

Thinking More about Activities



ECERS-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 levels. It is important to review each item entirely to ensure that no indicators at the 1 or “inadequate” level apply to the classroom. 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 children’s play. The focus is 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 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 enhancing learning opportunities for children.

Tips:

- If you are confused about a question in the worksheet, look at the item in the ECERS-R 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. For example, some math materials might be with fine motor materials, and others might be included with nature/science materials. However, some items do have specific considerations for having materials organized together, like the block 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 preschoolers (2.5-3 yrs.) **Y / N** older preschoolers (4-5 yrs.) **Y / N** or both? **Y / N**

Substantial Portion of the Day (SPOD) This concept is extremely important and affects many items.

The phrase, "substantial portion of the day" requires that children have access to materials for at least one-third of the program's operating hours. Please refer to the ECERS-R page 7, for the definition and description of requirements. Use the information below and at the end of the worksheet to determine if the materials/activities required are accessible for a substantial portion of the day.

Center operating hours _____ A.M. to _____ P.M. Total hours of operation _____ hrs. _____ mins.

Based on the chart on page 12 of the ECERS-R scoresheet (at the very end of the scale), the total amount of time needed to meet Substantial Portion of the Day (SPOD) is _____ **hrs. and** _____ **mins.**

For each item with this time requirement, the worksheet will ask you to list and total the times that materials are accessible. When doing this look at your daily schedule, but also reflect on what typically occurs. For each play period, write down when play actually begins (e.g., children can use materials, choose centers, etc.) and also when it ends (e.g., the clean-up transition starts). Add up the times and see if this reduces what is shown on the daily schedule. Remember only times when children can actually use the specific materials are counted.

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 SPOD. More information about this can be found in the Other Considerations section at the end of the worksheet.

ITEM 15 Books and pictures (p. 34-35)

List examples of daily language activities: _____

There are _____ children enrolled in the class. There are _____ books that the children can use independently. According to the Notes for Clarification, _____ appropriate books should be accessible.

Children can use the books during these times:

Total time books
are accessible daily:

The books in the classroom include the following topics. **Hint:** Check the Notes for Clarification to see the required types: _____

What other types of language materials are provided, in addition to books? _____

Are all books and language materials appropriate, meaning there are no images that show aggression or violence, frightening images, or adult content? **Y / N**

Are books organized in reading center? **Y / N** Does informal reading occur daily? **Y / N**

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

Do any books relate to current classroom interests, themes, or activities? **Y / N** How many? _____

ITEM 19 Fine motor (p. 39)

List the fine motor materials for each category that the children can currently use. The required number of materials can be found in the Notes for Clarification.

Small building	Art materials	Manipulatives	Puzzles

Children can use the fine motor materials during these times:

Total time fine motor materials are accessible daily:

Are fine motor materials well organized? **Y / N** Are they in good repair, with all pieces? **Y / N**

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

Are containers or shelves labeled? **Y / N**

ITEM 20 Art (p. 40-41)

Are the children able to choose art materials and use them in their own way? **Y / N**

How often do structured art activities occur when children are given instructions or shown an example, with required participation? _____

List the art materials for each category that the children can currently use. The required number of materials and examples can be found in the Notes for Clarification.

Drawing	Paints	Three-dimensional	Collage	Tools

Children can use art materials during these times:

Total time art materials are accessible daily:

Are art activities connected to classroom topics or themes? **Y / N** List recent examples: _____

If enrolled, are there ways for 4 and 5 year olds to work on art projects over many days? **Y / N / NA** If **yes**, how does this occur? _____

ITEM 21 Music/movement (p. 42-43)

List the accessible music materials. **Hint:** When thinking about accessibility to music materials, consider storage and whether open shelves or clearly labeled cabinets are used: _____

Can music materials be used by children for an hour or more each day? **Y / N**

If enrolled, is there a way for 4 and 5 year olds to play recorded music independently? **Y / N / NA**

List different types of music used on a regular basis: _____

Music/movement activities are planned _____ times a week. List examples of these:

Do music/movement activities occur daily during group times? **Y / N** And during free play? **Y / N**

In addition to regular music activities, do special activities occur that add to children's music/dance knowledge? **Y / N** If **yes**, list examples: _____

How often do special music activities occur? _____

ITEM 22 Blocks (p. 44–45)

Hint: Remember that this item considers blocks that are the size of unit blocks and larger. Smaller blocks and interlocking building materials of any size are considered only in the fine motor item. Specific details about the numbers and space required can be found in the NC Additional Notes.

Types and numbers of blocks:	Types of block accessories:
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

How large is the space used for block play? _____

Consider storage: Are blocks and accessories organized by type on open shelving? **Y / N**

Are the only materials in the block area blocks and block accessories? **Y / N** If **no**, can these other materials be moved to different areas of the room, so they do not interfere with block play (e.g., doll house or train tracks moved to another area, floor puzzles moved to fine motor or group time area)? **Y / N**

Do the block shelves have labels? **Y / N**

Children can use blocks during these times:

Total time blocks are accessible daily:

Is there block play outside? **Y / N**

ITEM 23 Sand/water (p. 46–47)

Describe the provisions for each type of sand/water play, the frequency, and types of accessories.

Indoor sand play:	Outdoor sand play:
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Indoor water play:

Outdoor water play:

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

ITEM 24 Dramatic play (p. 48–49)

List dramatic play materials indoors. **Hint:** The Notes for Clarification describes specific requirements and examples: _____

Children can use the dramatic play materials during these times:

Total time dramatic play materials are accessible daily:

What dramatic play themes are encouraged by the accessible materials? _____

Are materials rotated to offer a variety of different dramatic play themes? **Y / N** If **yes**, how often _____

Is storage for dramatic play materials organized? **Y / N**

List dramatic play props that represent diversity: _____

Outdoors, are there enough dramatic play materials for complex play (e.g., equipment/furniture combined with props, multi-piece sets)? **Y / N** If **yes**, list outdoor materials: _____

Are pictures, stories, and trips planned in ways that enhance children’s dramatic play? **Y / N**

ITEM 25 Nature/science (p. 50–51)

Children can use nature/science materials during these times:

Total time nature/science materials are accessible daily:

List the nature/science materials for each category that the children can currently use. The required number of materials can be found in the Notes for Clarification.

Natural objects	Living things	Books, games, toys	Activities

Are nature/science materials well organized? **Y / N**

Everyday events are used to teach about nature and science in the following ways: _____

Some examples of nature/science activities that are planned and implemented include: _____

How often do these occur? _____

Are books, pictures, or videos used to extend experiences with nature/science? **Y / N** If **yes**, describe:

ITEM 26 Math/number (p. 52-53)

List the math/number materials for each category that the children can currently use. The required number of materials can be found in the Notes for Clarification and NC Additional Notes.

Counting	Measuring	Comparing quantities	Recognizing shapes	Written number

Children can use math/number materials during these times:

Total time math/number materials are accessible daily:

Are math materials well organized? **Y / N**

Are math/number materials rotated? **Y / N** If **yes**, how often? _____

Practical, daily events (beyond number talk during play) are used to teach about math/numbers in the following ways: _____

Some example of math/number activities that are planned and implemented include: _____

How often do these occur? _____

ITEM 27 Use of TV, video, and/or computers (p. 54-55)

The use of TV, videos, or computers is optional but **not required**. Only answer these questions if TV, video, or computers are used.

Television/video programs used:

Computer, tablet, smart board programs used:

The total amount of time children can watch/use these programs in a day 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**

While having screen time, children can actively participate in the following ways:

TV/video:

Computer/tablet/Smart Board:

Children who are not interested can: _____

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

Is screen time connected to other classroom activities or themes? **Y / N**

ITEM 28 Promoting acceptance of diversity (p. 56-57)

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

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</u> and/or <u>other displayed materials</u> show diverse people, including different:	Accessible <u>play materials</u> 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

Diversity is promoted in dramatic play in the following ways: _____

Diversity is incorporated into daily routines and play activities in the following ways: _____

Special activities are planned and implemented to promote diversity such as: _____

How often? _____

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? Why?

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? _____

Are there ways the organization or arrangement in any of the learning and play areas could be adjusted to help with any concerns or challenges? For example, think about how well-defined or organized areas are, and if they are spacious enough for the intended activities. _____

Substantial Portion of the Day (SPOD)

Look back at the total times you listed and add the times to the items below. Remember to include access throughout the day, including in classrooms used in the early morning or late afternoon (as shown in the chart on the next page).

Item Number	Total Time Area Can Be Used
Item 15: Books and pictures	____ hrs. and ____ minutes
Item 19: Fine motor	____ hrs. and ____ minutes
Item 20: Art	____ hrs. and ____ minutes
Item 22: Blocks	____ hrs. and ____ minutes
Item 24: Dramatic play	____ hrs. and ____ minutes
Item 25: Nature/science	____ hrs. and ____ minutes
Item 26: Math/number	____ hrs. and ____ minutes

Is there enough time for each activity area or type of material (based on the operating hours) and are all of the required materials accessible during the times that were counted for SPOD? **Y / N**

Did you make sure not to include transitions, routines, and group times for times? **Y / N**

In addition to the materials/areas noted above, children should have play opportunities and free play for a substantial portion of the day. Please review items 34 and 35 for specifics. Two items included in the Space and Furnishings subscale also require access for a substantial portion of the day, so consider how long these areas are accessible as well:

Item 3: Furnishings for relaxation and comfort (a cozy area) _____ hrs. and _____ minutes

Item 5: Space for privacy _____ hrs. and _____ minutes

Secondary Spaces and Different Staff

If applicable, what happens in the AM and PM when the children are with different teachers or in a different classroom? **Hint:** Remember SPOD applies to the entire operating hours, so talking with 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 requirements.

In the boxes 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.

Are the materials accessible at these times sufficient for each item’s requirements to be counted towards SPOD? **Y / N** If **yes**, be sure to include these times in the “total time” boxes for each item.

Outdoor Materials

Does the group spend a lot of time outdoors or would you like to spend more time outdoors? That’s great! There are so many benefits to staying outside longer such as, fresh air and high levels of physical activity, increased awareness of the natural world, opportunities to extend all areas of learning and play in bigger, louder, and messier ways, etc.

In addition, if you would like outdoor time to count towards the SPOD requirements, check the ECERS-R Notes for Clarification and NC Additional Notes for the required number of materials needed outdoors.

Hint: Children need to play outside each day, weather permitting, for outdoor materials to be counted

toward SPOD. Remember that outdoor time should always be focused on gross motor play, but other types of materials can enhance the outdoor learning environment. Some of the materials or areas listed are easier to offer outdoors than others. For example, it can be more difficult to have a special block area, or a cozy area outdoors, as compared to offering a variety of books and fine motor materials.

The following materials or areas are provided outdoors each day, weather permitting:

Cozy area:

Space for privacy:

Books:

Fine motor:

Art:

Block area:

Dramatic play:

Nature/science:

Math/number:

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 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.

- Look for general information about the assessment process and also specific ECERS-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. (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>.

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