

Thinking More about Language and Interactions



ECERS-R

Purpose: This document addresses many of the requirements found in the Language-Reasoning and Interaction subscales. The focus is primarily on indicators at the 3, 5, and 7 level. It is important to review each item entirely to ensure that no indicator at the 1 or “inadequate” level applies. Answering the questions and referring to the ECERS-R will build familiarity with requirements, while offering a chance to reflect on current practices and situations.

Preparation: Refer to the ECERS-R (spiral bound edition published in 2005) when completing the questions. To better understand the scale format and structure, review the instructions for scoring on pages 5-6 in the ECERS-R and the definitions of common terms on pages 6-7. 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 promoting children’s development and building relationships. Responsive interactions for all children, including those with disabilities, is key. There is much focus on staff language and interactions with children throughout the day. This includes during various routines, as well as different types of activities, such as those that are social, instructional, planned, and spontaneous. Attention is given to warm and respectful interactions and promoting social skill development. The important work that teachers do to supervise and guide children for safety and teaching purposes is recognized.

Tips:

- If you are confused about a question, look at the item in the ECERS-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 children experience enriching, positive, and age-appropriate language and interactions. Additionally, this process emphasizes how interactions, social communication, and guidance contribute to positive relationships for all children.
- 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: _____

ITEM 16 Encouraging children to communicate (p. 36)

List materials provided for children’s play that encourage communication. **Hint:** Examples of materials are mentioned in the Notes for Clarification and indicator on page 36.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Think about activities that encourage children’s communication. **Hint:** Examples are included in the Notes for Clarification and indicators on page 36.

What activities encourage children’s communication during **free play**? _____

What activities encourage children’s communication during **group times**? _____

Are there ways communication is adjusted for each child, to match their individual skills and development? (e.g., allow time to respond, use increasingly complex vocabulary and questions, prompt as needed, etc.)?

Y / N If **yes** describe: _____

Do teachers write down what children say and show them what is written? **Y / N**

If **yes**, How or when is this done? _____

ITEM 17 Using language to develop reasoning skills (p. 37)

For this item and item 18, answer questions based on teachers’ language and how it varies based on children’s ages/abilities, and what they are doing or have ideas about. There are not specific responses or knowledge expected from the children.

For item 17, consider examples including logical concepts such as same/different, matching, sequencing, and cause and effect. Additional examples of the types of concepts considered in this item are listed in the Notes for Clarification on page 37.

Describe how reasoning and logical concepts **are related to daily events** (e.g., talking about the schedule and figuring out what comes next, first, or second; during meals talking about similarities in colors or textures of foods, etc.):

Describe two recent examples of how a child or children were introduced to a new reasoning idea or skill:

Describe two recent examples of pointing out reasoning while **children used materials** (e.g., matching, sequencing, cause and effect, etc.):

Do teachers **use real events and experiences** to encourage children to reason and notice/apply logical concepts (e.g., Why are there shadows on the playground today, but not inside?)? **Y / N** If **yes**, list two recent examples:

Describe two recent examples of responding to **children' ideas, questions, or problem-solving efforts** by introducing a logical concept (e.g., child asks why sand is stuck in funnel and the differences between wet and dry sand are discussed)?

Describe two recent examples of encouraging a child to **explain their thought process when they encountered a challenge** during play (e.g., what they figured out, why they decided to move something, etc.):

Now think about *each* type of interaction described above and if all of them occur multiple times throughout the day. Do some interactions tend to occur at certain times more than others and what are some ways that logic and reasoning can be added into daily events or activities? _____

ITEM 18 Informal use of language (p. 38)

Hint: For this item, consider only the interactions that occur at times other than group times.

Do adult-child conversations with multiple exchanges, beyond a question with a single response, occur frequently throughout the day? **Y / N** With all of the children? **Y / N**

Throughout the day, is most of the teachers' language used to exchange information and for social purposes? **Y / N**

Describe social conversations adults have with children during **play times**:

Describe social conversations adults have with children during **routines**:

If applicable, how are children with disabilities helped to communicate with their peers? **NA**

List two recent examples of responding to children by adding information to their ideas:

Describe how social communication between children is encouraged: _____

Are children frequently asked open-ended questions that elicit longer, more complex answers? **Y / N** List two questions that children have been asked recently: _____

ITEM 29 Supervision of gross motor activities (p. 58)

Are all areas of the gross motor space(s) indoors or outdoors easy to supervise? **Y / N**

Describe plans to ensure all children can be seen and to prevent dangerous situations: _____

Describe interactions between adults and children during gross motor play: _____

Do teacher interactions during gross motor times build on children's ideas as they play? **Y / N**

Do children ever require help to use equipment? **Y / N** If so, what is done to help them? _____

Describe any resources used to enhance gross motor play: _____

How do adults encourage children's social interactions during gross motor play?

ITEM 30 General supervision of children (other than gross motor) (p. 59)

Are all areas of the classroom easy to supervise? **Y / N**

Describe plans/actions to make sure all children can be seen, including when a teacher is working with a child or small group during play times: _____

Describe ways supervision is adjusted for each child, to match their ages, activity levels, and/or social skills across the group:

List two examples of recent interactions between adults and children during play times:

What happens when children have difficulty becoming engaged or using materials?

Are children's efforts, in addition to their accomplishments acknowledged? **Y / N** If **yes**, How so?

Is there a balance between children's independent play and staff offering input into their activities? **Y / N**

ITEM 31 Discipline (p. 60)

Are expectations for children's behavior adjusted based on their age and developmental levels? **Y / N**

Describe non-punitive guidance strategies used to address challenging or unwanted behaviors:

If guidance strategies are not effective and the behaviors continue, what happens next?

Are children involved in helping to find solutions, as appropriate, during conflicts or challenging situations? **Y / N** If **yes**, list a few recent examples:

Think about how the classroom is **set up** (e.g., daily schedule, space and arrangement, types of materials) and how these different aspects can impact behaviors.

Is the classroom arranged to reduce interruptions from traffic or noise and provide separation between quiet and active areas? **Y / N**

Are transition strategies used to reduce waiting times and keep children engaged? **Y / N**

If **yes**, list some strategies used during transitions: _____

Does the daily schedule provide ample free play time that allows children to have prolonged, meaningful play experiences? **Y / N**

Is there ample time scheduled for active and energetic play? **Y / N**

Are there duplicates of popular materials or a system used to help children with turn-taking? **Y / N**

Is there a variety of interesting choices in all areas to keep children busy and engaged? **Y / N**

If **no**, list any areas where additional materials or changes may encourage more use of an area or reduce conflict: _____

List any regularly planned activities intended to help children with **social skills** (e.g., stories, discussions, communication activities, etc.): _____

Are there outside professionals to help if there is a child with very difficult or unusual behaviors? **Y / N** If **yes**, list options for the program: _____

ITEM 32 Staff-child interactions (p. 61)

Think about how teachers interact with the children, including during positive, challenging, and neutral situations:

Do interactions with children include enthusiasm, affection, and/or appreciation? **Y / N**

Are most, if not all, teacher responses supportive and warm? **Y / N** Are they respectful? **Y / N**

Are responses to strong emotions sympathetic, even when the feelings occur during challenging behaviors? **Y / N**

Describe a recent interaction with a child who was angry or upset: _____

Is appropriate physical contact used to show warmth to children? **Y / N** If **yes**, in what ways does this occur? _____

Do adults model respect? **Y / N** Give an example of how teachers promote mutual respect between children and adults: _____

ITEM 33 Interactions among children (p. 62)

How are children's interactions with each other encouraged? _____

Do children get along well with one another? **Y / N**
Think of a recent conflict between children. Describe how teachers encouraged appropriate choices and assisted children with solving the problem: _____

Do these responses encourage appropriate interactions and behavior (e.g., tell them what to do, instead of what not to do)? **Y / N**

Are children encouraged and helped to solve their own problems with their peers? **Y / N**

How do staff model positive social skills for the children?

Are children encouraged to work together during play or other daily activities? **Y / N** Describe what occurs and when: _____

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 language and interactions:

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 ECERS-R indicators are covered in this worksheet, so review the ECERS-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 ECERS-R and the assessment process. For example:

- Look for general information about the assessment process and also specific ECERS-R resources. 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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Toll-free: 1-866-362-7527



References:

- Harms, T., Clifford, R., & Cryer, D. (2005). Early childhood environment rating scale. (Revised edition). New York, NY. Teachers College Press.
- NC Additional Notes (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.ncrlap.org>.