Thinking More about Language and Literacy

ECERS-3

Purpose: This document addresses many of the requirements found in the Language and Literacy subscale. The focus is primarily on indicators at the 3, 5, and 7 level. It is important to review each item entirely to ensure that no indicator at the 1 or "inadequate" level applies. Answering the questions and referring to the ECERS-3 will build familiarity with requirements, while reflecting on current practices and situations.

Preparation: Refer to the ECERS-3 (spiral binding at the top, published in 2015) when completing the 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.

The items in this subscale consider many aspects related to promoting children's literacy and use of language. Using varied and new vocabulary, encouraging children to talk with questions and conversations, as well as using books and other printed materials in the classroom, all work to expand children's language skills. Attention is given to the ways adults introduce new words and ideas, engage children in wide-ranging conversations, read and discuss books formally and informally, promote children's independent use of books and awareness of printed materials, and encourage children to write when appropriate.

Tips:
- If you are confused about a question, look at the Item in the ECERS-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 literacy materials are present as the environment changes over time, and that positive interactions promoting children's language, communication skills, and literacy are a focus 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.

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

Worksheet completed by:_____

Hint: When answering questions, consider what happens during both the 3-hour observation period and throughout the day. More information about the **observation period** (defined on p. 7 of the ECERS-3) can be found in the "Accessibility and time requirements" section of the Thinking More about Learning Activities worksheet.

Item 12 Helping children expand vocabulary (p. 36-37)

For this item, answer questions based on teachers' language and how it exposes children to new words during the 3-hour observation period and throughout the day.

During play, whole-group activities, and routines, do staff (check all that apply):

- ☐ Name people, places, things, and actions as the children experience them?
- ☐ Explain the meaning of words to children?
- ☐ Make use of materials, display, and activities to introduce words?
- ☐ Vary language to use a wide range of words?

Describe two recent examples of explaining the meaning of a word that was unfamiliar to a child:_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

If children who speak multiple languages or children with disabilities are enrolled, is language adjusted to meet their needs (e.g., home language used in addition to English, sign language, picture board, visuals, or communication device used, etc.)? **Y / N / NA**

Are children exposed to new words when new themes or topics are introduced? **Y / N** If **yes**, describe a recent example, including the new vocabulary introduced: _____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Do teachers expand on the meaning of words children use? **Y / N** If **yes**, give two recent examples:
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Item 13 Encouraging children to use language (p. 38-39)

For this item, answer the questions based on teachers' language and how it engages a child or small group of children to communicate during the 3-hour observation period and throughout the day.

During free play and routines, do teachers regularly respond to children's talk in the following ways (check all that apply):

☐ Give a positive, encouraging response
☐ Encourage them to talk more
☐ Ask questions that children want to answer
☐ Engage in back-and-forth conversations

Describe social conversations adults have with children during play times (indoors and outdoors):

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Describe social conversations adults have with children during routines:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Describe how social communications between children is encouraged on a daily basis: _____
_____
_____
_____

List two recent examples of questions that require children to give longer or more complex answers:_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Do some conversations include non-school topics, such as home/family life, activities outside of school?
Y / N   If **yes**, describe a recent example: _____
_____
_____
_____

Item 14 Staff use of books with children (p. 40-41)

Do teachers read books <u>informally </u>(not to a large group) at least twice during the 3-hour observation period and at other times throughout the day? **Y / N**

Describe strategies to make sure book times encourage children to participate (e.g., listen, answer questions, engage in discussion): _____
_____

_____
_____
_____

During times books are used with children:

Are they engaged and interested? **Y / N**

Teachers show interest and enjoyment? **Y / N**

Beyond reading, discussions occur? **Y / N**

Some of the books relate to current themes or activities? **Y / N**

Are books chosen to help support children's interests? **Y / N** If **yes**, give a recent example of this:_____
_____
_____

Are books ever used to answer questions or provide more information for children? **Y / N** If **yes**, give a recent example of this:_____
_____

Item 15 Encouraging children's use of books (p. 42-43)

Hint: Only consider books that in good repair and that are appropriate for children (e.g., no content that shows conflict or violence, or gives negative social messages).

The classroom includes _____ books.

Accessible books include the following topics (circle all that apply):

people   feelings   nature/science   math   cultures   different races

jobs/work   health/self-help skills   sports/hobbies   different abilities   other topics

Do children frequently use books independently during free play times? **Y / N** If **yes**, how do staff respond when they do? _____
_____

If **no**, are there ways to encourage children's independent use of books? List some ideas, if needed:
_____
_____
_____

Children can use books during these times during the observation period <u>and</u> throughout the day: **Hints**: See the definition of "Accessible" on ECERS-3 page 10. There is also more information about this concept and the 3-hour observation period in the Thinking More about Learning Activities worksheet:_____
_____
_____

Total time books are accessible during the 3-hour observation period:_____

Consider how the book area is set up. Does it include:

A protected soft space for children to use while reading? **Y / N**

Books organized so they are easily accessible? **Y / N**

Books that relate to current activities and themes? **Y / N**

Book storage that creates visibility for covers? **Y / N**

Is this area an interest center? **Hint**: See the Notes for Clarification on p. 42 and the requirements in indicator 5.3 on p. 43. **Y / N**

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Item 16 Becoming familiar with print (p. 44-45)

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This item considers the classroom display, staff actions to create print during the observation, and printed instructions used during activities. **Hint:** Only consider the print that is easy for children to see.

Do displayed items in the classroom include print combined with pictures? **Y / N**

Does most of the print displayed for children include corresponding pictures? **Y / N**

Are all the children's names included in display? **Y / N**

List recent examples when teachers wrote down what a child said or older children were encouraged to write: _____
_____
_____

Consider the ways print is used during the day, in play, routines, and group times:

When reading print to children, do teachers also point to the written words and help children learn sounds, letter, and words? **Y / N**   Does this occur frequently throughout the day, including during the 3-hour observation period? **Y / N**

Are print or picture instructions used during multi-step activities? Describe recent examples:

_____
_____
_____
_____

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 language and literacy:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

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 ECERS-3 indicators are covered in this worksheet, so review the ECERS-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 ECERS-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 ECERS-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., Clifford, R., & Cryer, D. (2015). Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale. (Third Edition). New York, NY. Teachers College Press.

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