

# Thinking More about Language and Interactions



## SACERS-U

**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 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 in 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 that relate 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 daily 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 staff 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 SACERS-U and check any Notes 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 children experience enriching, positive, and age-appropriate language and interactions. Additionally, this process emphasizes how interactions, social communication, and guidance practices contribute to building positive relationships with 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 28 Staff-child interactions (p. 35)**

Think about how staff 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 staff responses supportive and warm? **Y / N**

Is there much smiling and talking throughout the day? **Y / N**

Are most, if not all, staff responses to children fair and respectful? **Y / N**

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

Describe some recent examples of interactions that occurred during challenging situations:

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How is mutual respect between staff and children encouraged? \_\_\_\_\_

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Describe how staff promotes independence/autonomy in children's behavior. Hint: Consider how children's leadership and planning is encouraged, how child-initiated activities are supported, how staff respond to children's suggestions or ideas.

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**ITEM 29 Staff-child communication (p. 36)**

Do staff-child conversations occur frequently throughout the day? **Y / N**

Do the conversations often include multiple exchanges, beyond a question and single response? **Y / N**

Describe a few recent conversations: \_\_\_\_\_

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Is most of the adult language used for social interaction and to exchange information, rather than giving directions and behavior guidance? **Y / N**

Thinking about the types of questions staff ask children:

Do they encourage conversation? **Y / N** Hint: Consider if questions often require longer answers or they are used to learn more about how a child thinks as opposed to primarily gather basic, yes/no information.

Do they encourage brainstorming or problem solving? **Y / N** Hint: Consider if "why," "how," "what if" questions are used.

List some examples of questions staff have asked children recently that require longer, more complex answers: \_\_\_\_\_

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Do adults talk with each child daily? **Y / N**

When children share their ideas, do staff:

Add relevant information to enhance what the child already knows? **Y / N**

Ask questions that foster an interest to discover more about their ideas? **Y / N**

List a few ideas of recent interactions when staff have verbally expanded on children's ideas:

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**ITEM 30 Staff supervision of children (p. 37)**

Is supervision adjusted based on the needs of children or activities? **Y / N** If **Yes**, describe:

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Describe recent interactions between adults and children during play times: \_\_\_\_\_

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Describe recent interactions between adults and children during routines: \_\_\_\_\_

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When thinking about interactions during play times, describe ways that staff extend children's play:

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What happens when children are having difficulty becoming engaged or using materials?

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Are children's efforts and accomplishments acknowledged? **Y / N** How so?

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Are there staff with knowledge of team sports and other special activities who can teach the children and provide skill development help? Describe:

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### ITEM 31 Discipline (p. 38)

Is there a written discipline policy for the school age program that prohibits harsh discipline? **Y / N** If **yes**, do parents receive a copy? **Y / N**

When establishing expectations, are children's ages and developmental levels considered, with adjustments made as needed? **Y / N**

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

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Describe strategies used to address conflicts between children:

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

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

Does the layout of the classroom reduce interruptions and discourage running? **Y / N**

Is there a separation between active and quiet areas to help reduce distraction? **Y / N**

Are transition strategies used to reduce waiting times? **Y / N** If **yes**, list some strategies used:

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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 could encourage more use of an area or reduce conflict:

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

Is there ample free play time that allows children to develop friendships and have meaningful play experiences? **Y / N**

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

Are positive behaviors acknowledged? **Y / N**

Are there outside professionals to help if there is a child with very difficult or unusual behaviors? **Y / N**

If **yes**, list the options that are available: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Do staff discuss behavior concerns with parents and make joint decisions about plans and strategies? **Y / N**

If **yes**, describe how is this handled and an example of when this occurred.

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### **ITEM 32 Peer interactions (p. 39)**

How are children's interactions with each other encouraged? \_\_\_\_\_

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Consider how staff respond when children are having difficulties getting along.

Do staff help children become aware of other's feelings? **Y / N**

Are children encouraged to talk through their issues? **Y / N**

Are problem-solving techniques such as negotiation, self-reflection, and active listening discussed and encouraged? **Y / N**

Describe recent peer conflicts and how staff responses encouraged appropriate interactions and behaviors, and extended children’s problem-solving skills: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How do staff model positive social skills for the children? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**ITEM 33 Interactions between staff and parents (p. 40)**

What types of information are shared with parents? \_\_\_\_\_

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Does this include information about program policies and practice? **Y / N**

Does this include information on topics like community events, recreation, parenting, etc.? **Y / N**

Are there ways the program takes action to welcome and include parents? **Y / N** If **yes**, describe (during the pandemic think about alternative ways this can occur vs. only in-person):

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Do parent-teacher conferences occur? **Y / N** If **yes**, how often? \_\_\_\_\_

Are there ways parents help make decisions about the program? **Y / N** If **yes**, how does this occur?

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**ITEM 34 Staff interaction (p. 41)**

Only answer these questions if more than one teacher works with the children, either at the same time or at different times during the day; otherwise skip to the next item.

Is there time for staff to communicate about the children and classroom? **Y / N** How often and how does this occur? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

If multiple staff work together, is there joint planning time? **Y / N**

If **yes**, how often does this occur? \_\_\_\_\_

Do staff work well together (e.g., good communication, responsibilities and duties shared)? **Y / N**



