CONSIDERING APPROPRIATE IMAGES IN BOOKS & PICTURES
FOR NC’S ENVIRONMENT RATING SCALE ASSESSMENT PROCESS
THIS PRESENTATION

- Provides considerations regarding appropriate images in books and pictures as it applies to observations conducted by the NC Rated License Assessment Project for the NC Star Rated License.
- Addresses common questions.
- Provides additional information regarding related items on the Environment Rating Scales (ERS).
  - ITERS-R: Item 14, indicator 3.1 & 5.1
  - ECERS-R: Item 15, indicator 5.4
  - SACERS-U: Item 23, indicator 5.1
  - FCCERS-R: Item 15, indicator 3.1 & 5.1
ABOUT THE CONTENT

- This presentation addresses some of the considerations about appropriate images for children.
- This relates to one aspect of the books and pictures/language materials item on each of the ERS. It is important to carefully read each indicator of those items to more fully understand the expectations.
- Also read supporting scale text and other resources
  - Notes for Clarification
  - NC Additional Notes found at [www.ncrlap.org](http://www.ncrlap.org)
GOOD LITERATURE FOR CHILDREN - A BRIEF REMINDER

- Assessing images alone, does not replace the need to consider whether a book is a good choice for your classroom or group of children. Even if a book is not technically “inappropriate” in terms of ERS requirements, it still may not be a positive addition to a classroom.

- For all age groups, carefully and intentionally choosing books and pictures for classroom use is important to support a quality literacy curriculum.
WHEN DETERMINING IF AN IMAGE IS APPROPRIATE:

- Consider how images can influence children’s behaviors.
- Consider if images are non-violent or contain violent and/or frightening images.
- Think about the ages and developmental stages of the children enrolled in the group:
  - Infants & toddlers (birth-2 ½ yrs.)
  - Preschoolers (2 ½ yrs.-5 yrs.)
  - Younger school-agers (under the age of 8 yrs.)
  - Older school-agers (8 yrs. and older)
Children often imitate what they see.

So…. images of behaviors typically discouraged in the classroom might actually influence young children to replicate those undesirable actions (even if the text of the book has a positive message, such as how to avoid fighting).
In contrast an older school-age child can consider the inappropriate actions of a character in a story and think about these actions within the larger context of socially acceptable and safe behaviors.

They are better able to consider the consequences of those actions should they happen in real life.
The ability of children to distinguish between reality and fantasy matures as they get older.

When thinking about whether an image is appropriate for children, the age of the child is crucial.

For example, a preschooler may not be able to verbalize fear associated with a frightening image and understand that the image is not real.
In contrast, an older school-age child who can distinguish real life and pretend/imaginary situations is better able to process the same image.

An older school-age child typically understands there is no inherent danger from a picture in a book.
A WORD OF CAUTION BEFORE YOU PROCEED…

- The following images are not recommendations; but rather, they are similar to the types of images that might be present in some classrooms.

- We will discuss how these images are considered during an assessment when they are present in the classroom for children of varying ages to use.

- Look at the next image and think about how a three year old child might react to the picture compared to an eleven year old.
IS THIS SCARY AND FRIGHTENING?

- It all depends on the age and the child.
- Preschoolers (or younger) may not have the understanding that the image is a cartoon, monsters do not exist, and the image cannot hurt him/her. This image is not considered appropriate for that age group.
- An older school-age child is likely to have developed this level of understanding, so this image would not be considered inappropriate for that age group during an assessment.
  - Of course, group leaders in school-age programs still need to consider if the images in context of the story are beneficial for the group.
  - A good question to ask is, “Does this book/image support a quality curriculum?”
A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT MONSTERS AND SCARINESS

- Images in books like *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak are considered appropriate for all ages if the books are not frightening and the children do not display fear, even when the subject matter is about monsters.

- Again, the appropriateness depends on the book, images, and the ages of the children enrolled in the group.
WHAT BOOKS/IMAGES ARE ASSESSED?

- Books located in interest centers for use during free play are assessed.
- Books or images children are observed using are assessed, but school text books and books assigned/used for homework in school-age groups are not assessed.
- Books stored for teachers’ use that are inaccessible for children’s independent use are not assessed.
- Both images and words are considered for groups that include children who are emergent and/or independent readers.
COMMON AREAS OF CONFUSION

- We often receive questions about images that depict:
  - Weapons
  - Fighting/violence
  - Wild animals
  - Fairytales (and Disney)
  - Therapeutic books
  - Historical events
  - Religious stories
POP QUIZ!

- So let’s give this a try.
- View the next slides to see how you would consider these images.
- Then, see how these images are considered for the NC ERS assessment process.
IMAGES OF PEOPLE WITH WEAPONS?

OK OR NOT OK?
Images of an individual holding or carrying a weapon such as a gun, gun in a holster, spear, etc. are not considered inappropriate. Often these items are a part of a person’s work attire or duty such as a police officer or soldier.
WEAPONS IN USE AGAINST OTHERS

- If images depict weapons in use for fighting, battle, etc. these images are considered:
  - Not appropriate for infants/toddlers.
  - Not appropriate for preschoolers/ kindergartners.
  - Not appropriate for younger school-agers (under the age of 8 years).
- For older school-agers (8 years and older), it depends on the level of potential harm/degree of threat. Is it extreme?
  - Read the notes carefully in the SACERS-U for further guidance about considerations.
IMAGES OF PEOPLE FIGHTING; DEPICTIONS OF VIOLENCE? OK OR NOT?
FIGHTING

- If images depict fighting/intent to harm, these images are considered
  - Not appropriate for infants/toddlers.
  - Not appropriate for preschoolers/kindergartners.
  - For younger school-agers (under the age of 8), the appropriateness depends on the level of violence.
  - For older school-agers (8 years and older), probably will not be considered inappropriate unless the image is particularly gory/depicts extreme violence.
  - Read the notes carefully in the SACERS-U for further guidance about considerations.
IMAGES OF WILD ANIMALS?

OK OR NOT OK?
TYPICALLY THESE IMAGES ARE OK

- Realistic depictions of animals teach children about the world around them and support nature/science concepts.
- Often these images are considered appropriate for all ages, but there are some issues to think about further before deciding if the image works for your age group.
TEETH AND FANGS?

These types of images are fine for all age groups when there is no blood or gore shown; only teeth are visible.

Special consideration - Biting can be an issue for toddlers in particular; some teachers have mentioned that they do not like images that emphasize teeth for this reason. This may be something to think about for specific groups of children, but will not affect whether an image is considered to be appropriate during an assessment.
WHAT ABOUT ANIMALS (EVEN DINOSAURS) BITING EACH OTHER?

- If there is minimal fighting, slight biting, and/or some blood the image is:
  - Likely to be viewed as inappropriate for infants/toddlers.
  - Likely to be appropriate for preschoolers/kindergartners if the image is not particularly scary/frightening. The level of blood and gore is key to the appropriateness of the image.
  - Not considered inappropriate for school-agers.
WHAT ABOUT REAL LIFE IMAGES OF ANIMALS EATING OTHER ANIMALS?

- When images show illustrated and/or real life photographs of animals eating other animals with much “blood and gore” visible, those images are considered:
  - Not appropriate for infants/toddlers.
  - Not appropriate for preschoolers/kindergarteners.
  - Likely to not be viewed as inappropriate for school-agers, but group leaders still need to carefully consider whether there is value in these types of images, as well as, the specific characteristics of the children enrolled in their group.
WHAT ABOUT FAIRY TALES OR DISNEY BOOKS?
OK OR NOT OK?
It all depends on the images shown.

- The type/brand of story or publisher does not affect how those books are scored on ERS assessments— it's only about the content.

Think of ages and abilities of children when considering appropriateness, and use the concepts about scariness, fighting, and violence previously discussed when reviewing these types of books.

There are often many versions of the same story; if one version contains images that are problematic it is likely that another version with more appropriate images for the age group can be located.
THERAPEUTIC BOOKS?

- Sometimes books teach children about societal issues and concerns such as domestic violence, bullying, and stranger danger.

- These books can contain images that may be violent, frightening, or confusing for some age groups.
  - Think of ages and abilities of children when considering appropriateness.
  - Use the concepts about scariness, fighting, and violence previously discussed when reviewing these types of books.

- These books are assessed when they are accessible to the children. Read the NC Additional Notes regarding these types of books.
Sometimes books about history and/or religious events include images that show violence or other potentially frightening content for young children.

Even if books depict accurate historical information or concepts that are important within a program’s philosophy, the ages and abilities of children can help guide book selection.
HISTORICAL AND/OR RELIGIOUS STORIES- CONSIDER THE AGES ENROLLED

- For NC’s ERS assessment process use the concepts about scariness, fighting, and violence previously discussed when reviewing these types of books.

- For school-age children, books that correspond with grade level history topics are not considered inappropriate. Just be aware of the entire age range enrolled. What might be grade level appropriate for older school-agers may not be appropriate when younger school-age children also have access to those books.

- There are often many versions of the same story; it is likely that there is a version available with images that may be better suited to different age groups.
THINK YOU’VE GOT IT? THAT’S GREAT!

- But wait, there’s a little more information about appropriate images to think about.
- This concept is also considered on the ERS items that deal with diversity and the use of TV, video, and computers.
- The next slides explain more.
IMPACT ON THE DIVERSITY ITEM

- Materials that depict diversity are required by the ERS to show diversity in a positive way.
- When considering the appropriateness of images, also consider if the images show fighting/violence between different cultural groups.
- Make sure to read the scale text and Additional Notes related to diversity items regarding age-appropriate content.

- ITERS-R: Item 24, indicator 3.2
- ECERS-R: Item 28, indicator 3.2
- SACERS-U: Item 26, indicators 5.1 & 5.2
- FCCERS-R: Item 24, indicator 3.2
USE OF TV, VIDEO, AND/OR COMPUTERS

- Considerations about appropriate images are used when deciding the appropriateness of the content of videos, movies, programs, and electronic games viewed by children.
- Make sure to read the scale text and Additional Notes related to diversity items regarding age-appropriate content.

- ITERS-R: Item 23, indicator 1.1, 3.1, & 5.1
- ECERS-R: Item 27, indicators 1.1, 3.1, & 5.1
- SACERS-U: Item 23, Indicator 5.1
  (Potentially when observed in use)
- FCCERS-R: Item 25, Indicator 1.1, 3.1, & 5.1
ADDRESSING THE CONCERN REGARDING “BANNING BOOKS”

- The ERS considers the appropriateness of materials across learning domains used in child care and early education programs.
- Considering appropriate images in books and pictures through the lens of the ERS focuses solely on whether the images, accessible to children for independent use, are appropriate for the developmental level of children in that classroom.
- There is no further consideration about other ways to incorporate the book or considerations for limiting or “banning” the use of a particular book on a larger-scale.
- What books you choose to include in your reading center is still your choice; it may be helpful to be aware that particular books may not score well on certain items on the assessment tools.
YOUR BOOK COLLECTION-YOUR CHOICE

- Early childhood professionals are often passionate about books and early childhood literature.

- When thinking about the appropriate image indicators on the ERS, keep in mind that there are many options and choices.

- There may be favorite books that you consider to be important in facilitating unique program goals or program philosophy. You might wish to keep them in your collection, though they may not meet the requirement for appropriate images on the ERS. If so, it is your choice about whether to continue to use those books in the general reading center for children or save them for teacher facilitated activities.

- This choice could mean you earn a lower score on one, possibly two items, but if other items score well, a good overall average score can still be earned during the assessment. This is because it is the average score across all items that is used, rather than the score on any one item alone.
SO, CAN YOU JUDGE A BOOK BY IT’S COVER?

- No! It’s an old adage, but true. You have to actually open up those books and take a look.
- Considering images takes some thought on the part of program staff and...
  - A good book selection for children is appropriate for children’s development and reading abilities.
  - The selection covers a variety of topics.
  - It requires intentionally choosing books that are of interest to your children and relate to current classroom themes/topics of discussion.
SO HAPPY READING!
CONTACT US IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS.
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NCRLAP wishes to thank the NC School Age Quality Improvement Project and Ashley Stolfo, Teacher, Piedmont Global Preschool and Child Care, Greensboro, NC for reviewing this information.
The presentation introduces basic concepts in a concise manner.

Remember to read specific information in the appropriate Environment Rating Scale and supplemental text.

When planning for program enhancement, consider the unique features of the child care facility such as:

- Ages and abilities of the children enrolled.
- Overall program goals.

Programs may also wish to seek input from:

- Division of Child Development and Early Education Child Care Consultant
- Child Care Resource & Referral and/or Smart Start Partnership technical assistance specialist
- Resources from other child care agencies.
THE ENVIRONMENT RATING SCALES


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FOR THE ENVIRONMENT RATING SCALES

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