Thinking More about Program Structure

ITERS-3

Purpose: This document addresses many of the requirements for items found in the Program Structure 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 ITERS-3 will build familiarity with requirements, while reflecting on current practices and situations.

Preparation: Refer to the ITERS-3 (spiral binding on the top, published in 2017) when completing questions. To better understand the scale format and structure, review the Scoring System on page 9. 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.

This subscale considers how the classroom structure contributes to children's opportunities to explore, learn, and develop independence. There is a focus on the ways the classroom structure allows for individualized schedules as children transition through routines, activities, and play, significant opportunities for varied play, interactions with peers and teachers, and children's active involvement in group activities, if used. These aspects provide a strong foundation for fun and enriching experiences, and an environment where children's learning is optimized.

Tips:

- If you are confused about a question, look at the Item in the ITERS-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 classroom structure is supportive and developmentally appropriate. This process also emphasizes how specific aspects of program structure create a framework for positive and enriching experiences for children.
- Answering the questions with someone else (co-teachers, administrators, technical assistance specialists, health consultants, etc.) promotes sharing of perspectives and may draw attention to different details.

Reminder: In the ITERS-3, young infants are birth-5 months who cannot sit unsupported, older infants are 6-11 months who can sit up without support, young toddlers are 12-17 months, older toddlers are 18-23 months, younger twos are 24-29 months, and older twos are 30-35 months.

Date(s) completed:_____ Classroom name/age group:_____

Worksheet completed by:_____

Item 31 Schedule and transitions (p. 76-77)

If this is an infant classroom where all children are always on individual schedules for play and routines, circle   **NA**   and move to the next item.

Consider the daily schedule. Is it flexible and does it meet the needs of each child (e.g., children play, eat, nap, and are diapered/visit the toilet based on their own needs, routine care is scheduled to occur without much waiting or crying)? **Y / N**

Consider transitions (check all that apply):

  ☐   Supervision is provided to ensure children stay engaged and to prevent conflicts
  ☐   Supervision is positive and supportive
  ☐   Transitions are gradual or individualized
  ☐   The next activity/routine is usually ready

Describe actions to ensure the teacher is ready for the next activity/routine so there are minimal wait times, positive behaviors, and smooth transitions: _____
_____
_____
_____
_____

   Does this prevent transitions where children must wait for more than 3 minutes at a time without activities? **Y / N** If wait times are longer than 3 minutes, list some activities to keep them engaged or ways to reduce these times: _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

Does the schedule allow for play activities throughout the day that meet children's needs (active and quiet play available, children allowed to leave activity or teacher changes activity based on interest, activities extended when children show interest)? **Y / N**

Item 32 Free play (p. 78-79)

Hint: Only times when children can choose both the materials they use and peers to interact with are considered free play.

How long does free play last during the observation period? **Hints**: The observation period is defined on p. 9 and weather permitting is defined on p. 13 of the ITERS-3:

   Indoors? _____   Outdoors (weather permitting)? _____

List additional times in the early morning and afternoon when free play occurs:

    Indoors   Outdoors

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

Does the daily schedule provide ample free play time that allows children to have prolonged, meaningful play experiences? **Y / N**

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

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

    Is there a variety of interesting choices to keep children busy and engaged? **Y / N**

During free play times both indoors and outdoors, is there supervision to (check all that apply):

- ☐ Protect children's health and safety?
- ☐ Facilitate children's play by helping with use of materials, offering additional materials to support their play, etc.?
- ☐ Clean up materials as children finish and as needed?
- ☐ Provide many educational interactions related to children's play such as naming materials and activities with a wide variety of words?
- ☐ Respect the individual needs of children, by not interrupting their play, and to facilitate peer interactions, provide space to play alone as needed, etc.?
- ☐ Include positive interactions throughout play times?

During times that children play, are there many types of materials and equipment for them to use? **Y / N**

    Is this true for both indoor and outdoor materials and equipment? **Y / N**

Item 33 Group play activities (p. 80-81)

Hint: See the definition of group play activities in the Notes for Clarification on p. 80. **Group play activities are not required for infants, toddlers, or twos.** If group activities with expected participation are not a part of the classroom, circle **NA.**

If group play activities occur, list the times and lengths of typical whole-group activities: _____ _____ _____

What types of activities are used during whole-group times? _____ _____ _____ _____

What happens if a child does not want to join or tries to leave during the activities? Describe alternate activities, accommodations, etc.: _____ _____

_____
_____
_____

Are alternate play activities positive and interesting for children not choosing the group time? **Y / N**

Are group activities planned to encourage active engagement and support participation? **Y / N** If **yes**, list some strategies for the group or for individual children in the group (enough materials for all, space to carry out activity, etc.): _____
_____
_____
_____

If group activities do not go as planned, are adjustments made in the moment? **Y / N** If **yes**, give a recent example: _____
_____

Do group activities usually occur in smaller groups rather than the whole class, based on the children's interests and ages? **Y / N**

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 when asked, 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 program structure:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

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

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Want to find out more?

Not all ITERS-3 indicators are covered in this worksheet, so review the ITERS-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 website to stay informed about any updates and to continue to build your understanding of the ITERS-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.

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

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 Partnership TA Specialists, a Child Care Health Consultant, or other child care agencies.

References:

Harms, T., Cryer, D., Clifford, R., & Yazejian, N. (2017). Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale. (Third Edition). New York, NY. Teachers College Press.

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