

Thinking More about Language and Interactions



ITERS-R

Purpose: This document addresses many of the requirements found in the Listening and Talking 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 ITERS-R will build familiarity with requirements, while offering a chance to reflect on current practices and situations.

Preparation: Refer to the ITERS-R (spiral bound edition published in 2006) when completing the questions. To better understand the scale format and structure, review the instructions for scoring on page 6 in the ITERS-R and the definitions of common terms on pages 7-8. 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 ITERS-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 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: _____

Age groups: _____

Worksheet completed by: _____

Item 12 Helping children understand language (p.30-31)

Do staff frequently talk to children during both routine care and play activities throughout the day? **Y / N**

Consider any issues with background noise (e.g., sounds from other groups, loud music, etc.). Have these been minimized so that children are able to hear language? **Y / N**

Is the tone used with children consistently positive or neutral? **Y / N**

Consider any times when teachers might use phrases that include negative language rather than telling children what they should do. How can the following phrases be reworded to offer positive guidance?

“Uh-uh, not in your mouth” _____

“No climbing” _____

“We don’t hit” _____

Is guidance consistently offered in positive terms throughout the day and by all adults? **Y / N**

Thinking about interactions with children, consider the following questions:

Do teachers usually talk about things the children are interested in or playing with? **Y / N**

Is communication individualized for each child, such as by using simpler language with younger children, or adapting communication for children with disabilities? **Y / N**

Does it usually include specific words (e.g., you are holding a red ring) vs. non-specific words (e.g., you’ve got it)? **Y / N**

Do teachers describe objects and actions (e.g., you have a blue truck, or you fell down)? **Y / N**

Do teachers narrate or describe children’s play throughout the day and their attempts to communicate? **Y / N**

Do teachers introduce new words and talk about many topics, including feelings/emotions? **Y / N**

Do all of these types of language occur during both play and routine care times? **Y / N**

Are interactions playful or fun (e.g., rhymes, simple songs, back and forth babbling, repetitive words/sounds, etc.)? Describe:

ITEM 13 Helping children use language (p. 32-23)

Children communicate verbally and non-verbally in many different ways (e.g., babbling, words, crying, pointing, gestures, nodding, facial expressions). Think about all of the ways children communicate in this classroom and consider the following questions:

Do teachers usually understand what children are trying to communicate? **Y / N**

Are responses handled in a positive and timely manner? **Y / N**

Do responses usually address the child’s need or interest? **Y / N**

How do adults respond when:

A child is crying while their bottle warms up or a child asks to eat: _____

A child is crying because another child stepped on their hand: _____

How are wait times reduced before meals or nap for children who are hungry or tired, and also for children who are upset: _____

List two examples of adults describing what is occurring or their own actions during **routine care**:

List two examples of adults describing what is occurring or their own actions during **play**:

Consider both verbal and non-verbal children. Do staff model age-appropriate back-and-forth conversation with all children by repeating sounds and/or words, offering their response, and waiting for the child to respond? **Y / N**

For verbal children, do staff expand on words and ideas the children say? **Y / N / NA** If **yes**, list two examples of a word/words a child has said and the words staff used to respond:

Describe the types of questions staff ask children: _____

ITEM 25 Supervision of play and learning (p. 46)

Consider the following challenges related to supervision. Check any that occur at any time, and think about how supervision practices are adapted to accommodate different situations:

- Areas of the classroom or gross motor space that may be difficult to visually supervise
- Any times teachers turn their backs to children, for example to complete routine care or access materials or supplies
- Play or routine times when teachers work with one child or a small group of children
- Any time one teacher works alone with the group of children

Describe plans to make sure all children are in view throughout the day, even when challenges occur:

Do teachers participate in play activities with the children? Describe interactions that occur during play activities:

What happens when a problem, such as a conflict or a minor accident occurs?

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

Are there ways supervision is adjusted for each child, to match a range of ages, activity levels, and social skills etc. across the group? _____

Are any activities planned that require very close supervision? **Y / N** If **yes**, describe:

ITEM 26 Peer Interaction (p. 47)

Are positive peer interactions supported and encouraged (e.g., young infants play near others, can easily see others, older infants and toddlers can move freely and interact, etc.)? **Y / N**

Describe ways teachers help children get along with each other, especially during conflicts:

Do teachers model positive social skills for the children? **Y / N** Please list some examples of how this is done:

Consider how teachers promote children's awareness of each other:

Are they made aware of each other's feelings or told how their actions affect another child? **Y / N**

Are children's intentions verbalized to other children? **Y / N**

Do teachers notice and talk about instances of positive peer interaction? **Y / N**

List two recent examples of interactions that promoted children's awareness of each other:

ITEM 27 Staff-child interaction (p. 48)

Consider how teachers relate to children and check all that apply:

- Teachers seem to enjoy spending time with the children.
- There is much smiling and talking throughout the day.
- Most, if not all, adult responses are warm and responsive.
- Interactions are sensitive to each child's feelings and reactions.
- Interactions remain positive even in challenging situations.

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

How do teachers adjust responses to be sensitive to each child's variety of feelings and moods as they change throughout the day? _____

ITEM 28 Discipline (p. 49)

Describe how teachers address challenging or unwanted behaviors: _____

Describe approaches to addressing conflicts between children: _____

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

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 interruption of activities? **Y / N**

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

Are teachers often involved in facilitating children's play (e.g., children are not often alone in play areas while teachers engage in routine care, children are not alone in a swing or bouncy seat for a long time, etc.)? **Y / N**

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

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

Is there a variety of interesting choices and materials in reach 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: _____

Are there duplicates of popular materials? **Y / N**

Does the daily schedule have ample free play times, with a range of accessible materials and interactions possible? **Y / N**

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

Are routine care needs met in a timely, individualized manner (e.g., quick responses to crying)? **Y / N**

Do staff help children communicate (by offering words or encouraging children to talk) when social problems occur? **Y / N**

Are children's positive behaviors recognized with comments or other positive attention? **Y / N**

Are guidance strategies usually positive and effective? **Y / N** If the behaviors continue, what happens next? _____

Give two recent examples of teachers explaining how a child's actions affected someone else. **Hint:** see page 49 for examples: _____

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

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 ITERS-R indicators are covered in this worksheet, so review the ITERS-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 ITERS-R and the assessment process.

- Look for general information about the assessment process and also specific ITERS-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.

North Carolina Rated License Assessment Project
915 Northridge St.
Greensboro, NC 27402
Website: ncrlap.org
Email: ncrlap@uncg.edu
Toll-free: 1-866-362-7527



References:

Harms, T., Clifford, R., & Cryer, D. (2006) *Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (Revised Edition)* New York, NY. Teachers College Press
NC Additional Notes (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.ncrlap.org>.