

# Thinking More about Learning Materials and Play



## ITERS-R

**Purpose:** This document addresses many of the requirements that relate to various learning materials, areas, or activities. The focus is primarily on higher level indicators at the 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, and requirements at the 3 or “minimal” level are met. Not all ITERS-R indicators and items are covered here, so relying only on these questions to prepare for an assessment will not be sufficient.

**Preparation:** Refer to the ITERS-R 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. In addition, a copy of the most current NC Additional Notes (available at [ncrlap.org](http://ncrlap.org)) should be used with each item, when answering the questions. There are many questions, so it will likely take several reflection/review sessions to complete them all.

The items included here consider many aspects of the child care classroom pertaining to children’s play. The focus is specifically 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 is critically important in fostering 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:

- 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 and children’s ages increase.
- When documenting materials in the classroom, look at what is provided for children’s independent use. Having additional materials for rotation may help meet some requirements for indicators at the highest level of quality, but these are not considered in scoring indicators that require access.
- When thinking about children’s access to materials, make sure to think about children’s individual experiences and not only group schedules.
- If you are confused about a question in the worksheet, look at the item and notes and try to identify the requirement it relates to.
- This document is likely to be used by teachers, administrators, and technical assistance specialists. Answering the questions with someone else promotes sharing of perspectives and may draw attention to different details.

## 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 go through the questions, look carefully at items 3, 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. In addition, children should have free play for much of the day. Please review item 30 for specifics.

To determine if there are barriers to any child’s access to materials, it may be helpful to 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? **Y / N** Hint: Think about any long transitions or group times that last for more than 20 minutes.
- 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 certain materials are used, but not other materials? **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.

Consider times when other teachers may be responsible for the children in the classroom or another space, before or after the lead teacher’s scheduled work times. Talking with other teachers to understand what occurs at different times of the day is very important.

Which other spaces are the children in, who are their teachers at these times, and what is the schedule?

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What materials are accessible in alternate classrooms?

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Answer the questions based on the specific schedule and materials in the classroom. Use the ITERS-R and NC Additional Notes as you go to help increase understanding of the requirements. Hint: For ages, refer to the definitions of common terms on page 7 of the ITERS-R.

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

Are there: Infants **Y / N**    Toddlers **Y / N**    Both infants and toddlers **Y / N**

**ITEM 3 Provision for relaxation and comfort (p. 14)**

Describe the soft furnishings (other than soft toys) accessible in the classroom:

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Are enough soft furnishings gathered together to create a cozy area? **Y / N**

The classroom includes \_\_\_\_\_ soft toys for children’s use. Hint: Check the Notes for Clarification for the number required, based on enrollment.

Can each child use the soft toys and furnishings for much of the day? **Y / N**

List any barriers to individual children’s access throughout the day and possible solutions. Hint: Think about each child’s daily experience and look back at the questions on page 2:

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**ITEM 14 Using books (p. 34)**

The number of children enrolled is \_\_\_\_\_, so the required number of age appropriate books in good repair is \_\_\_\_\_. Hint: Refer to the Notes for Clarification for a definition and limits on the number of books in poor repair.

Is there a wide selection of books that includes the required topics listed in the Notes for Clarification? **Y / N**

List the topics that are included:

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Can each child use books for much of the day? **Y / N**

List any barriers to individual children’s access throughout the day and possible solutions. Hint: Think about each child’s daily experience and look back at the questions on page 2:

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

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**ITEM 15 Fine motor (p. 35)**

There are \_\_\_\_ infants and \_\_\_\_ toddlers enrolled. According to the Notes for Clarification, \_\_\_\_ age appropriate materials are needed for the infants and \_\_\_\_ age appropriate materials are needed for the toddlers.

List the fine motor materials currently used:

Infants	Toddlers

Are fine motor materials kept well organized? **Y / N** How so?

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

Can each child use fine motor materials for much of the day? **Y / N**

List any barriers to individual children’s access throughout the day and possible solutions. Hint: Think about each child’s daily experience and look back at the questions on page 2:

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

Indoors, can each child move freely for much of the day? **Y / N**

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

The gross motor equipment provided encourages the following skills:

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

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

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

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 following conditions prevent the group from playing outdoors:

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The program policy regarding bad weather and outdoor play is:

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**ITEM 17 Art (p. 38)**

\* If the classroom has only infants enrolled (all less than 12 months) the item can be marked N/A; however, if art materials are used with children of any age, then the item must be scored.

There are \_\_\_\_ toddlers and they are provided with art materials \_\_\_\_ times a week.

The following types of art materials are used:

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Are all art materials used with the children safe and non-toxic? **Y / N**

If children are not interested in the art activity, they can:

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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:

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

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**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:

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Can each child use the music materials for much of the day? **Y / N**

List any barriers to individual children’s access throughout the day and possible solutions. Hint: Think about each child’s daily experience and look back at the questions on page 2:

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Types of music used on a regular basis:

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Informal singing occurs with the children \_\_\_\_\_ time(s) per day.

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

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

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

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If children are not interested in the music activity, they can:

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**ITEM 19 Blocks (p. 40)**

There are \_\_\_\_ toddlers enrolled. If the classroom has only infants enrolled (all less than 12 months) the item is marked N/A. Hint: Remember that interlocking blocks are considered only in the fine motor item.

Types and numbers of blocks:

Types of block accessories:

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Can each child use blocks and accessories for much of the day? **Y / N**

List any barriers to individual children’s access throughout the day and possible solutions. Hint: Think about each child’s daily experience and look back at the questions on page 2:

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How are blocks and accessories organized?

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

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

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**ITEM 20 Dramatic play (p. 41)**

List the dramatic play materials currently accessible for children’s daily use. The required number and types of materials can be found in the ITERS-R.

Infants (if enrolled)	Toddlers (if enrolled)
Are there dolls, soft animals, toy telephones, pots/pans?	Does this include dolls, soft animals, toy telephones, pots/pans, play foods, dress up clothing, child-sized house furniture, small play buildings with accessories, doll furnishings?

Can each child use dramatic play materials for much of the day? **Y / N**

List any barriers to individual children’s access throughout the day and possible solutions. Hint: Think about each child’s daily experience and look back at the questions on page 2:

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How are dramatic play materials organized?

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If toddlers are enrolled, list dramatic play materials outdoors:

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Dramatic play items representing diversity include:

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**ITEM 21 Sand and water play (p. 42)**

There are \_\_\_\_\_ children enrolled who are 18 months of age or older. If all of the children in the classroom are under 18 months of age the item is marked N/A.

If applicable, describe the provisions, frequency of use, and types of accessories done with:

Indoor sand play:

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Indoor water play:

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Outdoor sand play:

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Outdoor water play:

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Successful sand and/or water play is ensured by:

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How often do activities vary for sand or water play and what are some examples?

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**ITEM 22 Nature/science (p. 43)**

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

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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**

Practical, daily events are used to teach about nature and science such as:

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

\* If television and computer are not used with the children, this item can be marked N/A. It is not required to provide these materials for the children; however, if either the television and/or computers are used, then the item must be scored.

There are \_\_\_\_ children who are older than 2 years old. Is screen time offered to children who are under 2 years old? **Y / N** Hint: Refer to the NC Additional Notes for indicators 1.3, 3.3

Television/video programs used:

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Computer, tablet, smart board programs used:

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

TV/video \_\_\_\_\_ Computer \_\_\_\_\_ Tablet \_\_\_\_\_ Smart Board \_\_\_\_\_

Children who are not interested can:

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Children's screen time is enhanced by:

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Screen time is connected to children's interests or classroom themes in the following ways:

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**ITEM 24 Promoting acceptance of diversity (p. 45)**

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

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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 ITERS-R. It may be helpful to list specific examples in the open space 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:
Races Cultures Ages (infant-elderly) Abilities Non-stereotypical male and female gender roles	Races Cultures Ages (infant-elderly) Abilities Non-stereotypical male and female gender roles	Races Cultures Ages (infant-elderly) Abilities Non-stereotypical male and female gender roles

**ITEM 31 Group play activities (p. 52)**

\* If group activities are never used with the children, this item can be marked N/A. Group activities are not required; however, if these are a part of the classroom, this item must be scored.

If offered, are activities with required participation limited in length and/or frequency based on children's ages? **Y / N**

Children are expected to participate in the following staff-initiated group activities:

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These activities last approximately \_\_\_\_\_ minutes each. During these group activities, the children who are not interested can participate in the following alternative activities:

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**Other considerations:**

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

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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 why?

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What changes could be made to utilize these spaces better or make them more interesting to the children?

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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?

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## Want to find out more?

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 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](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) by clicking on "Training" tab and then "Register for an event." Select the event and enter your information. You will receive instructions via email before the event.

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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### Resources:

Harms, T., Clifford, R., & Cryer, D. (2006) *Infant/Toddler Childhood Environment Rating Scale (Revised Edition)* New York, NY. Teachers College Press

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