

Thinking More about Activities



ITERS-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 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 11. 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 children’s play and learning activities. The focus is on 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 young children. In addition, the language and support that teachers provide during play activities are essential in building relationships and enhancing learning opportunities for young children.

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 required types and categories of materials are accessible over time, as the environment changes, and that interactions to promote children’s use of materials occur throughout each day.
- 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: _____

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

The term “**accessible**” is defined on pp. 11-12 of the ITERS-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 of the ITERS-3. To determine if there are lapses for 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**

After considering what occurs in the classroom, it is important to think about whether children are in other classrooms or with other staff members at different times of the day and what occurs. More information about this can be found in the Additional Considerations section at the end of the worksheet.

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)

Do teachers 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 for examples of the types of materials and indicators 5.1 and 7.1 for 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.

Fine motor for infants (if enrolled)	Fine motor for toddlers and twos (if enrolled)
Total #:	Total #:

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 children? **Y / N**

Consider teacher’s 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: _____

Teachers frequently interact with children while they use fine motor materials. **Y / N** If **yes**, describe two recent examples of extended interactions that included teaching during fine motor play: _____

Teachers ask questions or use comments to help children understand concepts during fine motor play **Y / N** If **yes**, describe two recent examples for different children: _____

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 18-23 months	Art materials accessible to 2-year-olds

Are all art materials safe (e.g., no small parts like loose caps or small crayon or chalk pieces, no glitter or foam)? **Y / N**

If twos are enrolled, are drawing materials accessible to them throughout the day? **Y / N / NA**

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

Consider teacher 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 teachers name colors during children's play with art materials? **Y / N**

Do teachers talk with children about their artwork? **Y / N**

Consider the art activities provided and teacher facilitation. Check all that apply:

- Materials and activities are used to help children explore concepts
- Teachers describe and demonstrate as needed to support children in using materials properly
- Children can use art materials in their own way with very few, if any, projects that look the same.

Describe two recent examples of discussion with children about their art work:

If twos are enrolled, do teachers 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 non-mobile children, list the materials that teachers make accessible to them.

Music materials for infants	Music materials for toddlers	Musical instruments for twos
Total #:	Total #:	Total #:

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

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**

Do teachers sing with children, formally or informally, each day? **Y / N**

Do the teachers engage the 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 (formal or informal), does the teacher:

Individualize experiences (e.g., adapt for energetic or quieter times, provide one-on-one music, sing in child’s first language)? **Y / N** If **yes**, describe a recent example: _____

Use music activities for teaching? **Hint:** See indicator 7.2 for examples. **Y / N** If **yes**, describe a recent example: _____

Are music/movement experiences related to recent themes or children’s interests? **Y / N**

Item 18 Blocks (p. 50-51)

Do teachers encourage block play and interact with children using blocks frequently throughout each day?

Hint: There should be no long lapses in each child's access to block play. **Y / N**

This item does not consider any 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 and for non-mobile children, list the materials that teachers make accessible to them.

Blocks for infants	Blocks for toddlers
Blocks for twos	Block accessories for twos

For older toddlers and twos, if enrolled:

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

Does the block interest center include large blocks (e.g., wooden hollow, cardboard, etc.) with enough space for active building? **Y / N / NA**

Consider teacher interactions while all children play with blocks:

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

Are age-appropriate concepts introduced during block play? **Hint:** See indicator 7.3 for examples. **Y / N** If **yes**, describe a recent example: _____

Do teachers model building simple structures and describe them? **Y / N** If **yes**, describe a recent example: _____

Item 19 Dramatic play (p. 52-53)

Do teachers 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 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.

Dramatic play materials for infants	Dramatic play materials for toddlers and twos

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

Are there at least 4 materials representing diversity? **Hint:** See the indicator for examples. List them:

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____

Do all children, including non-mobile infants (if enrolled), have access to dolls and soft animals? **Y / N**

Do toddlers and twos (if enrolled) have access to simple dress up clothing in a dramatic play interest center? **Y / N / NA**

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

Is play supervised to support children through conflicts or other challenging behaviors? **Y / N**

Do teachers name objects during dramatic play? **Y / N** If **yes**, describe two recent examples: _____

Do teachers play alongside of children and add information? **Hint:** see indicator 7.3 for examples. **Y / N** If **yes**, describe three recent examples: _____

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

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

Are teachers consistently positive with children about nature/science? **Y / N** **Hint:** See indicator 1.3 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 teachers make accessible to them.

Pictures/display	Books	Toys	Indoor plant(s)/animal(s)

Are there daily opportunities for all children to experience nature indoors? **Y / N** Outdoors? **Y / N**

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

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

Are activities supervised closely (including sand/water play, if used)? **Y / N**

Do teachers discuss and point out nature/science throughout the day (indoors or outdoors)? **Y / N**

If **yes**, describe three recent examples: _____

Do teachers model care or concern for nature to children? **Y / N**

For 2-year-olds (if enrolled):

Are nature/science materials organized in an interest center? **Y / N / NA**

Is sand or water play offered daily (indoors or outdoors)? **Y / N / NA**

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

See the Notes for Clarification on p. 56 for examples of math/number materials for different age groups.

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 teachers make accessible to them.

Infants	Toddlers	Twos

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

Consider interactions while children play with math/number materials:

Do teachers compare shapes, quantity, or sizes? **Y / N** If **yes**, describe two recent examples:

Do teachers point to objects and count them for children? **Y / N** If **yes**, describe two recent examples:

Do teachers teach numbers/counting in singing, chanting, rhymes, or finger plays? **Y / N** If **yes**, describe a recent example: _____

Do teachers describe the schedule or sequence of the day to children with math words? **Y / N**

Do teachers use their fingers during number talk to represent the number? **Y / N**

For 2-year-olds, do teachers point out printed numbers? **Y / N / NA** If **yes**, describe a recent example:

Item 22 Appropriate use of technology (p. 58-59)

The use of technology is **not required**. Requirements for this item may be reviewed, but 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.

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 columns you just documented. **Hint:** Requirements are found in the indicator on p. 61.

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

The accessible dolls include _____ different races.

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

Do teachers provide positive attention for children’s individuality? **Y / N** If **yes**, give a few examples:

Do teachers include teaching about diversity during daily activities? **Y / N** If **yes**, describe recent examples:

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 ITERS-3 defines “weather permitting” on p. 13.

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**

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 (ncrlap.org) 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 tops/bottom of swings
- Outdoors space is not fully fenced, or fence height is less than 4 feet

Consider the outdoor space:

List the different types of ground surfaces in the outdoor space: _____

Is there some protection from the elements?
Y / N

Are gross motor spaces separated from space used by older children or do groups use the space at different times? **Y / N**

Consider the gross motor equipment used by the children:

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 stimulate a variety of large-muscle skills? **Y / N**

Other considerations:

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

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 children aren't interested? 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. 12 of the ITERS-3 for more information.

Outdoor learning materials	Activities/materials to add

Accessible considerations:

If applicable, what happens in the AM and PM when the children are with different teachers or in other classrooms*? Documenting children's experiences throughout the entire day can help ensure that everyone is aware of the need to prevent the barriers mentioned on page 2.

In the chart below, list the teachers responsible for these times and their report of the schedule/what materials are used by children in these rooms, at these times.

AM location(s):	PM location(s):
Teacher(s):	Teacher(s):
Schedule/materials:	Schedule/materials:

*If other classroom(s) used are for a different age group, consider whether materials are appropriate and safe.

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 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 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 Technical Assistant 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>.