

ECERS-R Language Tips
ISBE Alignment Meeting August 26, 2016

ITEM 17: Using language to develop reasoning skills

Indicator 3.1 Must see at least two instances to score a yes.

Think about children listening.

During group time, you hear, “Okay friends, let’s talk about our day. First, we’ll have group time, then we’ll have free play.”

At the snack table you hear the teacher say, “I must be careful, if I pour too much milk, then it will spill over.”

During the walk from the classroom to the library you hear the teacher say, “My dog is bigger than my cat.”

During free play time you hear the teacher say, “There’s five minutes until clean up time.”

During group time, the teacher introduces concepts such as letters, numbers, shapes, or colors.

Indicator 3.2 Must see at least two instance to score yes.

For this indicator, children need **concrete experiences** or objects (things they can actually see and experience).

Think about children doing.

During free play, you see the teacher and child playing with counting bears. You hear the teacher say, “How many do we have here? Let’s count them together.” The teacher counts 1-5 aloud while pointing to each bear.

During floor puzzle play, the teacher says, “See this piece? It is smooth on this side. It goes on the very edge.”

At the sensory table there are two bins: one with warm water; one with ice water.

T: “How do your hands feel?”

C: “Warm.”

T: “Now try this one...how do they feel now?”

C: “Cold.”

T: “Oh, so this bin is warm and this bin is cold. The temperatures are different, aren’t they? The temperatures are not the same.”

During free play, the teacher helps a child match colors and numbers with cards.

During block play, the teacher points out and names the different shapes of unit blocks.

Indicator 5.1 Must see at least one instance to score yes.

This indicator requires that children play with **materials that stimulate reasoning** and the teacher explains the concept.

Look for materials specifically designed for stimulating reasoning. Listen for teachers interacting with children while using these materials.

During free play, the teacher and a small group of children are playing cards. You hear the teacher say, “Let’s see, is that the same number as that? No, okay. Is it a higher number or smaller number?”

Smaller, so his card is higher than yours, right? So he wins that hand, give the cards to him. Now it's your turn. "

During free play, a teacher and children play with a balance scale and small rocks. The teacher says, "Oh, look how that side goes up and this side goes down? Hmm, let's put more in this side...it's going down now. This side is heavier, so it goes down. This side is lighter, so it goes up."

During free play, children play with Unifix cubes and trays.

T: "Which stack has more?"

C: points

T: "This one? Let's count. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Let's count this stack. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Which has more?"

C: points

T: "Yes, eight is more than five. See how this is taller than this? This one has more."

Indicator 5.2 Must see at least two instances to score yes.

Look for materials specifically designed for stimulating reasoning. **Listen** for teachers asking children to explain their reasoning with words such as, how, why, tell me...

During free play, children are seen playing with three-colored and three-sized counting bears.

T: "I see you have three groups of bears. Why did you group them this way?"

C: "These are all red, these are all blue and these are all yellow."

T: "Oh, so you grouped them by color. Is there another way you can group them? Not by color, but a different way?"

C: "No, this is the only way."

T: "Well, what if you look at the size of the bears...see small, medium and large. Can you see any others this size? Let's put the small here."

C: "But the colors are all different..."

T: "That's true, we can have all small bears in this group, but they are different colors. Good noticing!"

During free play, you see children playing with large dominoes.

T: "Why have you put this one next to this one?"

C: "Because this is five and this is five. They match."

T: "Can I put this one here?"

C: "No."

T: "No? Why not?"

C: "This is four. See...1, 2, 3, 4. It doesn't match. You need five."

ITEM 18: Informal use of language

Indicator 5.3 Must see at least two instances to score a yes.

Listen for the teacher to expand on a **child's idea** and add to the child's understanding about the topic.

The following are examples of expansion:

C: "Fish have spikes."

T – "They have fins, which are sharp like spikes. The fins help them swim."

C – “Sniffer (playing with a sifter).”

T – “This is called a sifter; see there are holes in the bottom where the sand comes out. The wet sand sticks, but the dry sand goes through the sifter.”

T: “What kind of animals did you see?”

C: “I saw a zebra. I like zebras.”

T: “Oh, I like zebras, too. They have black and white stripes. They live on the savanna with other types of animals like elephants, giraffes, and rhinos.”

C: “I hit the ball with the stick.”

T: “This stick is called a golf club. When you use the club to hit the ball into the cup on the first try, it is called a ‘hole-in-one.’”

Explanation of observational rating criteria

ECERS-R Benchmark 17: Using language to develop reasoning skills

- To be rated at a 1, teachers are not observed talking with children about logical relationships, encouraging or responding to children’s questions. When ideas/concepts are introduced, they tend to be rote and not linked to children’s real-life daily experiences, or they may be too simple or overly complex (e.g., above children’s level).
- To be rated at a 3, language is used sometimes to talk about what is happening next or to point out differences in materials. Some concepts are introduced that show how things work or explain what is happening. To be rated at a 3, comments about logical relationships must be *observed twice*.
- To be rated at a 5, logical relationship thinking is actively stimulated, meaning that teachers provide materials for sequencing, comparing, classifying, matching, support one-to-one correspondence, building understanding of spatial relationships or cause and effect, and children are encouraged to talk about why and how these concepts are at work. At 5.1 this must be *observed once*. At 5.2 this must be *observed twice*.
- To be rated a 7, active reasoning conversations can be observed *throughout the day*, using events and experiences as a basis for deeper conversations about concepts and ideas. Throughout daily routines and activities this level of intentional focus is observed through prepared materials and active conversations. For 7.2, teachers follow children’s interests, questions, and support problem solving, such as talking about how many spoons are needed at a table. At 7.1 *at least two instances* must be observed *outside of play and the use of play materials*, such as at a meal or in a learning activity. For 7.2, at least two instances must be observed where teachers actively respond to children’s interests and questions or promote problem solving through intentional conversation that is related to learning.

ECERS-R Benchmark 18: Informal use of language

For this construct, the word “informal” does not mean relaxed or casual. It means intentional, rich language conversations that happen outside of – in addition to within - structured activities. In many classrooms across the country, much of language interaction is focused on giving instructions, guiding behavior, and telling children what will happen next. A critical priority is to assist teachers in using interaction skills that boost children’s language development across daily activities, as language is the means through which other skills depend, such as learning, behavior, and self-regulation. A second priority is to help teachers become intentional in their use of rich language use, explanations, questions, and conversation throughout the day.

- To receive a 1, teachers only talk with children to control behavior and manage routines. They rarely respond to children’s talk. Children’s talk is discouraged much of the day.
- To receive a 3, some conversation is used that results in a yes/no answer or only short answers are given. Children are allowed to talk throughout the day. In order to be given credit for conversation, there must be at least some mutual back-and-forth talking and responding. This may involve, gestures, sign language, or communication devices.
- To receive a 5, there are many conversations throughout free-play and routines. However, language is primarily used to exchange information with children and for social interaction. Staff do add information to expand on ideas presented by children. Communication among children is present, including those with disabilities. *To receive credit, at least two instances of expansion must be observed. About 75% of conversation observed is used for information and social discussion.*
- To receive a 7: Individual conversations are present with most children. Children are asked questions to encourage them to give longer and more complex answers. (Ex. Young child is asked “what or where” questions; older child is asked “why and how” questions.) *To receive credit, several instances must be observed.*

NOTES: