

Thinking More about Activities



ITERS-R

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 ITERS-R will build familiarity with requirements, while offering a chance to reflect on current practices and situations.

Preparation: Refer to the ITERS-R (spiral bound edition published in 2006) when completing this worksheet. To better understand the scale format and structure, review the instructions for scoring on pages 5-6 in the ITERS-R and the definitions of common terms on pages 7-8. It will also be helpful to refer to a copy of the most current NC Additional Notes (available at ncrlap.org). There are many questions, so completing them all will likely take several reflection/review sessions.

The items included here consider many aspects related to children’s play. The focus is on required types and quantities of materials used, the amount of time dedicated to play, any barriers that prevent children from using materials, and the interactions that occur while children are engaged in play with learning materials. Free play with a variety of appropriate materials and choices fosters positive developmental outcomes for young 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. Since the ITERS-R considers each child’s individual experience, extra steps may be needed to ensure that *all* children get to play with various materials and in different areas of the room.

Tips:

- If you are confused about a question in the worksheet, look at the item in the ITERS-R and check any Notes for Clarification and/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.
- Using the worksheet on an ongoing basis can help verify that the required types and categories of materials are present over time, and that each child’s needs are being met as the environment changes, children develop new skills, or different children are enrolled.
- Answering the questions with someone else (co-teachers, administrators, technical assistance specialists, etc.) promotes sharing of perspectives and may draw attention to different details.
- **Reminder:** In the ITERS-R, infants are children birth-11 months and toddlers are children 12-30 months.

Date(s) completed: _____ Classroom name/age group: _____

Worksheet completed by: _____

Number of infants (birth-11 months) enrolled: _____ Number of toddlers (12 to 30 months) enrolled: _____

Much of the day (MOD) This concept is extremely important in the ITERS-R and affects many items.

The phrase, “much of the day” relates to children’s access to materials and times when they are prevented from using materials. Please refer to the ITERS-R page 7 for the definition and description of requirements. As you complete the worksheet, look carefully at items 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, and 20 and think about each child’s experience throughout the entire day to make sure there are no long periods of time when the various materials or spaces are not accessible. Children should have free play for much of the day. Please review item 30 for specific details. In addition, one item in the Space and Furnishings subscale includes requirements related to much of the day (Item 3), so keep soft toys and a cozy area in mind as you think about this topic as well.

To determine if there are barriers to any child’s access to materials, think about the following:

- Other than routine care times, such as feedings, naps, and diaper changes, or outdoor play, are there any times of 20 minutes or more when children cannot use the materials in any of the items mentioned above? **Hint:** Think about any long transitions or group times that last for more than 20 minutes. **Y / N**
- Are furnishings that limit children’s physical activity/movement and access to materials used? **Y / N** **Hint:** This includes seating devices, such as bouncy seats, or swings and activity centers like exersaucers. Think about when and how often these are used and for how long.
- Are there times of the day that only certain materials are used? **Y / N** **Hint:** If so, think about how long this lasts and if preventing access to other types of materials is really necessary.
- Does each child have many opportunities to experience various types of play and learning materials throughout the day, without long times of limited or no materials and interaction? **Y / N** **Hint:** Think about non-mobile children, as well as those who are mobile. Also think about any group times that may occur or long transitions.

After considering what occurs in the classroom, it is important to think about what happens if children are in other classrooms at different times because this can also impact MOD. More information about this can be found in the Additional Considerations section at the end of the worksheet.

ITEM 14 Using books (p. 34)

Refer to the Notes for Clarification for a definition and limits on the number of books in poor repair, the overall number of books that are required, and examples of books that are appropriate for infants and toddlers.

The number of children enrolled is _____, so the required number of age-appropriate books in good repair is _____.

Evaluate the condition of books that are accessible to children. Look for repair issues such as torn or separated spines, missing flaps, scribbles, or torn covers. The number of books with repair issues is _____.

Repair issues are addressed in the following ways: _____

Is there a wide selection of books for each age group enrolled that includes the required topics listed in the Notes for Clarification? **Y / N** List the topics that are included: _____

Can each child use books for much of the day (e.g., no barriers identified on page 2)? **Y / N**

How often are books read? _____ If children are not interested, how is this handled? _____

Does informal reading occur daily? **Y / N** Books are also used by teachers at these times throughout the day: _____

Describe typical interactions that occur between teachers and children during book times: _____

If toddlers are enrolled, is there a book area they can use independently? **Y / N / NA**

Are books rotated? **Y / N** If **yes**, how often? _____

ITEM 15 Fine motor (p. 35)

There are ____ infants and ____ toddlers enrolled. According to the Notes for Clarification, ____ materials are needed for the infants and ____ materials are needed for the toddlers.

List the fine motor materials currently used. The required number of materials can be found in the Notes for Clarification:

Infants (if enrolled)	Toddlers (if enrolled)

For all children, are some of the fine motor materials easier and others more challenging? **Y / N**

Are fine motor materials in good repair and kept well organized throughout the day? **Y / N** If **yes**, how so?

Can each child use fine motor materials for much of the day (e.g., no barriers identified on page 2)? **Y / N**

Are fine motor materials rotated? **Y / N** If **yes**, how often? _____

ITEM 16 Active physical play (p. 36-37)

Indoors, can each child move freely for much of the day? **Hint:** consider the use of furnishings that can restrict movement listed in the Notes for Clarification on page 37) **Y / N**

Are all gross motor spaces and equipment safe and age-appropriate? **Y / N** **Hint:** Is there enough cushioning under and around equipment? Are the connectors at the tops and bottoms of swings closed?

The outdoor active physical play area and materials are used for _____ minutes a day.

The following conditions prevent the group from playing outdoors **Hint:** see the definition of “weather permitting” on page 8: _____

These conditions match the program’s written policy about outdoor play **Y / N**

Are some active play materials or equipment used every day, whether indoors or outdoors? **Y / N**

The mobile children are provided with the following active physical play area(s) and equipment (outdoors and indoors):

The non-mobile children are provided with the following active physical play area(s) and equipment (outdoors and indoors):

The gross motor equipment provided encourages the following skills: _____

Consider the route to access the outdoor space. Is it convenient and easy to transition in and out? **Y / N**

List the surfaces available in the outdoor space: _____

Is there protection from the elements outdoors? **Y / N**

ITEM 17 Art (p. 38)

* Answer these questions for children 12 months and older; however, if art materials are used with infants, the questions also apply.

If enrolled, younger toddlers are provided with art materials _____ times per week, older toddlers are provided with art materials _____ times per week. **Hint:** younger toddlers are 12-23 months, older toddlers are 24-30 months.

The following types of art materials are used: _____

Are all art materials used with the children safe and non-toxic (e.g., no choking hazards or irritants)? **Y / N**

If children are not interested in the art activity, they can: **Hint:** Is there more than one alternative activity?

Children are able to use art materials in their own way. **Y / N**

How often do activities occur when children follow a plan rather than using individual expression? _____

The use of art materials is facilitated in the following ways: _____

How is it decided when to offer different types of art materials or activities? _____

Consider access. Are materials only accessible with very close supervision for younger children? **Y / N / NA**

Are older toddlers/twos allowed more independent access, still with careful supervision? **Y / N / NA**

ITEM 18 Music and movement (p. 39)

The number of children enrolled is _____. According to the Notes for Clarification, the number of musical toys and/or instruments required is _____.

The classroom has the following musical materials, toys, and/or instruments: _____

Can each child use the music materials for much of the day (e.g., no barriers identified on page 2)? **Y / N**

What types of music activities are done and how often? _____

Children are encouraged to be involved in music activities in the following ways: _____

If children are not interested in the music activity, they can: **Hint:** Is there more than one alternative activity? _____

Does informal singing occur daily? **Y / N** When does this occur? _____

When recorded music is used, is this for limited times with a specific purpose? **Hint:** Is music turned off when the activity or routine ends? **Y / N**

Types of music used on a regular basis: _____

Are music materials rotated? **Y / N** If **yes**, how often: _____

ITEM 19 Blocks (p. 40)

Answer these questions if any children are 12 months and older. If all children are under 12 months, circle **NA** and move to the next item

Hint: Remember that interlocking blocks are considered only in the fine motor item.

Types and numbers of blocks: _____

Types and numbers of block accessories: _____

How are blocks and accessories organized? _____

Does traffic or other activities in the space for blocks interfere with block play? **Y / N**

Can each child use blocks and accessories for much of the day? (e.g., no barriers identified on page 2) **Y / N**

The following types of interactions occur with children in the block area: _____

ITEM 20 Dramatic play (p. 41)

Think about the dramatic play materials currently accessible for children’s daily use. The required number and types of materials can be found in the Notes for Clarification.

For infants and toddlers these materials are accessible daily (check all that apply):

Dolls **Y / N** If **yes**, how many? _____

Toy phones: **Y / N** If **yes**, how many? _____

Soft animals **Y / N** If **yes**, how many? _____

Pots/pans: **Y / N** If **yes**, how many? _____

For toddlers, if enrolled, these materials are also accessible daily (check all that apply):

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Play foods Y / N If yes , how many? _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Child-sized house furniture Y / N If yes , what is provided? _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dress up clothing Y / N If yes , how many/what types? _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Doll furnishings Y / N If yes , how many/what types? _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Small play buildings with accessories Y / N If yes , what is provided? _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

List any other materials provided for dramatic play: _____

Do most dramatic play materials represent familiar objects and experiences for children? **Y / N**

Can each child use dramatic play materials for much of the day (e.g., no barriers identified on page 2)? **Y / N**

How are dramatic play materials organized? _____

Dramatic play items representing diversity include: _____

If toddlers are enrolled, list dramatic play materials outdoors: _____

Describe recent interactions that occurred between teachers and children during dramatic play: _____

ITEM 21 Sand and water play (p. 42)

Answer these questions for children 18 months and older. If all children are under 18 months, circle **NA** and move to the next item.

Describe the provisions and toys used for each type of sand/water play, and how often it occurs.

Indoor sand play: _____

Indoor water play: _____

Outdoor sand play: _____

Outdoor water play: _____

Successful sand and/or water play is ensured by: _____

How often are changes made to sand and/or water activities? _____ List different materials and activities provided. _____

ITEM 22 Nature/science (p. 43)

List any pictures, books, and/or toys that represent nature realistically: _____

Can each child see the pictures and use the books and toys every day? **Y / N**

Are nature/science materials organized and in good repair? **Y / N**

The children are provided with the following opportunities to experience the natural world:

Indoors	Outdoors
How often? _____	How often? _____

Do children have indoor experiences with a plant or animal each day? **Y / N**

Daily events are used to teach/draw attention to nature and science such as: _____

The children are taught respect for nature in the following ways: _____

ITEM 23 Use of TV, video, and/or computers (p. 44)

* Only answer these questions when either television and/or computers are used. **The use of technology is not required.** If such activities are not provided, circle **NA** and move to the next item.

Is screen time offered only to children who are at least 2 years old? **Hint:** Refer to the NC Additional Notes for indicators 1.3, 3.3. **Y / N**

Television/video programs used:

Computer, tablet, smart board programs used:

The total amount of time children can watch/use these programs is:

TV/video _____ Computer _____ Tablet _____ Smart Board _____

Are all programs educational, culturally sensitive, and appropriate (nothing scary, showing physical conflict, or lacking in educational content): **Y / N**

Children who are not interested can: _____

How do teachers interact with children when they have screen time?: _____

Is screen time connected to children's interests or classroom themes? **Y / N**

ITEM 24 Promoting acceptance of diversity (p. 45)

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

Activities to promote diversity are planned and implemented, such as: _____

The dolls in the classroom show ____ distinct races.

Circle the categories of diversity that are present in each column. **Hint:** The required number of materials can be found in the Notes for Clarification. It may be helpful to list specific examples in the open space below to verify that enough are accessible.

Accessible <u>books</u> show diverse people, including different:	<u>Pictures and/or other displayed materials</u> show diverse people, including different:	<u>Various play materials</u> (other than dolls) show diverse people, including different:
<p>Races</p> <p>Cultures</p> <p>Ages (infant-elderly)</p> <p>Abilities</p> <p>Non-stereotypical male and female gender roles</p>	<p>Races</p> <p>Cultures</p> <p>Ages (infant-elderly)</p> <p>Abilities</p> <p>Non-stereotypical male and female gender roles</p>	<p>Races</p> <p>Cultures</p> <p>Ages (infant-elderly)</p> <p>Abilities</p> <p>Non-stereotypical male and female gender roles</p>

Other considerations:

Which areas of the classroom are used by children most often? _____

Are there areas of the room that the children do not use very often, either because the children or play materials are not put there, or because they aren't interested? If Y, which ones and what changes could be made to increase frequency of use? _____

Would the group like to spend more time outdoors? If so, that is a great way for children to get fresh air, move around, and extend play and learning opportunities. What types of learning materials, in addition to gross motor equipment, are provided outdoors? Are there other activities or materials that could be added to enhance outside time? _____

MOD consideration - If applicable, what happens in the AM and PM when the children are with different teachers or in other classrooms? **Hint:** MOD considerations apply to the entire operating hours, so talking to other teachers to understand what occurs and what materials children can use at different times of the day is very important. This can help ensure that everyone is aware of the need to prevent the barriers mentioned on page 2.

In the chart below, list the teachers responsible for these times and their report of the schedule/what materials are used in these rooms.

AM location(s):	PM location(s):
Teachers:	Teachers:
Schedule/materials:	Schedule/materials:

*If the classroom(s) used are for a different age group, consider whether materials are appropriate and safe.

Reflection for future planning: After completing this worksheet, it can be helpful to go back and think more about the answers. Were there any questions that were answered “no” instead of “yes?” If so, this could help identify areas to work on. It can also be helpful to break bigger topics into smaller steps so that changes and progress can be easily recognized. Hopefully this worksheet was a helpful beginning to an ongoing self-study practice and suggest continuing with an action plan after completing the reflection questions below.

List areas where strengths were noted in activities:

List areas where improvements could be made or there are new ideas to think about:

Are there any issues you will work to change right away? Describe how so:

Are there issues that will take more time to change? What are these and what resources may be needed?

Want to find out more?

Not all ITERS-R indicators are covered in this worksheet, so review the ITERS-R 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 website to stay informed about any updates and continue to build your understanding of the ITERS-R and the assessment process.

- Look for general information about the assessment process and also specific ITERS-R 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.
- 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,

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.

References:

Harms, T., Clifford, R., & Cryer, D. (2006) Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (Revised Edition)
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