Facilitating activities & the SACERS-U

Bring learning to life!
Before you start

• You will need a copy of the SACERS-U as you read this resource.

• Read the School-age Care Environment Rating Scale, updated (SACERS-U), paying close attention to the indicators in the Activities sub-scale that require specific types of interactions.

• Also carefully read the NC Additional Notes for the scale located at www.ncrlap.org.

• Consider the information in this resource and how these ideas are incorporated into your program’s goals and daily activities for school-age children.

• The following examples are meant to be used as a guide for school-age staff/group leaders. There are many different ways to earn credit for the various items and indicators on the Environment Rating Scales.
Purpose of this resource

• Provides examples of some of the required interactions and facilitation of learning for a few items on the Activities sub-scale of the SACERS-U.

• Illustrates ideas for implementing best practices while staff communicate and interact with school-age children.

• These examples reflect ways school-age staff provide quality care through extending activities and encouraging children’s interest in new topics.

• It is not designed to be used as a checklist.

• Rather, it serves as a reminder of how school-age staff/group leaders play an important role in setting up an inviting and engaging environment while offering a variety of play and learning activities each day.
Directions

• Read the following examples of how school-age staff facilitate learning in ways that enhance children’s experiences, as well as earn credit on the SACERS-U.

• Answer the question(s) that follow each scenario.

• If you have several school-age staff at your program, consider addressing the questions as a whole group. It can be a time for discussion and learning from the ideas presented by your co-workers.
DRAMA, DRAMA DRAMA !

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Think about how you intentionally extend children’s dramatic play. Look for examples of how the teacher makes suggestions while children pretend.

• **Scenario 1**
  Several children dress up in the dramatic play area and a child puts on a police hat. The teacher mentions that there is paper on the table that the children can use to write tickets. Another child picks up a purse and the teacher suggests that it could be used as evidence in solving a crime.

• **Scenario 2**
  While a group of 7-9 year old children play in the dramatic play area, a child pretending to cook states that she ran out of milk. The teacher suggests the children could pretend to go the store and label the materials with a price to practice purchasing them. The children then pretend like they are going to the store and use the cash register and play money.
This indicator requires more interaction on the part of the adult than merely setting up dramatic play props for children to use.

It involves the adult observing what the children are pretending so he/she can offer ideas for additional props to use, suggest additional places where children might play to enhance the experience, and/or help children deepen dramatic play roles and characters.

Questions for school-age staff:
What dramatic play theme have your children recently acted out? Explain how you enhanced their play or explain how you might extend their play in the future using this particular dramatic play theme.
READ & WRITE!
everyday, everyday, everyday, everyday, everyday

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Read indicator 5.3 (Page 30 of the SACERS-U) Think about how you encourage the practical use of reading and writing. Look for examples of how the teacher either models or encourages children to use reading/writing skills.

• **Scenario 1**
  The teacher plays the Memory game with Kindergarten children. She reads the rules to the children about how to play the game.

• **Scenario 2**
  A group of older school-agers have difficulty playing the Clue game. The teacher encourages one of the children to read the directions out loud to the other children in the group.

• **Scenario 3**
  Children line up to wash their hands for snack. A child only rinses her hands and wipes with a paper towel. The teacher politely encourages her to read the handwashing poster so the child can remember the correct steps for handwashing.
Item 23, Language/reading activities

• This indicator at the “5” or good level of quality requires school-age staff to recognize times when children can practice and use their reading and writing skills during typical, everyday experiences for a practical purpose.

• It reinforces to children that reading and writing skills are useful for daily life. (Rather than just something you have to learn in school!)

• It also fosters children’s growing need for independence and autonomy by allowing them to use reading and writing skills to complete tasks on their own.

• Questions for school-age staff:
  • Name one or two examples when you facilitated children’s use of reading and writing for a practical reason.
  • What do you think the children gained from this opportunity?
Are YOU a MATHLETE?

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Read indicator 5.2 (Page 31 of the SACERS-U) Think about how you encourage the practical use of math/reasoning skills. Look for examples of how school-age staff incorporate math and reasoning into typical daily events.

• Scenario 1
  During snack time the teacher of the Kindergarten group asks children to assist with snack. He encourages the children to count the number of place settings needed based on the number of children present that day and assist with setting the table accordingly.

• Scenario 2
  A group of 7-9 year old children play store in the dramatic play area. The teacher suggests the children price the toys, pay for items, and practice giving the correct change using different increments of play money.

• Scenario 3
  During outdoor play the teacher encourages children to keep track of the scores during a game of basketball.
Item 24, Math/reasoning activities

• This indicator requires school-age staff to provide children opportunities to use math and reasoning skills for daily life experiences and activities.

• It allows children to practice and develop math/reasoning skills learned during the educational day for a practical purpose. (Sort of like a real life word problem!)

• Questions for school-age staff:
  • Name one or two examples when you facilitated children’s use of math/reasoning for a daily activity.
  • What do you think the children gained from this experience?
WANTED: Future Scientists!

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Item 25, Science/nature activities

Read indicator 3.2 (Page 32 of the SACERS-U)
Think about how you use books/periodicals to further children’s knowledge of science and nature concepts. Find ways the teacher facilitates this in the following examples.

• Scenario 1:
  • A girl examines realistic looking plastic snakes in the science center. The teacher tells the child that he almost had a heart attack the other day when he saw the snake on the floor. The group leader explains that he thought it was real. The child laughs and asks the teacher why he was so afraid. The group leader asks the child if she knows what kind of snake it is and the child responds that she doesn’t.
  • The teacher explains that the fake snake is a representation of an Eastern Coral Snake which is extremely poisonous.
  • The group leader pulls out a picture poster of North Carolina snakes and shows it to the child. He continues to share the information on the poster regarding some snake species that look like the Coral Snake but are not poisonous.
Scenario 2:

- The children in this group, ages 6-9 years old, recently caught a lizard. Upon returning to the classroom from over the weekend a child asks, “Where is the lizard?”
- The teacher states that the lizard is outside because the program did not have a container large enough to make an appropriate habitat so she let it go outside.
- The child then asks, “Do squirrels eat lizards?”
- The group leader responds, “I don’t know. We have that book in the science center about squirrels. Why don’t you look it up?”
- While reading the book the child discovers that squirrels are mainly vegetarian, but that some also eat insects and small animals like young birds.
Item 25, Science/nature activities

• This indicator at the minimal or “3” level of quality requires school-age staff to use books (or similar reference materials) as a resource to provide children with more information about science and nature topics.

• Questions for school-age staff:
  • Name one or two examples when you used a book, a reference material, or periodical to facilitate children’s knowledge about science and nature?
  • What more did they learn from using the additional resource?

• Make sure to read the indicators at the “5” or good level and “7” or excellent level for more quality indicators related to facilitating children’s knowledge of science/nature.

• Children this age often want to know more about the world and how the things in their environment work. Using science/nature books reinforces how children can learn more through research and reading.
How about one more example?

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Item 36, Schedule

Read indicator 3.3 (Page 43 of the SACERS-U)

Note that this item is not in the Activities subscale, but is in the Program Structure subscale. However, it does relate to this resource because indicator 3.3 requires an interaction for teachers to schedule one fine motor or language activity daily.

• Scenario 1:
  • Children in this group of 6-12 year olds have been working on a week long team-building project in which they choose teams and work together within their small groups to develop their version of a board game.
  • The children vote on a name for their game and formulate rules and directions. They can also use various materials in the classroom to help develop the game.
  • Throughout the week the teacher checks in on their progress and encourages them to write “to do lists”, rules and directions.
  • At the culmination of this activity the children will have the opportunity to play each others’ games.
Scenario 1 provides an involved activity that earns credit for indicator 3.3, but less complex activities like putting out a variety of collage materials for children’s use can also earn credit.

However, more involved examples often have the potential to earn credit on other items and indicators, too. Many of which we just discussed.

Questions for school-age staff:
  - Name the fine motor/language activities that you scheduled for children each day this week?
  - For the children who were interested and participated, what do you believe they learned by engaging in this activity?

Bonus Question:
  - Now read the scenario on the previous slide once again. Can you guess what other items/indicators also earned credit for this more involved activity and why?
  - The answer is coming up soon so no peeking just yet! Hint: You may want to go back and review the information about the previous items discussed.
• We know that the scenario would earn credit for item 36, Schedule, indicator 3.3 because children use fine motor materials like art materials to create the game (fine motor activity).

• They also write directions and “to do lists” as well as discuss with their group members about how to proceed in the creation of the game (language activity).

• This involved activity supports a quality school-age program. When activities like this are observed during the assessment and/or there is evidence to show they occur, what other items/indicators on the SACERS-U also earns credit?
• Item 23, Language/reading, indicator 5.3 because reading and writing are used for the practical purpose of writing directions for the game as well as any additional information on a potential game board, game cards, etc.

• Item 24, Math/reasoning, indicator 5.2 because children vote on a name for the game. They might also use math to figure out various components of the game creation. Likely children in small groups will have to problem-solve and reason how many players for the game, the way you win, etc.

• Potentially item 25, Science/nature, indicator 3.2 if the game is about a science/nature topic (like a trivia game) and children are encouraged to use books to help develop game questions/answers.

• It is important to state that these requirements may have a specified frequency or be evident during the assessment. Read the Notes for Clarification and NC Additional Notes for each item to fully understand the expectations.
More about these types of interactions

• When school-age staff set up a quality environment and engaging activities, like those in the previous examples, those efforts are reflected through the indicators of quality on the SACERS-U like fostering positive peer and staff-child interactions, positive guidance, and good supervision.

• These types of interactions during out of school times can build upon the skills and concepts children learn during elementary school.

• The goal is to facilitate activities using various types of approaches in a meaningful, authentic manner to enhance the overall learning, recreational, and social experiences for children in school-age care.
More about these types of interactions

• Remember IT’S NOT A CHECKLIST to say and do certain things “just to earn credit”, of course. It is an intentional method or approach to teaching. The teacher facilitates learning based on children’s interests and play themes.

• Based on findings on the lower scoring items and indicators during NC assessments, these types of required interactions are often not observed.

• It may take some initial planning and on-going practice for school-age staff to seamlessly incorporate this into the program daily, as a good habit when interacting with the children.
Now go implement some cool activities that your children will love and...

...Bring learning to life!
Content considerations

• This information introduces basic concepts in a concise manner. The resource may not cover all considerations.

• When planning for program enhancement, consider the unique features of the child care facility:
  • Ages and abilities of the children enrolled
  • Number of teachers in the classroom
  • Overall program goals.

• Contact NC Rated License Assessment Project (NCRLAP) regarding questions about the SACERS-U and the assessment process.

• Programs may also wish to seek input from:
  • Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) Child Care Consultant
  • Resource and Referral and/or Smart Start Partnership technical assistance specialist
  • Resources from other child care agencies.

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