



NC ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR THE ECERS-3

The NC Additional Notes provide supplementary information for the Environment Rating Scales to help participants in the assessment portion of the North Carolina star rated license correctly interpret and score items found within the scale. The primary aim for the notes is to further explain requirements to improve interrater reliability or consistency among assessors working with the North Carolina Rated License Assessment Project (NCRLAP).

The NC Additional Notes are developed by members of the NCRLAP's management team, especially by our state anchors. These notes include many of the Additional Notes posted at ersinstitute.com/additionalnotes which are indicated with a parenthetical reference. However, the Environment Rating Scale Institute (ERSI) addresses questions from many different states and systems. Therefore, we include only the notes that will be helpful to participants in North Carolina's assessment process because of the relevancy to situations in this state, along with other specific details based on NCRLAP's assessment work and the NC Child Care and Sanitation Rules.

Participants in the NC star rated license system should be aware of the following:

- The NC Additional Notes may be updated (approximately) every 6 months, as needed. NCRLAP assessors conduct assessments using the most current notes. The most current notes are available at ncrlap.org.
- NCRLAP assessors use only the NC Additional Notes for the ECERS-3 and, due to modifications and additions that occur over time, the NC Additional Notes differ from notes found on the ERSI website. Participants in the NC star rated license should replace older notes with the current NC Additional Notes.
- NCRLAP began using the Third Edition of the ECERS February 1, 2025, *and assessors use the reprinted version that includes the Updated Notes for Clarification in the scale text*. For assessment purposes, this version replaced the ECERS-R.

Recent changes (The most recent changes are italicized in this document): *Minor updates 7/20/2026; 1/9/2026 Items 6, 22; 11/11/2024 Items 9, 22, 25*

GENERAL NOTES FOR THE ECERS-3

Administration of the scale: For NC assessments, the ECERS-3 is used when more than 50% of children are at least 3 years of age. Additionally, if more than 50% of children who typically attend are present for most of the observation, it is not required that 50% are present to begin an observation. This information replaces instructions for administration found in the scale on page 7.

Accessible: When calculating the time that materials or spaces are accessible, count only time that all children have reasonable access. When some children have access and others do not, for example when snack is offered as a choice during center time or children are required to leave centers to complete a teacher-planned activity, the time children fail to have access is not counted in calculating time accessible. When snack is offered as a choice during center time, the typical amount of time it takes a child to complete the routine (washing hands, preparing a plate, eating, cleaning up, and handwashing) must be subtracted from the time that centers are open and materials accessible. When children are required to complete a teacher-planned activity, make note of the time it takes for each child to complete the required activity and subtract the longest

amount of time for any child from the time that centers are open and materials accessible. Time that is not counted against accessibility of materials includes children using the toilet on individual schedules or when children participate in special activities not offered to the whole group, such as a therapy session or special classes that parents pay for separately. Start timing only when all children have access and no child is waiting, for example, when all children have completed the transition into centers. Clean-up time is not considered access to materials. These requirements hold true for all types of access (e.g., music, art, gross motor, etc.) (ERSI, 2024).

Free play: Means that the child is permitted to select materials and companions and as far as possible manage play independently. Adult interaction is in response to the child's needs. Situations in which the children are assigned to centers by staff, or staff select the materials that individual children may use do not count as free play. Free play does not mean that all areas of the classroom must be open at one time, with all materials accessible. A more limited number of area choices may be available, since free play takes place if children are allowed to choose where they will play, and with whom, from the choices allowed. The allowed choices must include play areas or interest centers of varied types, where children are allowed to choose what to take from toy storage shelves. Free play is not credited when staff pre-select a material that children are allowed to use in the various play areas or centers, when children are not able to freely access other materials in the play areas/centers if they wish. There must be enough areas open so that children do not have problems with access to materials that interest them (ERSI, 2024).

Routines: This refers to personal care routines, such as toileting/diapering, meals/snacks, handwashing, arrival/departure, and nap preparation, if observed. When certain interactions are required during "routines," it refers to these personal care routines and not to other daily activities such as transitions or group times (ERSI, 2024).

Gross motor equipment and safety issues: NC assessors use the gross motor safety information sheet titled: "NCRLAP's Requirements for Gross Motor Space and Equipment." This document is available at ncrlap.org.

Handwashing: In certain situations, when a sink with running water is not accessible for the group to use, hand sanitizing products may be used in lieu of handwashing. For example, hand sanitizer may be used while staff supervise children outdoors if hands are washed upon returning indoors. The following requirements must be met; the waterless wash or wipe must be used according to manufacturer guidelines (i.e., labeled as safe for use by children, used only with adult supervision, allowed to dry properly), and the waterless wash must be stored out of reach of children. Please note that this substitution is only acceptable in certain circumstances and that the requirements for adequate handwashing still apply for routine care activities and general classroom use.

Outdoor materials and activities: There are many benefits to offering a wide range of activities/materials in outdoor spaces where active behaviors can occur, and children are able to use items in different ways than is typically possible indoors. Therefore, for NC assessments when non-gross motor materials or activities are provided outside, these times can be applied to time requirements for "accessible" as soon as outdoor play begins if it is free play. This same idea also applies to various materials offered in indoor gross motor spaces.

Poor repair of materials and books: Materials and books that are in poor repair, meaning that they are not usable as intended, are excluded when determining whether the required numbers or examples for various categories have been provided.

Sanitation: Child care providers and other professionals should be aware that compliance with NC's Sanitation of Child Care Center Requirements contained in 15A NCAC 18A Section .2800 must be maintained by licensed child care centers; therefore, if differences in wording regarding the use of various products, such as a sanitizing solution, as compared to a disinfecting solution appear in some of the rating scale items, the Sanitation Requirements must be followed. Consider the following:

- For chlorine bleach and water sanitizing solution to be effective, it must be mixed to the strength specified in 15A NCAC 18A .2801 Definitions (22) and be allowed to dry for a minimum of 2 minutes. Complete air drying is ideal. Other sanitizing solutions, as required and approved in 15A NCAC 18A .2812, Cleaning and Sanitizing Equipment and Utensils (5E) may also be used.
- For chlorine bleach and water disinfecting solution to be effective, it must be mixed to the strength specified in 15A NCAC 18A .2801 Definitions (7) and be allowed to dry for a minimum of 2 minutes. Complete air drying is ideal. Other EPA registered disinfectants or germicides may be used, based on the specifications found in the same definition (e.g., approved for equivalent setting and instructions for use are followed).

Staff: Beyond classroom teachers, this includes adult volunteers and other staff who work with the children during the observation, even if this is for a short time compared to the usual teachers (e.g., a floater filling in for breaks, the weekly Spanish teacher's resource class that all children attend, a therapist works with a small group in the classroom rather than elsewhere, a student teacher or intern from local college, etc.). Interactions and activities completed by these adults are included in scoring decisions. Do not consider interactions that occur with one-time resource visitors, volunteers, or other special guests unless interactions are extremely negative.

General references: Materials that are frequently used by NCRLAP to assist in decision making are Caring For Our Children (used for health, sanitation, and safety issues) and the Handbook for Public Playground Safety, CPSC Publication No. 325 (for gross motor play issues). Links to these resources are found on our website, ncrlap.org and providers are encouraged to access these; however, all information contained in these resources may not be applied during an assessment.

ITEM 1:

Indicator 1.2, 3.2: To score "Yes" to 1.2, more than one of the 4 problems must exist in the room. If any one of the issues listed in 3.2 is a problem, score "No" to 3.2 (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 5.2: If the classroom has windows with shades or blinds on all windows that are closed throughout the observation, credit is not given since children do not experience natural light (ERSI, 2024).

ITEM 2:

Indicator 3.1, 3.4: Typographical error. The second and third sentences of the 3.4 note apply to the note for 3.1. They do not apply to indicator 3.4 (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 5.2: Tables and chairs must meet requirements in each area used by children, including any that are outside the classroom, such as a cafeteria.

ITEM 3:

Indicator 5.2: The term used carries the same meaning as accessible for this indicator. The five interest centers must all be accessible for use for 25 minutes during the observation (ERSI, 2024).

ITEM 4:

Indicator 5.3: If no problems are observed as children use spaces for privacy required in 5.1, score this indicator “Yes” (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 7.2: If no issues about having to share materials are observed, score “Yes” (ERSI, 2024).

ITEM 6:

Indicator 1.2, 3.2, 5.3 A fall zone with protective surfacing is not required for items designed/ intended for purposes other than gross motor play (e.g., picnic table, bench, retaining wall, a rock or stump that is away from the usual gross motor equipment). If such items are used for gross motor activities such as jumping or climbing, this may be considered in item 28 as a supervision concern if these behaviors are encouraged or prevalent during the observation and occur in an unsafe manner.

Indicator 3.1 The space used must be an outdoor space. Only when weather does not permit use of the outdoor space, can an indoor space be substituted (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 5.1: If the space is large enough to meet the requirement of being spacious for the 30 minutes required in 5.2, other space(s) used for gross motor play can be smaller and are not considered in scoring here (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 5.1, 5.2 The outdoor space is required to be used during the observation unless weather does not permit use (ERSI, 2025).

Indicator 5.4 Always consider access to the outdoor space(s) normally used and consider access to indoor gross motor spaces only if observed being used (ERSI, 2025).

ITEM 7:

Indicator 3.1, 3.2, 5.1, 5.2, 7.1, 7.2: At the minimal level, either portable or stationary equipment are allowed for scoring. Both are not required. At the 5 and 7 levels of quality, both portable and stationary equipment are required and must also be considered when scoring (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 3.3: Consider the skills stimulated by gross motor equipment that is used or accessible during the observation. When outdoor gross motor play does not occur, equipment that stimulates at least five gross motor skills is required.

Indicator 5.1: Base the score on all on-site equipment that is used regularly by the children. If weather does not permit use during the observation, outdoor equipment should still be considered. However, to score “Yes,” there must also be enough equipment accessible indoors to keep children active and interested if children must stay indoors due to weather (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 5.2: The appropriateness of equipment is based on all equipment that is regularly accessible to the children when they can go outdoors, as well as any indoor equipment that is observed being used during bad weather (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 5.3: Base score on the amount of time any equipment accessible to the children during the observation, either indoors or outdoors, or both (ERSI, 2024).

ITEM 8:

Indicator 1.2, 3.3, 5.3, 7.1: Consider the following components

- Proper hand washing for adults and children: Includes use of running water and soap for approximately 15-20 seconds, followed by drying with an individual paper towel or air dryer. Hands should not be recontaminated after handwashing before eating. Consider adult and child handwashing separately.
- Sanitary eating surfaces: Must be cleaned with a soapy water solution, wiped dry and then sprayed with the sanitizing solution before and after eating. For bleach/water sanitizing solution to be effective, it must be allowed to dry for a minimum of 2 minutes and complete air drying is ideal. Manufacturer instructions for other sanitizers should be followed. Paper towels or a clean cloth, rather than sponges should be used. The same cloth or paper towel cannot be used to wipe the soapy water and the sanitizing solution. The use of a clean cloth to wipe sanitizing solution from more than one table is acceptable if the sanitizing procedure was carried out correctly. If a table itself cannot be sanitized, then a placemat (e.g. vinyl) that is cleaned and sanitized may be used or a clean disposable placemat may be used.
- Uncontaminated foods and beverages: Are served using sanitary utensils and containers. Food is not served directly on table tops. Contaminated foods/beverages are those that can spoil and have been non-refrigerated for more than one hour or that have been dropped on the floor, placed on an unclean surface, etc.

Replace note in scale with the following: Since three important health practices are required (washing /sanitizing the eating surface, hand hygiene before and after eating, and serving uncontaminated foods), consider the extent to which each of these required health practices is followed. If there is little or no effort in two of the three health practices, (for example, handwashing is completely ignored, there is no attempt to clean tables, and/or foods are served under conditions that cause extreme contamination), then score 1.2 Yes. For all indicators, there can be minor lapses in following the handwashing procedure (not rubbing for the 20 seconds but rubbing all hand surfaces thoroughly; not wetting hands first but soap still makes bubbles). However, hands should be cleaned reasonably well. If there is some attempt to complete practices, even if procedures are not done correctly, score 3.3 Yes. If there is a significant attempt to do all procedures, but the practices are completed with many minor errors, score 5.3 Yes. To score 7.1 Yes, all procedures must be done with only a few minor errors. When a flexible snack time is provided, and children come and go throughout a period of time, the same sanitary conditions are required, such as sanitizing the table between uses by different children, handwashing completed. If children use hands to eat, handwashing is required after eating to remove saliva and food (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 3.1: Children should be fed every two to three hours, unless sleeping. One meal or snack should be observed during the 3-hour observation to score 3.1 "Yes." In addition, water should be offered between meals/snacks when children have been very active, upon request or if the air is very dry (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 3.2 and 5.2:

- NCRLAP does not evaluate the nutritional adequacy of foods or beverages brought from home; however, for meals and snacks provided by the child care program, nutrition guidelines still apply.
- Written instructions from a child's health care professional for food or beverage substitutions are acceptable. For snacks: Two of four nutritional components from the USDA Meal Guidelines must be served. A child with food or beverage allergies may be served any food that counts for a second USDA component as a substitute. For example, if the snack is milk and crackers, a child who is allergic to milk may be served juice and crackers because the child's allergies are considered, and the alternative snack still meets USDA guidelines. A food or beverage substitution must be made in cases when there is a family dietary preference or restriction, and the substitution must meet USDA guidelines.

ITEM 9:

For proper sanitary diaper change procedure, see the NC Health and Safety Resource Center Diapering Procedure Poster available at <https://healthychildcare.unc.edu/resources/posters/>

New information from CFOC shows that touching sink faucets after handwashing does not add to a substantial amount of contamination. Therefore, it is no longer required that faucets be turned off with a paper towel. In addition, if sinks are observed to be used for multiple purposes, and only the faucets are touched during handwashing (e.g., no food washed in sink, no touching sink surfaces occurs), it is no longer necessary to disinfect the sinks between different uses, except when soiled or during regular cleaning. Therefore, if a shared sink is used without disinfecting, consider the relative contamination that is observed, and if minimal, consider this a minor problem when scoring the handwashing/sanitation indicators (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 3.1: The example referring to "toileting accidents" should not affect the score when a toileting accident is observed, but staff reminded and encouraged children to use the toilet, not ignoring the need for some children to get extra attention (ERSI, 2024). Additionally, do not apply the Note for Clarification for 3.1. When the toilet is clearly freely accessible to preschool children, it is not necessary to observe a toileting routine unless there are accidents or instances of staff ignoring children's cues or requests.

ITEM 10

Indicator 3.2, 5.2: Adequate spacing between cots/mats/cribs or a solid barrier between nap provisions is acceptable for NC assessments. The solid barrier must extend the entire length of the sleep surfaces.

If naptime is not observed, but cots and linens are observed to be stored with minor sanitary problems, (slight problem of contamination, such as a few edges of blankets touching) score 3.2 Yes, and 5.2 No. If there is a major problem with contamination, such as contamination of linens for each cot or floor sides of mats stored touching sleep sides of other mats, score 3.2 No (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 3.3: Some interaction is required. All interaction observed must be either neutral or positive, with at least 2 examples of positive interaction. No negative interactions can be observed to score Yes (ERSI, 2024).

ITEM 11

Indicator 5.1: There can be no more than 2 major hazards indoors and 2 outdoors to give credit. If there are more than 2 in either location, credit cannot be given (ERSI, 2024).

ITEM 14:

Indicator 1.2, 3.2, 5.2, 5.3: Book time is any time a book is read to or used with a child or a group of children. It can be formal or informal (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 3.2, 5.2: When multiple book times are observed, either formal or informal, each needs to meet the requirements for 3.2 and 5.2.

Indicator 3.1, 5.1: To give credit for 3.1, one book must be read from beginning to end, unless staff reads a complete story within a book with several stories. The book or story read can be very short, but it must be completed in its entirety to score Yes. 5.1 requires that two books/stories are read in their entirety. In addition, singing the text of a book counts as reading (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 5.4: This indicator can be met as staff read to the children or use books with them, formally, or informally, more than once during the observation. When doing these types of activities, they must demonstrate the interest or enthusiasm required in the indicator. The mere reading of a book to a child without showing enthusiasm or enjoyment, suggesting that a child go use a book, or briefly commenting on a child's use of a book as they walk past may not be enough to meet the requirements of the indicator (ERSI, 2024). The examples must occur at different times (e.g., not only during the same group time).

ITEM 15:

Indicator 1.2: If this happens twice during an observation, and 75% of the children are not interested, score "Yes" (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 3.2: To give credit, at least two examples of each type of book must be easily observed (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 5.3: If unrelated materials, such as dramatic play or fine motor, are observed being used in the area and would disrupt any book use, and staff do not redirect the play to another space, then the area is not considered a "defined reading interest center," even if it was originally set up in that way (ERSI, 2024).

ITEM 16:

Indicator 3.1: The note for 5.1 also applies to this indicator (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 5.3: To give credit for encouraging a more advanced child to write, staff must encourage or guide children as they write down what they have said (about their artwork or a note to someone, for example). Simply prompting children to write letters or write their name does not meet the requirement of this indicator (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 7.3: To give credit this must be observed 3 times during the observation (ERSI, 2024).

ITEM 17:

Indicator 1.2: If staff do not interact with children using fine motor materials or children do not use fine motor materials independently, and staff do not encourage them to do so, this indicator is scored Yes.

Indicator 3.4: To give credit, the materials required in 3.1 must offer the different levels of challenge (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 5.3: To give credit, at least 2 different examples must be observed (ERSI, 2024).

ITEM 18:

Indicator 1.2, 3.2, 5.2: Art materials may be used in other curricular areas. All uses of art materials, whether or not labeled "art," should be considered.

Indicator 1.3 If staff do not interact with children using art materials or the only interaction is directive or corrective, or children do not use art materials independently, and staff do not encourage them to do so, this indicator is scored Yes.

Indicator 7.2, 7.3: To give credit for these indicators, two different examples must be observed for each indicator (ERSI, 2024).

ITEM 19:

General note for item: Since the definition of "staff" has been updated to include special staff who work with children on a regular basis (i.e., weekly), such as a music teacher or librarian, disregard the statement, "Do not count experiences provided by a special music teacher who is not present daily or almost daily, even if the music teacher is present during the observation." The interactions with a regular weekly music teacher are considered in scoring this item, if observed (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 5.1: Since the "many music materials" are required to be accessible during free play, disregard the portion of the original note that states, "or if used at group time there must be at least 1 instrument for each child participating" (ERSI, 2024).

ITEM 20:

Indicator 1.2: If staff do not interact with children using blocks or children do not use blocks independently, and staff do not encourage them to do so, this indicator is scored Yes.

Indicator 5.1: For NC assessments, any blocks that are the size of unit blocks or larger can be considered and not only unit blocks. There are many sizes and types of blocks available. To help clarify the most common types of blocks and required quantities, use the following as a guide:

- Unit block sets include the traditional wooden sets of different, specific sizes. Other comparable sized and/or shaped blocks made from various materials are also considered here. At least 80-unit blocks are needed for one structure.
- For sets of blocks that are larger than unit blocks, at least 40 are required. This can include any types of larger block sets, made of various materials.
- The quantities above specify what is required for a single structure. Remember that the indicator requires enough blocks for three sizable structures, whether the blocks provided are of the same or different types.

A block area that provides at least 6 x 9 ft. of building space (or equivalent dimensions) is required unless it is observed that children experience difficulties when building in the space provided and then more space would be expected. There must be enough accessories for three children to

use. Especially for groups with older children, more space or materials may be appropriate based on the type of blocks provided, available space, and complexity of play that occurs.

Indicator 5.5: To give credit this must be observed twice (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 7.1: Consider all blocks larger than unit blocks and at least 40 are required.

Indicator 7.3: Interactions that occur with larger blocks, and not only unit blocks may be considered

ITEM 21:

Indicator 1.3: If staff are rarely, if ever, observed interacting positively with children using dramatic play materials, or the only observed interaction is to control disruptive behavior, such as fighting or the inappropriate use of materials, this indicator is scored Yes. If one example of staff paying positive attention to children in the dramatic play area is observed, or if staff encourage children to use the materials when no one has used them during the observation, score this indicator No (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 3.2, 3.3: To score these indicators Yes, staff are not required to be in the dramatic play interest center when they interact with the children, as long as the children know that the staff are interacting with them about their dramatic play. For example, a child may bring a doll to a teacher and the teacher might talk about the doll play with the child, or the teacher may talk from another area, but is close enough for the child to notice the interaction (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 5.3: At this level of quality, staff should circulate to the dramatic play center and have conversations with the children as they play there (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 7.2: Replace original note with the following: To score Yes, observe either print or number talk at least once. Both print and number talk are not required to be observed (ERSI, 2024).

ITEM 22:

When scoring sand/water experiences, there should be a sufficient quantity of the sand or water so children can dig, scoop, pour, fill, and empty containers. Materials that cannot be used for digging, measuring, and pouring, such as Styrofoam packing materials, natural objects (e.g., pine cones, acorns, leaves for children to examine), or gelatinous sensory materials (e.g., goop, Jello) cannot be counted as sand/water substitutes. In addition, do not count foods (issue of wasting food) or materials that are hazardous to the children in the group, such as dried kidney beans, materials that children put in nose or ears, etc. Examples of appropriate substitutes would be millet bird seed or sterilized potting soil. Kinetic sand can count as an appropriate sand/water substitute but should not be used with children who mouth materials because it poses a safety hazard if ingested. Do not count mulch used as ground cover outdoors (ERSI, 2025).

Indicator 1.1, 3.1, 5.1: For the tools category, beyond the examples listed in the scale, consider other materials or activities that allow children to experience natural or scientific phenomena and/or concepts such as activities related to textures, smells, colors, light, etc.

Indicator 1.3: Consider obvious, extreme negativity about the natural world here. Positive statements or reactions can balance out minor comments.

Indicator 3.1, 3.3: Sand and/or water can each be counted for both indicators (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 3.3: For NC assessments, all outdoor time when sand or water play is accessible should be counted, without waiting for 15 minutes.

Indicator 5.1: Even though an outside garden is listed as an example in the original note defining the “living things” category, the garden cannot be counted to meet the requirements of 5.1, since as stated in the indicator, the materials counted to meet this indicator must all be located within a defined nature/science interest center (with the exception of sand and water). Sand/water experiences do not have to be located in the nature/science interest area in order count among the 15 required materials. However, all other required materials must be included in the center, including at least one living thing. There may be plants/animals in other areas in the room or outdoors, but to be counted in the required 15 materials, they must be present in the nature/science center for children to observe closely or care for (ERSI, 2024).

ITEM 23:

Indicator 1.1, 3.1, 5.1: Since the use of unit blocks in construction encourages children to become familiar with size and shape, consider unit blocks as math materials for this item, whether labels are present on the shelves or not. One type of blocks is counted as one math material representing familiarity with shapes. For example, all unit blocks are one example, large hollow blocks are a second example (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 1.2: If either behavior is observed, score “No.” If neither is observed, score “Yes” (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 5.3: If staff model showing fingers to represent numbers, this can count as “encouraging children” only if staff obviously encourage children to follow their model, or one or more children are observed copying what the staff does (ERSI, 2024).

ITEM 24:

Indicator 3.1, 5.1: The terms “routines” or “daily routines” are the personal care routines considered in the items Meals/snacks, Toileting/diapering, and Health practices. They do not include other scheduled daily events, such as whole group or small group times. See the definition of “routines” in the Additional Notes for Clarification, Explanation of Terms Used Throughout the Scale (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 3.2, 5.2, 7.2: In each of these indicators, the math talk must be about non-math materials, as stated in 3.2. Using math talk in relation to children’s play or clean-up of blocks is not credited here, since blocks are considered a math material and considered in Item 23, Math materials and activities (ERSI, 2024). Materials considered for these indicators include any that are not credited in item 23 or 25. Disregard any examples in scale text that mention math materials such as blocks or measuring items.

Indicator 3.3: For this indicator, any whole group can be considered including routines, transitions, or playing/learning. Additional examples of the math talk might include staff saying to the group, “First we will get our coats; second we will go out and then we can play”, How many people are allowed in the block center? Three, that’s right.”. “Remember we need to rub our hands for 20 seconds as we wash” (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 7.2 The math talk must occur when children are playing and not involved in transitions or routines (ERSI, 2024).

ITEM 25:

Indicator 1.1, 3.1: The examples must be easily seen by the children and children must be able to clearly see the relationship between the printed number and the quantity it represents. At least one easily seen example must be observed to score 1.1 No. To give credit for 3.1, at least two easily seen examples must be observed (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 7.1: The appropriate materials are the types of play materials required in 5.1. Since these are play materials, displayed items such as number posters or signs in centers telling how many children can play there, are not considered here. However, if children can actually play with or manipulate a displayed item, it can be considered here (e.g., displayed magnetic board showing different quantities of objects with magnetic print numbers to match or count.) (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 7.3: The materials are those required in 5.1 (ERSI, 2024).

ITEM 26:

Indicator 1.3: Prejudicial statements or actions considered in this indicator are those that:

- Demean, mock, devalue, or threaten others based on preconceived opinions or feelings
- Disregard family preferences
- Perpetuate myths or misinformation about a group of people
- Demonstrate an attitude of negativity or fear, either verbally or nonverbally

Indicator 5.1, 5.2: To give credit for materials, children must be able to easily experience them for at least one hour during the observation. For example, if the materials are in play areas or interest centers, children must be able to play with them for the required amount of time. Pictures in the display must be easily viewed and displayed in spaces children access during the observation (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 5.3: For the category of ages, seniors should be evident, since their depictions are often underrepresented in children's programs (ERSI, 2024).

ITEM 27:

Various items that have electronic screens, in addition to TV and computers, are considered when scoring this item. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Computers of any type (e.g., laptops, notebooks, tablets such as iPad)
- Gaming systems of any type, including handheld (e.g., Nintendo DS, Play Station, X Box, Wii, Game Boy)
- Smart Boards
- iPods or other MP3 players
- Cell phones

Therefore, when such devices are used by children the requirements of the various indicators are considered. Exceptions include situations when an electronic device is used only to play music or read without video/images, or for children to complete classroom tasks such as signing in or making a lunch choice, or as a communication device for a child with a disability.

In some settings computer screen savers are used on monitors as a constant part of the environment. If children are not using the technology, or being made to watch it as an activity and are not observed to be attracted to it in any way then do not consider this in scoring. If a child spends a very brief time using screen time (less than 2 minutes) and this is a rare occurrence during the observation, mark the item NA (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 3.2, 5.2: The term TV/video represents a passive use of screen time with no active involvement (“the couch potato”). This use is limited to 10 minutes during the observation. The more active use of screen time, such as active dancing or singing with a video, having conversations about photos on the tablet or making choices on a computer game are the “other electronic media,” and their use is limited to 15 minutes during the observation. The two separate types can be combined for a total of 25 minutes screen time during an observation, but neither can exceed its time limit (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 3.3: If electronic media is used with children for less than 5 minutes, and all children are interested and engaged, this indicator can be scored Yes, even though there may not be an alternate activity accessible. For example, if children all enjoy dancing for a few minutes to a program shown on a smart board, and no alternative is accessible, score Yes. However, this should not occur more than once during the observation or for longer periods of time (ERSI, 2024).

ITEM 28:

If classrooms are combined during gross motor times, consider the experiences of all children and the supervision of all staff. If scoring this item when space is being shared with other groups, consider all staff and all children of about the same ages as those being observed. (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 3.3, 5.3: To give credit for these indicators, some outdoor gross motor play must be observed, weather permitting. There is no specific time requirement for outdoor gross motor play, but it must be enough time to be a satisfying experience for the children (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 7.2: To give credit, at least one example must be observed (ERSI, 2024).

ITEM 29:

Indicator 5.1: To give credit there must be many materials/activities accessible for an hour of the observation and most must be open-ended (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 5.1, 5.2: Materials/activities may be indoors and outdoors.

Indicator 5.2, 7.2: “Staff sometimes circulate” means that staff do not remain in one or two places throughout free play. Instead, they move about occasionally to interact and teach children playing in different areas. However, they do not need to frequently move about the room, as would be required to provide much individualized teaching during free play. A few children may not receive any interaction. For 7.2, no children should be ignored while in indoor free play, and many should be interacted with in outdoor free play (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 5.3: “Most” means almost all observed staff-directed activities, with only minor problems that do not affect most of the group. When scoring, consider all staff-directed times, including group times, transitions, and routines, such as meals or toileting (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 7.1, 7.2: To give credit for these indicators, at least one hour of free play must be observed (ERSI, 2024).

ITEM 30:

Indicator 1.4, 3.1: If activities with whole group are observed for at least 2 ½ hours of the 3-hour observation, score 1.4 Yes. In addition, 3.1 may be scored Yes, even if 1.4 was scored Yes (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 3.3: Although staff might appear to be neutral in their interactions, and sometimes mildly negative with children, as they attempt to manage out-of-bounds behavior, to score Yes, they must show interest in children's activities, get along well with children, usually appear relaxed. If staff frequently appear irritable, disinterested or detached, or show extreme negative behavior with any child, score 3.3 No (ERSI, 2024).

ITEM 31:

Indicator 1.1: Most of the time" means for at least 2 ½ hours of the 3-hour observation (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 5.1: If free play time is limited to less than an hour during a 3-hour observation, do not give credit (ERSI, 2024). Peer interaction may occur outside of free play; however, times when children do not select the peers they interact with (e.g., times with assigned seating, groups, or line order) are not considered (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 7.1: Observe two examples to give credit (ERSI, 2024).

ITEM 32:

Indicator 3.2: Usually means that staff maintain the control required to keep children from hurting themselves, one another or being destructive most of the time, with only a few exceptions during the observation. If there are constant minor problem behaviors, such as teasing, taking toys, not listening to staff, or running in the room, in which children do not really become upset or hurt, or even a few major problems that are not topped, either caused by one or more children, score this indicator No (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 7.1: To score Yes, a total of two examples must be observed: one calling attention to a negative interaction and one calling attention to a positive. If there are no negative effects of children's actions observed, two explanations of positive effects are required to give credit (ERSI, 2024).

ITEM 33:

Indicator 3.1: To score this indicator Yes, no heavily negative staff-child interaction can be observed, or only one or two mildly negative interactions, during any transition. Even if children misbehave, the problem is generally handled in a positive manner. Score No when any obviously negative interaction (discounting one or two mildly negative interactions) is observed during any transition (ERSI, 2024).

Indicator 5.2: To score "Yes" there can be no long delays observed, due to staff not being prepared, that cause children to wait for long periods (ERSI, 2024).

ITEM 34:

Indicator 5.1: At least 20 minutes of outdoor free play (weather permitting) must be observed as part of the total 1 hour of free play required for this indicator (ERSI, 2024).

ITEM 35:

Indicator 1.2, 3.2: Score 1.2 Yes only when there are extreme problems observed with the way in which group times are carried out, so that most children cannot become or remain engaged throughout the activity. Score 3.2 No when problems, such as crowding, trouble seeing the book, or difficulty listening to peers cause many children to lose engagement for extended periods of time. Small problems with these issues that do not significantly affect children's engagement or enjoyment of the activity should not cause this indicator to be scored No (ERSI, 2024).

References:

ECERS-3 Additional Notes for Clarification found on the Environment Rating Scales Institute website (www.ersi.info/)

Harms, T., Clifford, R.M, & Cryer, D. (2015). Early childhood environment rating scale. (Third edition). New York, NY. Teachers College Press.