

# Thinking More about Activities



## FCCERS-3

**Purpose:** This document addresses many of the requirements for items found 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 space(s) for childcare. Answering the questions and referring to the FCCERS-3 will build familiarity with requirements, while reflecting on current practices and situations.

**Preparation:** Refer to the FCCERS-3 (spiral binding on the top, published in 2019) when completing questions. To better understand the scale format and structure, review the Scoring System on page 11. 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.

This subscale considers children’s play and learning activities. The focus is on the organization of play areas and interest centers, the types and quantities of materials used, the time dedicated to open-ended exploration, and 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 children. In addition, the language and support that providers offer during play activities are essential in building relationships and enhancing learning opportunities for children.

### Tips:

- If you are confused about a question, look at the Item in the FCCERS-3 and check any Notes for Clarification and/or NC Additional Notes to identify the specific indicator and requirement to which it refers.
- Describe current practices when answering 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 accessible over time, as the environment changes, and that interactions to promote learning occur throughout each day.
- Answering the questions with someone else (other FCCH providers, technical assistance specialists, health consultants, etc.) promotes sharing of perspectives and may draw attention to different details.

**Reminder:** In the FCCERS-3, young infants cannot sit unsupported, older infants can sit up unsupported, young toddlers are 12-17 months, older toddlers are 18-23 months, younger twos are 24-29 months, older twos are 30-35 months, preschoolers are 3 through 5 years, older preschoolers are 4 and 5 years, school-agers are 6 through 12 years, and older school-agers are 9 through 12 years.

Date(s) completed: \_\_\_\_\_ Ages enrolled: \_\_\_\_\_

Worksheet completed by: \_\_\_\_\_

**Accessibility and time requirements:** these concepts are extremely important and affect many items

The term “**accessible**” is defined on pages 12-13 of the FCCERS-3. Indicators that include this term consider whether children can reach and use the materials, furnishings, and equipment specified. These indicators consider barriers to accessibility, as well as lapses when materials are not provided, including:

- The use of furnishings that restrict movement (swings, bouncers, exersaucers, etc.)
- Schedules or expectations that limit/prevent access (e.g., group times, transitions, time in other spaces, children being assigned to or rotated through centers etc.).

**Hint:** Lapses and considerations for different age groups are defined on p. 12-13 of the FCCERS-3. To determine if there are lapses to any child’s access to materials, think about the following throughout the day:

Other than routine care times, (feedings, naps, diaper changes), or outdoor play, are there any times when children cannot use the classroom materials? **Hint:** Think about long transitions or group activities. **Y / N** If group activities are used, required participation in group time should be brief, and only when children are engaged.

Are furnishings or other barriers used that limit children’s physical activity/movement and access to materials? **Hint:** This includes seating devices, such as bouncy seats, swings, and activities like exersaucers. **Y / N** If **yes**, think about when and how often these are used and for how long.

Does material storage create any barriers (containers with lids, closed cabinets, materials stacked in ways that make it difficult to take certain items out)? **Y / N**

Are there times of the day when only certain materials are used, any play/interest areas are closed, or children are limited to certain centers? **Y / N** If **yes**, think about how long this lasts and if preventing access to some materials is necessary.

Does each child have many opportunities to experience various types of play and learning materials throughout the day, without times of limited or no materials and limited interaction? **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. **Y / N**

**Remember these questions and as you think about the activity items (15-21), double check that children have much access to the different types of materials throughout the day without any long lapses.**

**Item 15 Fine Motor (p. 44-45)**

Does the provider encourage the use of fine motor materials and interact with children using them frequently throughout each day? **Hint:** There should be no long lapses in each child’s access. **Y / N**

See the Notes for Clarification on p. 44 and the indicators on p. 45 for examples of the types of materials appropriate for each age group and the numbers of materials considered in this item.

List the accessible fine motor materials for your age group(s). **Hint:** Consider materials that children can reach and use independently and for non-mobile children, list the materials that teachers make accessible to them.

Infants (if enrolled)	Toddlers and Twos (if enrolled)

Preschool (if enrolled)		
Interlocking building toys	Manipulatives	Puzzles

School-age (if enrolled)		
Building toys	Manipulatives	Complex jigsaw puzzles

Do the lists for preschool and school-age (if enrolled) include at least one example from each category? **Y / N**

Do these materials represent different levels of difficulty for each age group enrolled? **Y / N**

Is the space for fine motor material use well-organized and comfortable for each age group? **Y / N**

Consider adult interactions with children while they use fine motor materials:

Conflicts over materials are consistently resolved and children are successfully supported in finding a new material, sharing, or moving to an alternate activity. **Y / N** If **yes**, describe how this is handled: \_\_\_\_\_

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The provider frequently interacts with children and helps them while they use fine motor materials. **Y / N** If **yes**, describe two recent examples of extended interactions that included teaching use during fine motor play: \_\_\_\_\_

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The provider asks questions or uses comments to help children understand concepts during fine motor play. **Y / N** If **yes**, describe a recent example: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Item 16 Art (p. 46-47)**

Answer these questions for children **18 months and older**; however, if art materials are used with infants and young toddlers, see the Notes for Clarification on p. 46 about which indicators apply and answer accordingly.

Art activities offered to children 18-35 months	Art materials accessible to preschool and school-age
	Drawing:  Paints:  Three-Dimensional:  Collage:  Tools:

The total number of materials for preschool and school-age children is: \_\_\_\_\_

If any child is not interested in the art activity, they can: **Hint:** Is there more than one alternate activity?

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Consider adult interactions with children while they use art materials:

Is positive supervision provided to prevent misuse of materials and facilitate children's exploration and creativity? **Y / N**

Do adults talk with children while they use art materials? **Y / N** If **yes**, describe two recent examples with different children that included extended conversations: \_\_\_\_\_

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

For children two and older: Does the provider write children's comments about their art on their work? **Y / N / NA**

### Item 17 Music and movement (p. 48-49)

See the Notes for Clarification on p. 48 for examples of the types of materials and indicator 5.1 for the number of materials considered in this item.

List the accessible music materials for the enrolled age group(s). **Hint:** Consider materials that children can reach and use independently and for any non-mobile children, list the materials that adults make accessible to them.

Music materials for infants	Music materials for toddlers and two-year-olds	Musical instruments for preschool	Musical instruments for school-age

The total number of materials listed above is \_\_\_\_\_. Also, are there at least two for each age group enrolled? **Y / N**

Are these materials accessible throughout each day? **Hint:** There should be no long lapses in each child's access. **Y / N**

Music materials/instruments are accessible at the following times: \_\_\_\_\_

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When recorded music is used, is this for a specific purpose like dancing or singing along? **Y / N** Is recorded music always turned off during reading or singing other songs? **Y / N**

Does the provider sing/chant (other than circle/group times)? How often does this occur? \_\_\_\_\_

Does the provider engage children in movement or dance activities? **Y / N** If **yes**, how often? \_\_\_\_\_

Consider group music activities, if offered:

Do children enjoy and remain engaged during group music times? **Y / N / NA**

If children are not interested in the group music activity, they can: **Hint:** Is there more than one alternative activity? \_\_\_\_\_

During music/movement activities (either formal or informal):

Are children encouraged to participate in active ways (e.g., sing or dance along, etc.)? **Y / N**

Are at least two different types of music used daily? **Y / N** List the types used: \_\_\_\_\_

Are music activities used for teaching? **Hint:** See indicator 7.3 for examples. **Y / N** If **yes**, describe a recent example: \_\_\_\_\_

Is creativity encouraged? **Y / N** If **yes**, describe a recent example: \_\_\_\_\_

**Item 18 Blocks (p. 50-51)**

Does the provider encourage block play and interact with children using them frequently throughout each day? **Hint:** There should be no long lapses in each child’s access. **Y / N**

This item does not consider any table blocks or blocks that interlock. See the Notes for Clarification on p. 50 for examples of appropriate blocks and accessories.

List the accessible blocks for your age group(s). **Hint:** Consider materials that children can reach and use independently. Blocks are not required for young infants or older school-agers.

Blocks for older infants/toddlers	Blocks for twos/preschool/young school-age

For twos/preschool/young school-age, write the number of each type of accessory stored with the blocks:

Transportation toys: \_\_\_\_\_ People: \_\_\_\_\_ Animals: \_\_\_\_\_

Is there protected floor space for play only with blocks and block accessories? **Y / N** If **no**, can other materials be moved to different areas of the space, so they do not interfere with block play (e.g., doll house, connecting toys, or train tracks moved to other areas)? **Y / N / NA**

Consider adult interactions while children play with blocks:

Is there talking with children about their block play? **Y / N** If **yes**, describe two recent examples: \_\_\_\_\_

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Are age-appropriate math/number concepts introduced during block play? **Hint:** See indicator 7.4 for examples. **Y / N** If **yes**, describe a recent example: \_\_\_\_\_

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### Item 19 Dramatic play (p. 52-53)

Does the provider encourage dramatic play and interact with children using dramatic play materials frequently throughout each day? **Hint:** There should be no long lapses in each child's access to dramatic play. **Y / N**

See the Notes for Clarification on p. 52 for examples of dramatic play materials for different age groups.

List the accessible dramatic play materials for the enrolled age group(s). **Hint:** Consider materials that children can reach and use independently and for non-mobile children, list the materials that adults make accessible to them.

Dramatic play materials for infants	Dramatic play materials for toddlers and two-year-olds
Dramatic play materials preschool	Dramatic play materials for school-age

Do the materials listed include all, or almost all, of the examples on p. 52 for each age group? **Y / N**

Are dramatic play materials organized in a protected interest center? **Hint:** The definition of an interest center is found on p. 14. **Y / N**

In addition to larger props, are there also small dramatic play toys such as a doll house with people and furnishings, a barn with animals, or toy cars? **Hint:** See the Note for Clarification for indicator 3.2 for details. **Y / N**

Do toddlers, preschool, and school-age children (if enrolled) have access to dress up clothing? **Y / N / NA**  
If **yes**, do the dress up clothes include examples representing males and females for children three years of age and older? **Y / N**

Consider adult interactions while all children play with dramatic play materials:

Is there engagement and facilitation of children's dramatic play? **Y / N** If **yes**, describe two recent examples: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Does the provider play with children and use dramatic play for teaching? **Hint:** See indicator 5.4 for examples. **Y / N** If **yes**, describe two recent examples: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do toddlers and older children (if enrolled) have access to dramatic play materials outdoors or in another large space? **Y / N / NA**

**Item 20 Nature/science (p. 54-55)**

Is the provider consistently positive with children about nature/science? **Y / N** **Hint:** See indicators 1.3 and 3.3 for examples.

List realistic nature/science materials and experiences indoors. **Hint:** Consider materials that children can see, reach, and use independently and for non-mobile children, list the materials that adults make accessible to them.

Natural objects	Living things	Nature books/games/toys	Nature/science tools



The total number of examples listed is: \_\_\_\_\_ Are there some for each age group enrolled? **Y / N**

Are at least two categories accessible? **Y / N**

For twos/preschoolers (if enrolled): Is sand or water play with toys accessible daily? **Y / N / NA**

Are sand and water play supervised closely? **Y / N / NA**

Are there opportunities for all children to experience living things indoors? **Y / N** Outdoors? **Y / N**

Do adults interact with children who are using nature/science materials? **Y / N**

Consider adult interactions while children experience nature or play with nature/science materials:

Do adults talk to children about nature/science materials and experiences? **Y / N** If **yes**, describe three recent examples: \_\_\_\_\_

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Are nature/science experiences used to extend children's learning? **Hint:** See indicator 7.4 for examples. **Y / N** If **yes**, describe a recent example: \_\_\_\_\_

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### Item 21 Math/number (p. 56-57)

List accessible materials for learning about numbers, shapes, and size for your age group(s). **Hint:** Consider materials that children can see, reach, and use independently and for non-mobile children, list the materials that adults make accessible to them.

Shape/number/size materials for infants, toddlers, and two-year-olds	Math/number/shape materials for preschool	Math/number/shape materials for school-age

Are there at least four examples for each age group enrolled? **Y / N**

Do children have access to these materials throughout the day? **Hint:** There should be no long lapses in each child's access to math/number materials. **Y / N**

For toddlers/twos/preschoolers/school-age children, can they see/access display or books that show numbers and matching quantities? **Y / N** If **yes**, list materials: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Consider adult interactions while children play with math/number materials:

Does math talk with children occur often, including when they use math materials? **Y / N**

Does the provider talk to children about numbers/math concepts in engaging/meaningful ways? **Y / N** If **yes**, describe three recent examples: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Does the provider point to objects and count them for children? **Y / N** If **yes**, describe a recent example: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Are children two and older encouraged to count using their fingers? **Y / N**

Are children given hands-on experiences with math during daily experiences? **Y / N** If **yes**, describe two recent examples: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

For children three and older, does the provider ask questions to stimulate math reasoning? **Hint:** See indicator 7.2 for examples. **Y / N / NA** If **yes**, describe two recent examples: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

For children two and older, does the provider connect written numbers with matching quantities? **Hint:** See indicator 7.3 for examples. **Y / N** If **yes**, describe a recent example: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Are math words used to describe the schedule or sequence of the day to children? **Hint:** See indicator 7.4 for examples. **Y / N**

**Item 22 Appropriate use of screen time (p. 58-59)**

The use of technology is **not required**. NC assessment participants should be reminded that per the NC Child Care Rules, screen time is prohibited for children under the age of 3 years. Only answer these questions if it is used with children three years old and older. If such activities are not provided, circle **NA** and move on to the next item.

Is all television/video/internet/smart board offered only to children who are at least three years old? **Y / N**

List the types of programs used: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

The total daily time children who are three years or older can use technology is: \_\_\_\_\_

Children who are not interested can: **Hint:** Are there at least three alternate activities? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

How do adults interact with children during the use of technology? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Rather than passive watching, do these materials encourage active involvement? **Y / N**

Is the use of screen time connected to program themes or children’s interests? **Y / N**

**Item 23 Promoting acceptance of diversity (p. 60-61)**

See the Notes for Clarification on p. 60 for examples of the materials considered in this item.

List the items showing diversity that are easily experienced by all the children.

Books	Pictures or other display	Play materials (other than dolls)

The total number of items listed in the three columns above is: \_\_\_\_\_

Circle the categories represented across the three columns you just documented. **Hint:** Requirements are found in indicator 5.3.

- Race                  Culture                  Age (including elderly)                  Ability                  Non-traditional gender roles

The accessible dolls include \_\_\_\_\_ different races. Are there at least three difference races represented?  
**Y / N**

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

Does the provider include teaching about diversity during daily activities/routines? **Y / N** If **yes**, describe a few recent examples: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Does the provider point out similarities and differences between people in a positive way to the children? **Y / N** If **yes**, describe a recent example: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do adults provide positive attention for children's individuality? **Y / N**

**Item 24 Gross motor (p. 62-63)**

See the Notes for Clarification on p. 62 for examples of appropriate space and equipment for different ages. List the times children spend in the outdoor space each day: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do any weather conditions prevent outdoor play? **Hint:** The FCCERS-3 defines "weather permitting" on p. 14. **Y / N** If **yes**, list them: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Describe the space and equipment for gross motor play:

Indoors:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Outdoors:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do the indoor and outdoor spaces provide ample room for active movement? **Y / N**

Is there at least one space where children can be very active (e.g., running for toddlers and older children)? **Y / N**

Is it easy to get to this space? **Y / N**

Are infants taken outdoors? **Y / N / NA**

Check for safety hazards in all indoor and outdoors spaces used for children’s gross motor play. Are any of the following common hazards present? Please note this is not a complete list of possible hazards. **Hint:** Refer to the document NCRLAP’s Requirements for Gross Motor Space and Equipment for specific measurements.

- Not enough cushioning under and in the fall zones of gross motor equipment
- Fall zones not large enough around gross motor equipment
- Equipment spacing is too close
- Open hooks at the top/bottom of swings
- Outdoors space is not fully fenced, or fence height is less than 4 feet

Consider the outdoor space:

Is there some protection from the elements? **Y / N**

List the different types of ground surfaces in the outdoor space: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Are gross motor space(s) organized so different activities don’t interfere with one another? **Y / N**

Consider the gross motor equipment used by your group:

Is all equipment appropriate and in good repair? **Y / N**

Is there enough equipment for all the children to stay active? **Y / N**

Does it include both portable and stationary equipment? **Y / N**

**Other considerations:**

Are there ways activities or areas are modified to allow participation by different age groups (or used exclusively by certain age groups, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Which areas of the caregiving space are used by children most often? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Are there areas of the that the children do not use very often, either because the children or play materials are not put there, or because children aren’t interested? **Y / N** If **yes**, list these areas and what changes could be made to increase interest and frequency of use: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Would the group like to spend more time outdoors? If so, that is a great way for children to get fresh air and exposure to the natural world, 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? **Hint:** If the group spends more than an hour of the morning observation time (and a third of the day overall outside), materials required in the various activity items should also be provided outdoors. See p.13 of the FCCERS-3 for more information.

Outdoor learning materials	Activities/materials to add

**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”? Were there any questions where you struggled to provide written examples, or where the specific interactions considered do not occur daily, throughout the day? 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 tool in an ongoing self-study practice and will be useful in continuing with an action plan after completing the reflection questions below.

List areas where strengths were noted in activities:

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List areas where improvements could be made or there are new ideas to think about:

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Are there any issues you will work to change right away? Describe how so:

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Are there issue that will take more time to change? What were these and what resources/support may be needed?

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**Want to find out more?**

Not all FCCERS-3 indicators are covered in this worksheet, so review the FCCERS-3 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 on the [ncrlap.org](http://ncrlap.org) website to stay informed about any updates and to continue to build your understanding of the FCCERS-3 and the assessment process.

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).

Look for general information about the assessment process and specific ITERS-3 resources. These resources may offer ideas about what to focus on or to supplement ideas you were already considering. Check out the answers to the Frequently Asked Questions or send a new question to [ncrlap@uncg.edu](mailto:ncrlap@uncg.edu)

When planning for program enhancement, always consider the unique features of the program such as ages and abilities of the children enrolled, the provider(s), and overall goals and/or philosophy. Programs may also seek advice from their DCDEE Child Care Consultant, local CCR&R and/or Smart Start Partnership TA specialists, a Child Care Health Consultant, or other child care agencies.



**References:**

Harms, T., Cryer, D., Clifford, R., & Yazejian, N. (2019). Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale. (Third Edition). New York, NY. Teachers College Press.

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