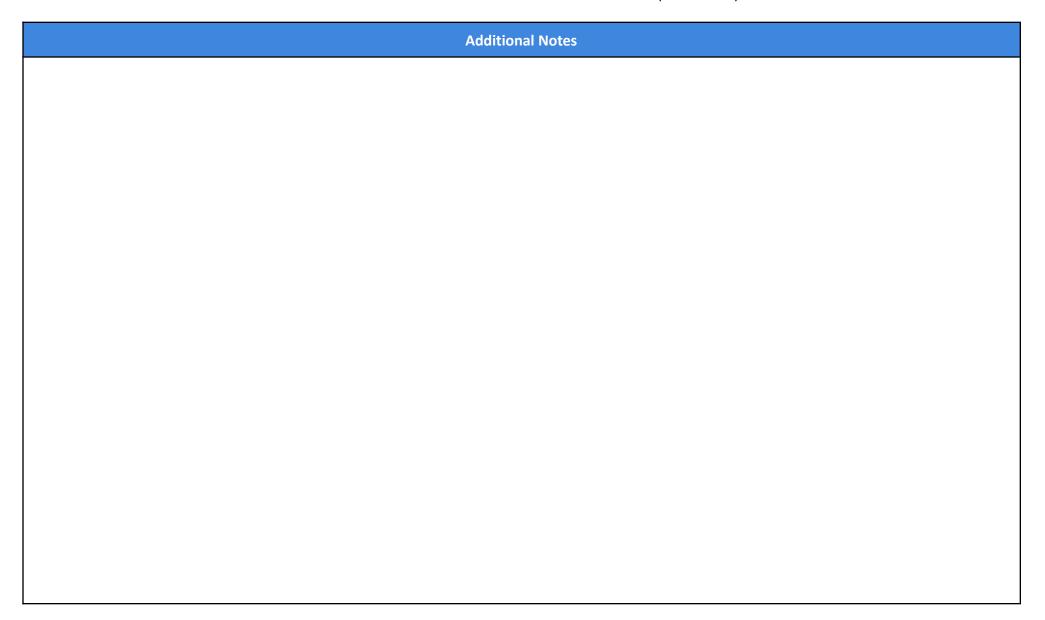| Relationships: Opportunities exist that foster positive relationships	Needs improvement (0)	Emerging (1)	Developing (2)	Proficient (3)	Exemplary (4)	No Opp. To Observe
Norms/policies that guide positive peer to peer interactions are clearly communicated (verbally and/or posted) **and modeled** (i.e. bullying prevention, healthy communication, social "non-negotiables", restorative practices, social media behavior, allyship and anti-discrimination, etc.)	No evidence of norms/policies posted or verbally communicated	There is evidence in the room that norms/policies have been taught	Norms/policies are clearly communicated and modeled but without consistency	Norms/policies are clearly communicated, modeled, and reinforced in classroom routines and procedures	Norms/expectations are clearly communicated and modeled by teacher and reinforced by student modeling	
Teacher provides direct instruction on considerate interpersonal communication and behavior (i.e. kindness and accountability language, effective conflict resolution, listening/response techniques, cultural awareness and respect, addressing microaggressions, etc.)	Students weren't taught/reminded of the impact of their behavior on others	Strategies are rarely communicated or modeled appropriately	Teacher communicated strategies to individual students responsively.	Strategies taught to all students (at least once) and prompted responsively as needed.	Student voice and peer to peer support represented in the strategies taught and practiced consistently and responsively.	
Teacher models healthy interpersonal communication techniques (i.e. with other teachers, teacher-student, positive motivation, grace/appreciation, empathy, humor, body language, etc.)	Did not model healthy interpersonal communication techniques	Teacher modeled techniques but missed various opportunities	Teacher modeled techniques during at least half of the opportunities	Teacher modeled technique during most opportunities	Teacher responded to all opportunities and appropriately differentiated techniques modeled	
Teacher provides an opportunity for students to practice positive peer to peer interactions (i.e. scripts, conversation starters, role plays, community building activities, cooperative/interactive learning structures)	No opportunities exist to practice positive peer to peer interactions	Few individual students were given an opportunity to practice responsively.	Some individual students were given an opportunity to practice responsively.	Teacher prompted class wide practice at least once and responsive practice is encouraged for individual students as needed.	There are clear and consistent routines in place to support individual and class wide practice.	
Opportunities exist for students' voice and opinions to be heard (i.e. peer-to-peer discussion, inquiry-based responses, community circles, student-led project, group planning/decision-making)	No opportunities exist for student voice or opinions to be heard	Opportunities exist for students to express their opinions during general classroom activities (i.e. pair share, projects)	Opportunities exist for students to be consulted about their ideas, offer feedback to peers or about significant decisions that impact their learning experience.	Opportunities exist for students to work collaboratively with teacher to identify challenges and generate solutions that impact student learning experience. (i.e. learning design or planning activities)	Opportunities exist for student-led activities or group process where students assume some responsibility for outcomes or education peers or other adults.	
Teacher validates student identities and celebrate personal strengths and interests (i.e. verbal/visual shout outs/affirmations, student jobs, chants, handshakes, acknowledge and integrate student experience/culture into instruction and encourage self-praise/self-worth, etc.)	Did not acknowledge student identities or celebrate strengths or interests	Teacher rarely acknowledged student identities but celebrated some student strengths or interests	Teacher acknowledged student identities and celebrated strengths, and interests but missed various opportunities	Teacher validated student identities, strengths and interests	Teacher consistently validated and celebrated student identities, strengths and interests and encouraged students to do so as well	
Teacher utilizes restorative questions and/or conversations with students	Teacher did not verbally initiate a restorative conversation.	Teacher verbally indicated a follow up conversation would occur in response to a hurtful interaction	Teacher held a private conversation with some student voice (content unknown)	Teacher or student initiated a private conversation with equitable student voice and some evidence to support a restorative approach	Teacher or student initiated a private conversation that addressed the impact on the relationship. A collaborative plan was agreed upon.	

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Regulation: Teacher utilizes affective communication and models emotional regulation.	Needs improvement (0)	Emerging (1)	Developing (2)	Proficient (3)	Exemplary (4)	No Opp. To Observe
Teacher utilizes active listening strategies (i.e. non-verbal strategies: use of eye contact, facial expression, proximity, and silence; verbal strategies: open-ended questions, door openers, eliciting techniques, summarization, reflective responses)	Did not utilize non-verbal or verbal techniques.	Used only non-verbal techniques.	Consistently used non-verbal techniques and open-ended questions, door-openers, eliciting.	Consistently used a combination of non-verbal and verbal techniques including summarization.	Consistently used a combination of non-verbal and verbal techniques including summarization & reflective responses.	
Teacher models regulation techniques when appropriate (i.e. mini check-ins/breaks, breathing strategies, positive self-talk, access social support, "I feel/need" statements, etc.)	Teacher did not model any regulation techniques	Teacher modeled regulation techniques but missed various opportunities	Teacher modeled techniques during at least half of the opportunities	Teacher modeled appropriate technique during most opportunities	Teacher responded to all opportunities and appropriately differentiated techniques modeled	
Teacher verbally and non-verbally communicates comfort and caring (i.e. non-verbal: frequent displays of smiling, laughter and enthusiasm, non-threatening stance, supportive gestures, non-judgmental emotional tone, etc.; verbal: recognizes positive choices, affirms worries/responds to questions, utilizes growth mindset language, etc.)	Teacher utilized shaming/threatening/ demeaning tone & language	Teacher non-verbally communicated comfort/caring	Teacher non-verbally communicated comfort/caring and verbally in times of distress	Teacher maintained supportive tone and stance	Teacher consistently maintained supportive tone, stance and actions	
Consequences are delivered respectfully and in a normal speaking tone (i.e. kind and firm, normal volume, lacks shameful/threatening emotion, avoids passive aggressive or exclusionary language)	Consequences delivered in shaming/threatening tone	Respect and tone utilized was inconsistent	Consequences delivered in a neutral tone	Consequences delivered respectfully and in a normal tone most of the time	Consequences consistently delivered respectfully and in a normal tone	

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Regulation: Opportunities exist for students to learn and practice regulation of emotions and behaviors.	Needs improvement (0)	Emerging (1)	Developing (2)	Proficient (3)	Exemplary (4)	No Opp. To Observe
There is evidence in the room that sensory supports are available (i.e. relevant & uncluttered wall displays, adequate personal space, alternative/active seating options, sensory tools, etc.)	No evidence of sensory supports are available in the classroom	Evidence of visual supports and personal space are present but use of alt. seating or sensory tools are limited	Evidence of sensory supports are present and one alt. seating or sensory tool is used at least once	Evidence of sensory supports are present and a range of seating options or sensory tools are used when appropriate	Evidence of sensory supports are present and a range of alt. seating options or sensory tools are used consistently	
Teacher responds to basic needs of students (i.e. temperature, bathroom, water, rest, medical, etc.)	Teacher does not respond to basic needs	Teacher responds only to basic needs that are urgent and does not have a consistent procedure in place	Teacher responds to some basic needs but the general procedure is disorganized and inconsistent	Teacher responds to most basic needs and has an organized procedure in place	Teacher responds to all basic needs appropriately and has an efficient and equitable procedures in place	
Opportunities for movement are integrated into academic lessons (i.e. hand signals for non-verbal communication/activities, clapping/gesturing, Kagan structures, learning walk, etc.)	No opportunities for movement integrated into the lesson.	Opportunities for seated movements integrated into lesson.	Seated movement and at least 1 opportunity for physical activity integrated into lesson for all students.	Opportunities for seated movements and physical activity integrated into lesson.	Student voice/choice included in differentiated opportunities for movement throughout the lesson.	
Opportunities for non-academic movement breaks are utilized (i.e. gonoodle, instant recess, brain breaks, bio-breaks, etc.)	There were no opportunities provided for breaks.	At least one break is provided. Routines/procedures need to be strengthened	Routines/procedures in place to support at least 1 teacher led break.	Teacher led breaks are utilized consistently and responsively	Student led breaks are utilized consistently and responsively	
Designated space(s) or tools within the classroom are utilized for students to take a break/calm down as needed	There are no clearly designated spaces	Space(s) are designated. Unclear routines in place and/or not utilized when student needs arise	Space(s) are designated and utilized but. routines and procedures need to be strengthened.	Strong teacher led routines in place for consistent/accurate utilization of designated space(s)	Students are able to independently access and utilize space(s) in the classroom appropriately as needed.	
Emotional regulation & self-care strategies are explicitly taught and/or communicated to students	There is no evidence that strategies have been taught.	There is evidence in the room that strategies have been taught (i.e. posters, calm down corner materials)	Teacher communicated strategies to individual students responsively.	Strategies taught to all students (at least once) and prompted responsively as needed.	Student voice and peer to peer support represented in the strategies taught consistently and responsively.	
Opportunities are provided for students to practice emotional/behavioral regulation skills (i.e. journaling, deep breathing, self-talk, mini-break, exercise, social support, consequences as opportunities, etc.)	No opportunities provided.	Some individual students were given an opportunity to practice responsively.	Most individual students (internalizes/externalizers) were given an opportunity to practice responsively.	Teacher prompted class wide practice at least once and responsive practice for individual students as needed.	There are consistent routines in place to support individual and class wide practice.	

Additional Notes

Recommended Citation

Zeigler, K. & Brewton, A. (2020). Trauma-Informed Schools Classroom Observation Tool. Available at Coaching Resources – Safe Schools NOLA (tulane.edu).

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Scoring, Reflection, and Action Planning

1. In the box below, indicate the score received for each of the trauma-informed practices. In order to create a final score for each practice, take the average of the scores under each practice.

Trauma-Informed Practice	Score/Total Possible Points	Average
Trauma-Informed Environment	__/ 32	
Relationships: Opportunities exist that foster positive relationships	__/ 28	
Regulation: Teacher utilizes affective communication and models emotional regulation.	__/ 16	
Regulation: Opportunities exist for students to learn and practice regulation of emotions and behaviors.	__/ 28	

2. Reflect on teacher scores.

What evidence was used to support the ratings selected for the highest and lowest scored practice?	How do you think the students would rate their experience of the practices observed?
How do these behaviors and practices typically look in this classroom?	What professional learning experiences could facilitate improvement in the areas of growth?
How does school culture or priorities affect this rating?	What can be done to improve implementation of these practices more fully and/or consistently?

Observation Notes Form

Staff Observed _____

Observer _____

Activity/Activities _____

Date & Time _____

Observation Priorities _____

 # Observation _____

What are adults doing and saying doing your observation?

What are the students doing and saying doing your observation?

Classroom Environment Observations

Trauma-Informed Schools Classroom Observation Tool
(Version 6.0)
Works Referenced

This observation tool was developed using existing instruments as well as additions and input from the Safe Schools NOLA Implementation Team. Existing instruments that informed this checklist include:

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