

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). 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 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, 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. **Hint:** 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 rarely? **Y / N**

Describe any complex art projects where children learn new skills/concepts 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. **Hint:** 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? _____

How often do special music activities occur? _____

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:

Total time blocks and construction materials are accessible daily:

Are functional carpentry tools and supplies used? **Y / N** If **yes** how often: _____

ITEM 22 Dramatic play/theatre (p. 29)

List dramatic play materials are in the classroom? _____

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

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

For children aged 7+ (if enrolled), list age appropriate dramatic play materials specifically for that group: _____

The children can use dramatic play materials during these times:

Total time dramatic play materials are accessible daily:

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

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

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.

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

How many language games are there for:

Younger school-agers, if enrolled? _____

Older school-agers, if enrolled? _____

List at least 3-5 examples: _____

List at least 3-5 examples: _____

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 how this is encouraged: _____

ITEM 24 Math/reasoning activities (p. 31)

Are there appropriate math and reasoning 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? _____

List at least 3-5 examples: _____

List at least 3-5 examples: _____

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

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

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

Total time math materials are accessible daily:

Daily, practical events (not play) are used to teach about math/number in the following ways: _____

ITEM 25 Science/nature activities (p. 32)

Science/nature books are used in the following ways: _____

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

List the science/nature equipment, tools, and materials present: _____

List the science/nature activities, kits, and games present: _____

Are there appropriate materials present for each age group enrolled (e.g., both older and younger children)? **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. **Hint:** Examples can be found in the indicator: _____

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:	<u>Various play materials</u> show diversity, including different:
Races	Races	Races
Cultures	Cultures	Cultures
Ages (infant-elderly)	Ages (infant-elderly)	Ages (infant-elderly)
Abilities	Abilities	Abilities

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: _____

Are inclusion and acceptance a part of daily interactions and activities? **Y / N**

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

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? _____

Which areas are the most popular? _____

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? _____

If the school-age group shares a space with another group, are there any challenges in providing a variety of age-appropriate materials and experiences for the children enrolled? How is this handled and are there other strategies that could be used to mitigate those challenges to ensure children have a variety of experiences daily and across the week? _____

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? _____

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 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 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.
- 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.

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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>.