

September 2020



The Environment Rating Scales: ITERS and ECERS

Welcome to the fourth installment of What I Need to Know About the Environment Rating Scales! In this edition we will be looking at the largest of the areas, Activities. There are ten items in this subscale, in both the ITERS and ECERS. Since there are so many, we will break them down in to more manageable sections. This section can be overwhelming, but just like when you eat an elephant, just take one bite at a time. One of the important things to remember is the term, **Much of the Day** in ITERS and in ECERS, **Substantial Portion of the Day or SPOD**. I will talk about these within each Scale. I have attached several videos.

The first one is: <https://ncrlap.org/Resources/Viewer/?iFileID=217333&iAction=1>

To start with, let's look at the first five items the of the ITERS-R:

Much of the day: To get credit for *much of the day*, it is important to be sure that any child awake and able to play has free choice as much as possible in using all accessible materials during the observation. *Much of the day impacts 8 items* on the ITERS-R. Each item is considered separately where the requirement appears.

If children are prevented from using materials for long periods of time such as being in bouncy seats, exersaucers or otherwise away from materials, then credit cannot be given for *much of the day*. This also applies if children are kept waiting for long periods of time while transitioning to or during daily routines like toileting/ diapering or feeding times.

The ITERS-R states that children must have at least 1 hour of active physical play daily. If teachers decide to keep children outside beyond this one hour on perhaps a day with exceptionally nice weather, it is important to bring additional materials outside to ensure children access to a variety of materials. This can help to support children's engagement as well as making sure children have enough time with a variety of materials throughout the day. It is important for the teachers to make sure all children are engaged during group times. When children have to stay in groups in which they aren't engaged, such as reading a book where the kids have to sit and listen, then it will begin counting time away from *much of the day* if these children are not allowed to leave the group-time to play or do an activity more interesting to them. If children are not mobile or if they are unable to reach toys or materials, teachers need to bring these toys and materials to the children to use, in order to give the kids an opportunity to engage in a variety of learning activities.

<https://ncrlap.org/Resources/Viewer/?iFileID=317035&iAction=1>

<https://ncrlap.org/Resources/Viewer/?iFileID=217333&iAction=1>

15. Fine Motor

Infants and toddlers need a variety of age-appropriate toys and materials that they can manipulate and play with. Materials should be clean, in good repair, organized for play (and reorganized, after they get dumped over and over again, but remember fill and dump is also a skill), and stimulate children at different levels. These activities strengthen fine motor (hands and fingers) while encouraging and reinforcing skill development that contributes to school readiness. A child needs grip strength to hold a pencil. They need hand eye coordination to write. These are skills that are begun as infants and worked on the rest of childhood.

16. Active Physical Play

Young children need lots of opportunities to practice their gross (large) motor skills, (arms, legs, trunk). Opportunities for active physical play should be available both indoors, in an open space and outdoors. Age-appropriate equipment and materials should present interesting and challenging options and should be supervised by attentive and involved teachers.

<https://ncrlap.org/Resources/Viewer/?iFileID=504411&iAction=1>

17. Art

Young children benefit from exposure to art activities that are open-ended and process oriented. (Process before product, or, the skill is more important than the results) Children's art should be respected and appreciated as individual creative expression. Safe materials and opportunities to create art projects at a beginning level should be available as children are developmentally ready for them.

18. Music and Movement

Music and movement are valuable means of learning and expression. There should be enough musical instruments for every child, but no less than 10 instruments available for much of the day. Children's educational and developmental needs are better met when recorded music is used purposefully and for limited times 20 min, unless children are actively engaged or at nap time. Teachers should sing often and songs, finger plays and dances make great transition activities.

19. Blocks

Block play, with a variety of blocks and accessories, such as people, animals, and containers so kids can fill and dump. This gives young children the opportunity to explore spatial, mathematical, and role-play concepts. Block play requires enough space in a protected area and time to expand on concepts and ideas. Teachers should do simple block play with the kids.

Next let's look at the first four of the ECERS-R.

Many of the ECERS items requires access to learning materials for a substantial portion of the day. What that means is a 1/3 of your program day, children need to be actively engaged and allowed to use the activity areas and learning materials. This time does not have to be all at one time but can be broken up throughout the day. However, you cannot count clean up time or any other time children are not able to have freeplay with the materials.

<https://ncrlap.org/Resources/Viewer/?iFileID=516666&iAction=1>

<https://ncrlap.org/Resources/Viewer/?iFileID=317027&iAction=1>

19. Fine Motor

Children need a lot of age appropriate and developmentally appropriate materials that they can manipulate with their hands and play with at will. They should have small building materials (such as Lincoln logs, bristle blocks and Legos of age appropriate sizes), art materials, manipulatives (such as stringing beads, lacing cards, Potato Heads, pegs and peg board) and puzzles. These activities strengthen fine/small motor (hands and fingers) control while promoting skill development that contributes to academic readiness. To be able to write, fine motor, and hand eye coordination must be developed, as well as cause and effect and spatial skills.

20. Art

Young children need exposure to child-initiated art activities that are open-ended and process oriented. Children's art should be respected and appreciated as individual, creative expression. Materials and opportunities to create art projects at a beginning and more advanced level should be available as children are developmentally ready for them. 3D materials should be made available. Most if not all, art activities should be free art and not following an example, (teacher directed).

21. Music/Movement

Music and movement are valuable means of learning. Music should be available as both free choice and teacher directed daily. Creativity should be encouraged, and various types of music should be used. Movement/ dance activities should be done at least weekly. There should be musical instruments, props like scarves or ribbons, and a music center with a tape or cd player as well as tapes or CDs for use by the children.

22. Blocks

Block play, with a variety of blocks and accessories, allows children the opportunity to explore spatial, mathematical, and role-play possibilities. Powerful block play requires sufficient space in a protected area and time to expand on concepts and ideas. The NC Additional Notes from the NCRLAP website page 6 state:

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 comparably sized and/or shaped blocks made from various materials are also considered here. At least 80 are needed for one structure.

For sets of blocks that are larger than unit blocks, at least 40 are required. This can include any type 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 type or different types of blocks are provided.

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.

NC Additional Notes. Retrieved August 24, 2020, from:

https://ncrlap.org/Resources/Pages/NC_AdditionalNotes/

<https://ncrlap.org/Resources/Viewer/?iFileID=431231&iAction=1>