

**Clarification on ECERS-R:  
Recommendations for Technical Assistance Providers**

**Question 1:** What is the difference between active, buffer, and quiet centers?

- Art, computer, books and writing are designated as quiet centers
- Dramatic play, blocks and music are active centers
- Fine motor, math, and science are considered buffer centers

**Question 2:** For which areas of ECERS-R are programs scoring low, and therefore need the most support?

- #17 Using language to develop reasoning skills
- #18 Informal use of language
- #30 General supervision of children
- Use of television, video, and computers

**Question 3:** What are the requirements for language and reasoning activity subscale and items that can be used by coaches and trainers to support quality improvement and higher future ratings?

- The ECERS-R manual provides specific descriptors for each subscale. A handout is provided to illustrate the unique requirements for each rating.
- The area of language and reasoning is a national and state priority. The handout provides additional resources that can be used to illustrate high-quality interactions to increase scores in these dimensions.

**Question 4:** What approaches can be used to meet the requirements for “ample” space in a classroom, especially for classrooms with limited space?

- For “ample” space, if two areas are crowded, a 5 cannot be achieved.
- To achieve “ample” space, furnishings do not limit movement.
- See suggestions below for dual use of space and traffic flow.

**Question 5:** How can programs with smaller classrooms achieve all of the requirements for space and furnishings while at the same time having “ample” space for each and every area (e.g., cozy area, privacy area, blocks, dramatic play, nature/science, math, art area with many and varied materials, music area, sand and water daily, and quiet and active areas far enough apart)?

- For item #1 5.1, there cannot be more than one crowded play area. Crowding can be controlled through classroom management (ex. Only 2 children allowed in a small dramatic play area at a time instead of 4).
- *All about the ECERS-R* states that there should be “plenty of space for children to use the materials as well as for the materials and furniture needed in almost all of the activity areas.” – p7.
- “Staff should be able to move around freely and assist the children during meals and snacks while children are seated at the tables” – p8.
- Most centers should be able to be open and have ample space to receive credit for this item. In addition, the table areas cannot be crowded.

- If there is not adequate space to use the dramatic play props in the dramatic play center, credit cannot be given for 5.4.
- To utilize available space, the following may be helpful:
  - Use table tops for standing/sitting puzzle and construction play.
  - Vary the traffic pattern, such as create a circular pattern where children can walk around a grouped set of shelves or other furniture to push buggies, take a walk to a market, or march through a forest, etc. (i.e., during dramatic or vehicle play).
  - Move back shelving units and organize teacher materials such that these do not take up space that can be utilized for child play.
  - In addition to a sand/water table, individual tubs placed on a low table can allow for more children to participate in sand, water, or sensory play activities.
  - Light tables and collections can be portable, so that low tables and floor areas are maximized, and therefore children can spread out through the classroom rather than congregate in one area.
  - Unused space may be available for activity (e.g., affix paper to a wall, move easels for painting, or plan a daily art project at a low table.)
- It is important to note that some classrooms, no matter how designed, may not be “ample” for 20 children due to the lack of square footage in the classroom.

**Question 6:** For area #22 blocks, what is needed for ample space?

- In determining ample block space, the size of the blocks and accessories are a primary determining factor.
- Children must be able to build three independent structures in the space.
- If large hollow wooden blocks or cardboard brick blocks are used, more space is required.
- For any type of blocks, there needs to be enough blocks for three children to build their own sizable structures at the same time.

**Question 7:** For books and pictures #15, what does “appropriate books” mean?

- Item #15, indicator 5.4: If there are any books accessible to children that show violence in a graphic or frightening way, or that glorify violence, then credit cannot be given for this indicator.
- The Grouchy Ladybug is a predictable pattern text with the line, “Wanna fight?” on each page, as the ladybug tries to engage various other insects to fight (e.g., yellow jacket, praying mantis, beetle, etc.). For this reason, it does meet the criteria for “appropriate books.”
- Fairy tales are not “appropriate” if they contain violence or material that may be frightening to children. This criteria remains true regardless of cultural representations of character, plot or setting of a book.
- Please note: Death and dying are not appropriate topics for preschool children.

**Question 8:** Why has the personal care section become non-applicable? If personal care routines were taken out, why aren't books taken out, as well?

- Books are necessary to support language and literacy development in children.
- In school-based settings and in some state QRIS programs, personal care has been removed. It is not possible for most school-based settings to meet these benchmarks when sinks and bathrooms are not located in a classroom.
- In center-based settings, general licensing standards need to be met and sinks are generally present in the classroom.
- While health, safety, and hand washing are always a priority, this particular section of ECERS-R is no longer used as part of our rating system.

**Question 9:** How do assessors focus on areas #16-18 (i.e., encouraging children to communicate, using language to develop reasoning skills, and informal use of language) while at the same time evaluating materials? If an assessor marks "instances not observed," how do teachers know that something wasn't missed?

- Assessors are trained to be objective in observation and take into account both materials and interactions. At times, assessors may be writing notes about observations, and at other times, they may be evaluating materials.
- Assessors follow very specific evaluation criteria and must record the number of times language interactions occur with documented examples.
- Language samples are taken many times during the observation. Some indicators require that conversations are frequent and throughout the day. While in-depth back-and-forth conversations may happen at times, they often are not sustained throughout an observation.
- Since teachers are busy interacting with children, they may not notice when an assessor is focusing on one area of the classroom or another. *Please note that assessors may be documenting language even when not looking directly at a teacher.*

**Question 10:** In general, how do the monitors (assessors) have adequate time during a morning session to evaluate all of the items for ECERS and the Compliance Checklist?

- Assessors complete the ECERS-R during the morning classroom session, next conduct an interview with the teacher (approximately 30 minutes), and then spend the afternoon collecting Compliance Checklist data.
- On average, the assessor is at the site 30 minutes before a class starts until about 2:30-3:30 PM.

**Question 11:** What are some solutions other programs are using when the bathroom is not in the classroom to avoid long lines as children are waiting to use their turn, or to avoid children leaving the classroom on their own?

- Co-teacher may take groups of two to four children away from larger group so that *most* children continue to engage in learning activity.
- Co-teacher may take children in small groups and bring along items for children, such as drawing materials or books.
- In small "waiting" groups, teacher may engage children in active conversation, songs, chants, or finger-play/games.

- It is important to note that children must be actively engaged in these activities. Often it is observed that teachers sing *at* the children, yet children are not engaged/interested, and are involved in a long, inactive wait time.

**Question 12:** What about child-related displays and the use of worksheets? Is a science/math recording tool considered a worksheet?

- A science-math recording tool is not a worksheet when it is a means of collecting or tallying data for an interactive hands-on activity.
- A sorting sheet (where children place real objects in one space or another) is not a worksheet when it is used as a grid to organize or categorize materials/objects.
- Child related displays must be current and relate to themes that have been explored/studied within the last month, and must be displayed at the child's eye level.

**Question 13:** When observing whole-group time it is often stated that "children did not remain interested or involved." What kinds of activities are appropriate and what can be addressed?

- Often the length of time that teachers expect children to focus/give attention is inappropriate, even when activities are age-appropriate.
- We look for children to be actively engaged in reciprocal conversations and to participate in hands-on or interactive activities during group times.
- We look for teachers who connect book reading and conversation to children's real-life experiences so that the content is relevant to children's daily lives and interests, thus engaging participation.
- We encourage teachers to shift between focused/quiet and active times so that children can remain engaged. When teachers notice that several children are wiggling or unfocused, this should be taken as a sign to shift to active movement or provide a change of pace. Teacher responsiveness to children's needs, interests, and involvement level is the key.

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