

## ECERS-3: Areas for Focus

### GENERAL DEFINITIONS

Review the definition of “accessibility.” If fine motor materials are placed on tables and used for arrival time and then are put away, these are not considered accessible for a later play time. Sometimes, materials are stored on high shelves or in cabinets and are not available to children. They must have continuing access to materials that can be retrieved easily. Once put away (e.g., stored), materials do not count as accessible.

### ITEM #1 INDOOR SPACE

See Indicator 5.1. Classrooms need to have ample space in the classroom for mealtimes, group times, and free play. Staff need to evaluate how spaces are being used when children *are present* in the classroom and make adjustments. It is not enough for coaches to help staff plan play areas without children present. Indicator 5.3 requires that classroom staff have direct control over the ventilation in the classroom (page 12, All About the ECERS-3 book).

### ITEM #2 FURNITURE FOR CARE, PLAY AND LEARNING

Cubbies need to provide storage for children's possessions without touching, ample space for play, and eating, working, and playing without crowding. Staff need to evaluate storage, play, work, and routine spaces for crowding when children are present. Indicator 5.1 also required that each child has an individual cubby, large enough to store all possessions without touching.

### ITEM #3 ROOM ARRANGEMENT FOR PLAY AND LEARNING

Each classroom should have at least five interest centers, including a cozy area. Review the ECERS-3 Notes for Clarification on page 18 with staff to find the requirements of an interest center. An interest center is a clearly defined play area for a particular kind of play. More active areas, such as dramatic play and blocks, need larger areas to ensure that there is enough space to accommodate the type of play and the number of children that want to participate. Indicator 7.3, like the previous ones, requires observation of each area when children are present.

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## ITEM #5 CHILD-RELATED DISPLAY

Each classroom should have displays that are easily identified by themes. Staff need support weaving the theme of study into many areas of the classroom display. This can include the individualized artwork posted by children, word walls with theme related words and pictures (this will also meet the requirement of 16, 7.1), posters, graphs relating to the theme, or charting children's responses to theme related questions.

For Indicator 5.3, staff should have a deeper understanding of individualized artwork and being sure that it represents at least 1/3 of the classroom display.

For Indicator 5.4, teachers must talk about the display materials at least two different times during the observation. At this level, the talk needs to take place during free play or routines (not group times or transitions) about displays posted in the classroom.

For Indicator 7.2, staff must go beyond pointing and asking a question about a display; they must engage in a conversation, where both teacher and children are participating with at least two exchanges from both the teacher and child.

For Indicator 7.3, staff must be intentional about reading and pointing to print in display, they must point from left to right while reading the displayed print. Holding flashcards of letters, or only pointing out letters, is not considered here.

## ITEM #6 SPACE FOR GROSS MOTOR PLAY

Teachers should pay particular attention to the space, time, hazards, and accessibility, including Items 5.1 – 5.4. For Indicator 5.1, if weather does not permit gross motor play outdoors, a gym or gross-motor area must be available for gross motor play during the observation.

## ITEM #7 GROSS MOTOR EQUIPMENT

Pay particular attention to the type of equipment and its accessibility to the children.

For Indicator 3.3, equipment must stimulate at least 7 different skills (see notes on page 26 of ECERS-3).

For Indicator 5.1, there must be enough stationary and portable equipment to interest all the children and keep them active and involved.

For Indicator 5.2, almost all of the equipment must be appropriate for the age and ability of the children. See the list of this equipment on page 26.

For Indicator 5.3, equipment must be available for at least 30 minutes during the observation. For programs less than 3 hours, this minimum limit is 20 minutes. Remember that as soon as staff ask children to line up, or if they limit some children from playing, this impacts the total time of accessibility.

For Indicator 5.4, adaptations or special equipment must be provided for children with disabilities in the group who require them.

## ITEM #12 HELPING CHILDREN EXPAND VOCABULARY

Language is an important area that is needed for communication, self-regulation, and additional content learning. Staff should aim for the highest level of practice and “increase understanding of what children already know, expand their knowledge base, and increase vocabulary” (see page 36 of ECERS-3, Notes for Clarification Indicator 7.2) and “carry the child’s ideas further.”

- **Using rich descriptive language.** Staff must frequently use descriptive language as part of their normal dialog with children. Descriptive words add more layers to the language they are currently using. See Indicator 5.1.
- **Explaining the meaning of unfamiliar words:** See Indicator 5.2. Staff answer children’s questions about what a word means or explains the meaning of an unfamiliar word. See page 151 of the All About the ECERS-3 book for examples.
- **Adding/introducing/explaining new words and ideas.** See Indicators 7.1 – 7.2. Example: “Kendrick, I heard you say you were wearing shoes. Did you know the shoes you are wearing are called sneakers?”
- **Adding on information to what children are interested in.** See Indicator 7.3. Example: If a child is talking about bees, ask, “Did you know that the bee’s buzz is the sound made by their wings? Bees communicate with one another by dancing. One bee has to fly about 90,000 miles – three times around the world – to make one pound of honey. Let’s look at a book about bees to learn more facts.”

## ITEM #13 ENCOURAGING CHILDREN TO USE LANGUAGE

See Indicator 5.4, helping children to communicate verbally with one another: Example: “Stephanie, use your words to let Mitchell know you would like to use the puzzle now. What can you say? Yes, those were nice words, good job.” “Tara, Nathan’s mommy had a new baby yesterday, so he’s a big brother now. You have a new baby at your house too. Can you tell Nathan how you help your mommy? Nathan, how do you think you’ll be a good helper, tell Tara.”

See Indicator 7.1, asking open ended questions: Example: “Why do you think the floor is so dirty? What do you think we could do so that the floor doesn’t get so dirty?”

## ITEM #16 BECOMING FAMILIAR WITH PRINT

Review Indicators 5.1 – 5.4 with staff. Staff must not just point to print or use it, but explain how and why they use it. Staff must specifically explain why and how the print is used. Staff must actively write what children say. These documents may be found in displays at the 5 level, but must be observed at the 7 level.

## ITEM #19 MUSIC AND MOVEMENT

For Indicators 3.1 or 5.1, when materials are present, there must be enough space for children to engage without materials blocked from accessibility. Staff should be observed encouraging dance and movement, and positively engage children in these activities (5.2 – 5.4). See page 239-240 in the All About the ECERS-3 book for examples of music/dance activities.

## ITEM #20 BLOCKS

Teachers should consider how children use and interact with materials. There must be enough space, unit blocks, and accessories from three categories accessible for three children to build sizable independent structures at the same time (see Indicator 5.1). There must be a special block area with enough floor space for building (see Indicator 5.3). Children should be able to build sizable, complex structures. Finally, this space should be available for a one-hour time period. Staff should engage in many conversations with children about their block play (see Indicators 1.2, 3.4, and 5.5).

## ITEM #22 NATURE/SCIENCE

Classrooms must have the minimum 15 required nature science materials as described in Indicator 5.1. It is important to remember that included in those 15 materials are least five nature/science books and at least one living thing that must be present in the nature/science center. Indicator 5.1 also requires that the science area is set up as an interest center. Staff must use and talk about the nature/science materials with children (see Indicator 5.2). Staff should discuss and model concern for the environment (Indicator 5.3).

## ITEM #23 MATH MATERIALS AND ACTIVITIES

Math activities are teacher-initiated and teacher-directed and are required at even the 1 and 3 levels. See level 7, which requires expansion of math activities and teaching related to math materials.

## ITEM #24 MATH IN DAILY EVENTS

To meet the good level, staff must *actively talk about* math learning as part of daily routines – not just in a teaching situation (see Indicator 5.1). Staff must engage children in conversations about math in non-math play areas (see Indicator 5.2).

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## ITEM #25 UNDERSTANDING WRITTEN NUMBERS

**Item #25 is an area of ECERS-3 where most classrooms do not meet even the minimal level.**

Indicators 1.1 and 3.1 require that some of the displays in the classroom show print numbers accompanied by pictures illustrating the quantities. Staff must ensure that at least two examples are displayed in the classroom and can be easily seeing by the children. This can be a poster with numbers and the appropriate number of fruit pictures next to each number for example. Teachers must use materials to help children understand math concepts. Notice that once materials are present (at Indicator 5.1), staff must show children how to use materials and talk about the meaning of printed numbers. This indicator is not covered by staff counting children or napkins. Instead, staff must help children make connections between *printed numbers* and their meaning.