Language Activity: Understanding the requirement for SACERS-U item 29, Staff-child communication, indicator 5.4
How to use this activity

• Read the School-age Care Environment Rating Scale, updated (SACERS-U), item 29, Staff-child communication carefully including the NC Additional Notes for the scale located at www.ncrlap.org.

• Consider the information in this activity 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. There are many different ways to earn credit for the various items and indicators on the Environment Rating Scales.
Content considerations

• This activity introduces basic concepts in a concise manner. The activity 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 School-age Environment Rating Scale- updated (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.
Purpose of this activity

- Provides examples of the types of language and questioning techniques that specifically meet the expectations for item 29, Staff-child communication, indicator 5.4.
- Illustrates best practices for language when staff ask children probing questions that encourage children to give more involved responses.
Types of questions

• Closed-ended questions require a “yes” or “no” response or one correct answer
  – “Did you have a good day at school?”

• Some questions require children to report events
  – “How was your day?”
  – “What did you do during vacation?”

• These types of questions earn credit for item 29, indicators 3.1 and 5.1.
Questions that allow children to share information and encourage a back and forth exchange earn credit in indicator 5.2 for encouraging conversation. These questions can help build rapport with staff and children and support the positive teacher-child interactions required by indicator 5.3.

– “Will your family go with you to the tournament?”
– “What will you do at the tournament?”
Probing questions

• However, indicator 5.4 requires more than just asking children to “report” an answer.

• Questions considered for indicator 5.4 are intentional in helping children think, analyze, elaborate, make connections, and expand their verbal responses.
  – “Why do you think there are no birds at the bird feeder today?”
How often do you use these probing questions with children?

How?

What if…?

Why?

What might happen…?
• Read the following examples of questions on the next page. Consider the various types of questions and determine which examples earn credit for indicator 5.4. Types of questions include:
  – Closed-ended that require a yes/no response or one correct answer
  – Encourages children to report information
  – Encourages children to think critically and provide longer answers. These types of questions earn credit for item 29, indicator 5.4.

• Use a separate sheet of paper to write down your answers. When you’ve made your decision, view the next pages to see the answers.
1. Did you draw that picture?

2. How can we handle that better instead of fighting?

3. What are you building?

4. Can you tell me how you built that house?

5. During a science experiment a teacher asks, “What do you think will happen if you blow air into this bottle of water?”
1. Did you draw that picture?  

Example 2 does not earn credit for indicator 5.4.

It is a closed-ended question that requires the child to provide a yes/no response. These questions can be the start of a conversation if more questions and sharing occur.
2. How can we handle that better instead of fighting? ✓

Example 2 earns credit for indicator 5.4.

This question encourages children to think about the causes of the conflict and consider what they could do instead.
3. What are you building? 

Example 3 does not earn credit for indicator 5.4.

It requires a child to report.

This type of question allows for an exchange of information and can foster positive adult-child social interactions, but does not encourage children to think critically or in a more analytical manner. Staff can then build upon these questions to ask more probing questions, such as example 4 on the next slide.
4. Can you tell me how you built that house?

Example 4 earns credit for indicator 5.4.

It is an open-ended question that encourages a child to think about the steps needed to build the house.

It also requires the child to explain the steps used, encouraging the child to provide a more complex response.
5. During a science experiment a teacher asks, “What do you think will happen if you blow air into this bottle of water?”

Example 5 earns credit for indicator 5.4.

This type of question allows children to make hypotheses, make connections, and apply prior knowledge.
More about the types of questions

- Each type of question (closed-ended, reporting, and probing) can support the exchange of information and social interaction.
- The goal for adults is to communicate using various types of questions in a meaningful, authentic manner to enhance the overall learning, recreational, and social experiences for children in school-age care.
- It is the probing questions that are not often used so it may take some practice for staff to remember to do this daily when working with children.
- Play game 2 for a little more practice.
On a separate sheet of paper, write down whether you think the sample questions 6-12 on the next slide does or does not earn credit for item 29, indicator 5.4.

When you are finished reviewing the questions, review the next pages for the answers.
6. What did you do today?
7. Did you have a good day at school?
8. Why are you upset today?
9. What do you think will happen if I pull this Jenga block from the middle? How do you know?
10. What did you do over the weekend?
12. Since you both want to use the hula hoop how can we resolve this issue?
Explanation of game 2 answers

6. What did you do today?

7. Did you have a good day at school?

Questions 6 and 7 only require reporting.
8. Why are you upset today?

9. What do you think will happen if I pull this Jenga block from the middle? How do you know?

Example 8 requires the child to think about what happened, and example 9 requires the child to think about what might happen and why.
10. What did you do over the weekend?
12. Since you both want to use the hula hoop how can we resolve this issue?

Questions 10-12 are open-ended because they do not ask for a specific answer.

Question 10 does not earn credit because it only requires the child to report.

Questions 11 and 12 encourage children to think and elaborate on what they are saying/doing.
So how did you do?

- Do you think you have a better understanding of how the language school-age child care teachers use with children is considered through the lens of the SACERS-U, item 29, indicator 5.4?
- Of course, it isn’t about how well you did on this game.
And it isn’t about whether you know how to “just earn credit” for specific items and indicators on the Rating Scale.

It is about ensuring that school-age children enrolled in child care have positive experiences that help them socialize, learn, grow and develop.
• Group leaders have a crucial role to play in setting up the school-age care environment and facilitating quality learning and play activities supported by positive interactions.

• When programs offer an enriching child care experience each day, those efforts are reflected in the various indicators of quality on the SACERS-U.
This is what it’s all about!

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