

## ITERS-R: Areas for Focus

### GENERAL DEFINITIONS

Staff must understand the definition of “accessible.” Materials must not be stored in covered bins or in cabinets that are not available to children. Items like furniture cannot block materials so children cannot reach or use them. If children do not have continuing access to materials that can be retrieved easily by the children, materials are not accessible. Once put away (e.g., stored), materials do not count as accessible.

Staff must understand the term “Much of the day.” “Much of the day” means most of the time that any child may be awake and able to play. Sometimes, children are prevented from using materials for long periods because of long routines - when the children have to wait with nothing to do. Sometimes, they are kept in areas where access to materials is not possible. In these cases, credit cannot be given for “much of the day.” If children are ready to play, but are prevented from reaching and using materials for a total of 20 minutes during a three-hour observation, then “much of the day” credit cannot be given. It is important that teachers understand that the 20 minutes can be calculated as one 20-minute time period or may be calculated as a combination of smaller time periods that equal 20 minutes.

### ITEM #1 INDOOR SPACE

See Indicator 5.1. Classrooms must have ample space 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 possible to see if space is ample if children are not present. Ample space is determined when children are present – to see how children use the space. See page 11 in the ITERS-R spiral book. Children need ample space to reach materials and play without being disrupted by teachers or the activities of other children.

### ITEM #2 FURNITURE FOR ROUTINE CARE AND PLAY

For Indicators 3.1 and 5.1, there must be storage of 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*. If hooks are used to store children possessions, they should be well separated so possessions do not touch. Cubby spaces should be large enough to hold all possessions without touching.

Seating for young children should be appropriately sized. High chairs should provide a foot rest so children's feet are comfortable instead of dangling. Child-sized chairs should allow toddlers who are able

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to sit back with feet touching the floor. A child-sized table should allow toddler's knees to fit under the table while their elbows are comfortably resting above the table. The notes on page 13 of the ITERS-R spiral book state that children should be able to sit independently, without being "put into" the chair by an adult. Don't forget comfortable adult seating. It is required for Indicators 5.5 and 7.4.

### ITEM #3 PROVISION FOR RELAXATION AND COMFORT

Evaluate the cozy areas carefully to meet the criteria described in Indicator 5.2. The cozy area must be protected from active play. This not only means the location in the room (for example, in a sheltered corner), it also includes how staff supervise the area diligently to ensure that active children do not interfere with a child in the cozy area. Often other children enter the area to play loudly or to jump or run in the space. Teachers must redirect children who actively play in this area. In addition, for Indicator 5.1, be sure this area provides a substantial amount of softness. Many classrooms provide one or two soft things, but don't provide a substantial amount of softness. See page 14 in the ITERS-R spiral book for notes.

Here are some tips for teachers to provide a protected cozy area:

- Place the cozy area in a different part of the room from active play centers such as blocks and dramatic play.
- Keep the cozy area out of traffic areas and pathways so that other children and teachers cannot walk through it or disrupt the area.
- Protect the cozy area with a separate location or physical barrier, such as a cube or shelf. Show children how to use the cozy area by reading a book quietly, resting, or cuddling with a soft blanket.
- Provide careful supervision and support for the cozy area. For example, the teacher should redirect other children from the area and encourage appropriate quiet activities in the cozy area. ITERS-R at Indicator 5.2 specifies that when other children run through the cozy area while a child is relaxing, teachers must be observed stopping and redirecting the active play (Cryer, Harms, & Riley, 2004).

### ITEM #4 ROOM ARRANGEMENT

Review requirements for supervision (see Indicator 3.2 and 5.2). Children should not be out of view. For this reason, the room should be evaluated when children are present, to consider where and how they play. You must evaluate the teacher's ability to supervise when children are active and using all the spaces of the room. Sometimes, shifting a shelf or other sight barrier can make a difference.

Quiet and active play areas should be separated (see Indicator 5.3). Consider how children use the spaces and what might be adjusted to separate active and quiet play.

## ITEM #13 HELPING CHILDREN USE LANGUAGE

Indicator 5.2 requires sensitive and responsive talking with children in response to children's needs. Indicator 5.3 requires teachers to describe the actions they take and narrate the activities, events, emotions, and experiences of children. Back and forth talking should be a priority throughout the day. Examples include:

- Responding to a child's words, questions, or vocalizations.
- Naming foods children eat and describing how these taste or talking about the texture.
- Describing the steps of a diaper change as they are completed.
- Talking gently with a child waking up or going to sleep.
- Talking with children during play about specific toys and actions.
- Reading a story and relating the details to something in a child's life or experience.
- Pointing out items displayed on a wall or shelf.
- Describing the child's actions while playing.
- Asking questions and pointing out a child's artwork.
- Drawing attention to what the child and you see outside of a window.
- Adding on words when a child speaks. "Truck." "Yes. That's a red fire engine."

## ITEM #14 USING BOOKS

Classroom must have the required number of books for children to engage in reading with an adult, look at pictures, and explore books independently. Books should not be mixed up, but be sorted by themes. They should not be ripped and should be displayed in pleasing ways where children will want to explore them. Review to see that books are accessible and do not show violence or frightening content. ALL classrooms should have staff reading to children at every level, but reading books must be observed at the five and seven levels. Staff should be actively reading books with children throughout the day.

## ITEM #16 ACTIVE PHYSICAL PLAY

At Indicator 3.2, ALL children must be taken outdoors for active physical play at least three times a week, weather permitting (temperatures between 25-90 degrees). Children should be dressed properly and taken outdoors every day (see weather permitting definition on page 8 (spiral book). Indicator 5.5 requires that ALL equipment used with infants/toddlers is appropriate for their age and abilities. Examples of age appropriate equipment is found on page 37 (spiral book). ALL spaces used for active physical play are also considered here. Staff should make sure that all spaces used for active play, indoors or outdoors, have no major hazards, such as insufficient cushioning, entrapments, or inadequate fall zones.

## ITEM #17 ART

Indicators 1.2 and 3.2 require that ALL art materials used with children are non-toxic and safe and not within children's reach. Some examples of unsafe materials are: glitter, shaving cream, permanent markers, and anything children can choke on (marker caps, cotton balls, Styrofoam pieces, etc.). More

examples can be found on page 38 (spiral book) and on page 230 of the ALL About the ITERS-R book. Staff should read the labels to ensure all materials used with this young age are appropriate and safe. Access to materials should be based on children's abilities.

## ITEM #19 BLOCKS

For block play, programs must meet accessibility in terms of time for blocks and accessories (see Indicator 3.2 and 3.3). It is required that accessories for block play are stored with the blocks or are observed being used with the blocks. Programs must have enough space for block play that is out of a traffic area and that has a steady surface. Teachers must consider the number of children in the program, and evaluate space, materials, and time related to block play.

## ITEM #21 SAND AND WATER PLAY

A variety of toys needed at the good level (see Indicator 5.2). In addition, all classroom should provide sand and/or water play daily. Activities are required at Indicator 7.2.

Sand/water play at Indicator 3.2 must be supervised. Children must be closely supervised while playing in the water or sand table to prevent children from drinking the water from the water table or eating or throwing sand from the sand table.

## ITEM #22 NATURE/SCIENCE

At the good level, outdoor experiences must be provided (5.1), children must have daily experiences with plants and animals (5.2), and teachers must actively talk about science through everyday events (5.3). Teachers must introduce science ideas in books and talk about natural patterns in weather, caring for pets, and respecting nature (7.1). They can increase the number of natural collections and make these appealing to young children for Indicator 7.2.

## ITEM #23 USE OF TV, VIDEO, AND/OR COMPUTER

Classrooms must not use video for children under the age of two.

## ITEM #25 SUPERVISION OF PLAY AND LEARNING

This item relates to the earlier Item #4, Room arrangement. The way children use the room, the spaces, and the outdoor spaces impact supervision. Teachers must remain aware of the whole group while working with one or two children. This is required for Indicator 5.1. Staff should communicate verbally with each other to ensure all areas are supervised. This item requires an organized room, preparation of materials, and *full time focus* on children's needs.

## ITEM #28 DISCIPLINE

An important strategy for positive guidance is to plan ahead (see Indicator 5.1). Another strategy is to keep consistent routines and ensure children know what is expected (see 3.3). However, to be at the excellent level, staff need to be good emotion coaches for children. They can call attention to the needs of other children, explain feelings, and talk about children's experiences. Teachers must support children at Indicator 7.1 and take on an active role of helping children use their words to solve problems at 7.2.

## ITEM #29 SCHEDULE

Often, the schedule does not provide a balance of indoor and outdoor activities. Teachers must understand the requirements for going outside (see Indicator 5.2).

Teachers must be careful not to make children wait for extended periods of time (see Indicator 5.4). For example, a teacher may be focusing on one child – hand washing, for instance – but the other children are waiting. Here are some ideas to minimize transitions:

- Use one teacher to move on to the next activity or event while the other teacher is washing children's hands or attending to personal needs.
- Come in early or stay late to prepare materials.
- Talk daily with co-teachers to evaluate the length and effectiveness of transitions.
- Have materials waiting and set up for the next activity.

Minimizing transitions provides children more time to be engaged in social, cognitive, language, and physical learning – and in playful learning. Help teachers aim for the 7.2 level.

## ITEM #30 FREE PLAY

Like Item #29, teachers must ensure that free play occurs indoors and outdoors, weather permitting (see Indicator 3.1).

Just like Item #13, free play requires that teachers add words to children's actions and point out interesting features of toys or events (see Indicator 7.1). Teachers should pay attention to children's engagement and add materials that may stimulate their interest during free play times (see Indicator 7.2).