

# Thinking More about Activities



## SACERS-U

**Purpose:** This document addresses many of the requirements in the Activities subscale. The focus is primarily on indicators at the 3, 5 and 7 level. It is important to review the entire item to ensure that no indicators at the 1 or “inadequate” level apply to the classroom. Answering the questions and referring to the SACERS-U will build familiarity with requirements, while offering a chance to reflect on current practices and situations.

**Preparation:** Refer to the SACERS-U (spiral bound edition published in 2014) when completing the questions. To better understand the scale format and structure, review the instructions for scoring on page 4 of the SACERS-U and the definitions of common terms on pages 5-6. It will also be helpful to refer to a copy of the most current NC Additional Notes (available at [ncrlap.org](http://ncrlap.org)). There are many questions, so completing them all will likely take several reflection/review sessions.

The items included here consider many aspects of the school-age program, whether afterschool or full-day, related to children’s play. The focus is specifically on required learning or play areas, the types and quantities of materials used, the amount of time dedicated to play, and the interactions that occur while children are engaged in play with learning materials. Free play with a variety of appropriate materials and choices is critically important in fostering positive developmental outcomes for children. In addition, the language and support that teachers provide related to play activities is essential in building relationships and fostering learning opportunities for children.

### Tips:

- If you are confused about a question in the worksheet, look at the item in the SACERS-U and check any Note for Clarification or NC Additional Notes to identify the specific indicator and requirement to which it refers.
- Describe the current practices that occur when answering the questions. Remember, this is not about a “right answer” but rather a way to build understanding about what occurs every day. In the reflection section at the end, it can be helpful to add ideas about future plans or changes.
- Using the worksheet on an ongoing basis can help verify that the required types and categories of materials are present over time, as the environment changes. Consider all accessible materials in the entire classroom because not all materials have to be in a single area.
- Answering the questions with someone else (co-teachers, administrators, technical assistance specialists, etc.) promotes sharing of perspectives and may draw attention to different details.

Date(s) completed: \_\_\_\_\_ Classroom name/age group: \_\_\_\_\_

Worksheet completed by: \_\_\_\_\_

The number of children currently enrolled in the classroom is \_\_\_\_\_.

Are there younger school-age children (K-2nd) **Y / N** older school-age (3rd-5th+) **Y / N** or both? **Y / N**

How many children usually attend each day? \_\_\_\_\_

**ITEM 19 Arts and crafts (p. 26)**

List the art materials for each category that children currently use. The required categories and examples are described in the Notes for Clarification.

Drawing materials	Paints	Collage	Sculpture	Crafts

Are all materials usable (e.g., watercolors have cups for water and brushes, there is paper to use for drawing materials, collage materials have glue) and in good condition (e.g., not dried out)? **Y / N**

The children can use art materials during these times:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Total time art materials are accessible daily:

Are the children able to choose art materials and use them in their own way? **Y / N**

If planned, do art activities when children must follow an example or specific plan occur infrequently? **Y / N**

Describe any complex art projects and also any that include multiple steps over different days:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How often do these activities occur? \_\_\_\_\_

**ITEM 20 Music and movement (p. 27)**

List the music and movement materials currently used. The required number of materials needed can be found in the Notes for Clarification.

Recorded music	Dance props	Instruments

The children can use music and movement materials during these times:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Total time music materials are accessible daily:
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Are there provisions for daily music and movement activities? **Y / N**

Special music activities and music/movement instruction times are planned to extend children’s interest in music such as: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How often does music/movement instruction occur? \_\_\_\_\_

What about special music activities? \_\_\_\_\_

**ITEM 21 Blocks and construction (p. 28)**

List blocks for children to use:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

List interlocking construction materials: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

List accessories for blocks and interlocking building sets:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Are the accessories stored near or with the building materials? **Y / N**

Describe the space used for building: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The children can use blocks/construction materials during these times:

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Total time blocks and construction materials are accessible daily:

List any functional carpentry tools and supplies, and how often these are used:

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### ITEM 22 Dramatic play/theatre (p. 29)

What dramatic play materials are in the classroom?

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List the different themes or activities offered by the dramatic play materials:

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Are there appropriate materials that encourage more complex play, for each age group enrolled? **Y / N**

The children can use dramatic play materials during these times:

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Total time dramatic play materials are accessible daily:

Children's dramatic play is extended in the following ways:

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Children are involved in developing drama/theater productions in the following ways:

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### ITEM 23 Language/reading activities (p. 30)

The classroom includes \_\_\_\_ appropriate books.

For older children (if enrolled), there are \_\_\_\_ chapter books.

Children are read to (or they read to each other) \_\_\_\_ days per week.

List the language games that are present: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How many language games are there for:

Younger school-agers, if enrolled? \_\_\_\_\_ Older school-agers, if enrolled? \_\_\_\_\_

Are all books and language materials appropriate (e.g., there is no violent, frightening, or sexually provocative content/images)? **Y / N**

The children can use language and reading materials during these times:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Total time language and reading materials are accessible daily:

Children are encouraged to use reading/writing for practical purposes in the following ways:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Are the children taken to a library to check out books? **Y / N** If Yes, how often? \_\_\_\_\_

Are the children encouraged to share books from home with the group? **Y / N**

Do children create written material (Hint: see the indicator for examples)? **Y / N** If Yes, describe: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**ITEM 24 Math/reasoning activities (p. 31)**

List the math/reasoning games and activities that are present: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Are there appropriate materials present for each age group enrolled? **Y / N**

How many math games are there for:

Younger school-agers, if enrolled? \_\_\_\_\_ Older school-agers, if enrolled? \_\_\_\_\_

The children can use math/reasoning materials during these times:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Total time math materials are accessible daily:

Daily, practical events are used to teach about math/numbers in the following ways: \_\_\_\_\_

Are math games labeled or stored with an indication of their age-range? **Y / N**

**ITEM 25 Science/nature activities (p. 32)**

Are children encouraged to help others with math games or homework? **Y / N**

List the science/nature materials, games, and equipment present: \_\_\_\_\_

Are there appropriate materials present for each age group enrolled (e.g., both older and younger children)? **Y / N**

Science/nature books are used with children in the following ways: \_\_\_\_\_

Are there any science/nature books set up with related materials? **Y / N**

The children can use science/nature materials during these times:

Total time science materials are accessible daily:

Are the children involved in caring for and observing living things? **Y / N**

Special, more extended science/nature activities are planned such as: \_\_\_\_\_

These activities are offered \_\_\_\_\_ times per year.

List nature/science related field trips: \_\_\_\_\_

How often do these occur? \_\_\_\_\_

Describe any activities or concepts that are introduced to show children how nature/science impacts their lives: \_\_\_\_\_

**ITEM 26 Cultural awareness (p. 33)**

Circle the categories of diversity that are present in each column:

Accessible <u>books</u> show diversity, including different:	<u>Pictures and/or other displayed materials</u> show diversity, including different:	Various <u>play materials</u> show diversity, including different:
<p>Races</p> <p>Cultures</p> <p>Ages (infant-elderly)</p> <p>Abilities</p>	<p>Races</p> <p>Cultures</p> <p>Ages (infant-elderly)</p> <p>Abilities</p>	<p>Races</p> <p>Cultures</p> <p>Ages (infant-elderly)</p> <p>Abilities</p>

Are there also materials that show non-traditional roles for males and females? **Y / N**

Is a non-biased approach applied to different activities (e.g., all children encouraged to participate equally, avoid assumptions, etc.)? **Y / N**

If a child or adult shows prejudice, the following actions are taken: \_\_\_\_\_

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Special activities to promote diversity are planned and implemented, including the following:

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**Other Considerations:**

What topics are the children in the group most interested in? In what ways can these interests be connected to their play experiences in the various activity areas? \_\_\_\_\_

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Which areas are the most popular? \_\_\_\_\_

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Are there areas that children do not use as often? **Y / N** If Yes, which ones and what changes could be made to increase their use? \_\_\_\_\_

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### Want to find out more?

Not all SACERS-U indicators are covered in this worksheet, so review the SACERS-U carefully and seek out other resources, as needed, since relying on these questions alone to prepare for an assessment will not be sufficient. We encourage you to review other resources found on the [ncrlap.org](http://ncrlap.org) website to stay informed about any updates and continue to build your understanding of the SACERS-U and the assessment process.

- Look for general information about the assessment process and also specific SACERS-U resources. For example, there are videos with accompanying supplements, the NC Additional Notes, and many documents and webcasts about different topics. These resources may offer ideas about what to focus on or supplement ideas you were already considering.
- Check out the answers to Frequently Asked Questions or send a new question to [ncrlap@uncg.edu](mailto:ncrlap@uncg.edu).
- Register for free online training webinars. Some are live webinars; others are pre-recorded and offer training credits (contact hours). Call 1-866-362-7527 or register online at [ncrlap.org](http://ncrlap.org).

When planning for program enhancement, always consider the unique features of the classroom and facility such as ages and abilities of the children enrolled, the number of teachers in the classroom, and overall goals and/or philosophy. Programs may also seek advice from their DCDEE Child Care Consultant, local CCR&R and/or Smart Start Partnerships, or other child care agencies.

North Carolina Rated License Assessment Project  
915 Northridge St.  
Greensboro, NC 27402  
Website: [ncrlap.org](http://ncrlap.org)  
Email: [ncrlap@uncg.edu](mailto:ncrlap@uncg.edu)  
Toll-free: 1-866-362-7527



### References:

Harms, T., Jacobs, E., & White, D. (2013). School-age care environment rating scale. (Updated edition). New York, NY. Teachers College Press.

NC Additional Notes (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.ncrlap.org>.