Let’s Talk

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Build
Strong Foundations For Our Youngest Children

QRIS
National Learning Network
The ECERS-3
Thelma Harms, Richard Clifford, Debby Cryer

A New, Updated Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale for the 21st Century
Similarities across all ECERS editions

- Assess programs for young children in center-based care
- Consider comprehensive developmental needs of children 2 ½ through 5 years (original considered infants and toddlers also)
- Require a substantial observation time, (2 ½ hours originally; now at least 3 with extra time for looking at materials, gross motor space as needed)
- Assess what children experience (process), rather than structures
Reasons for a third edition

- Expectations of children and early childhood care and education have changed (influences of Piaget, Constructivists, Pre-academics in Public preschools vs child care)
- Some ECERS-R items were not scaled well for accurate measurement
- Importance of interaction and teaching
- No extant instrument is a strong predictor of child development outcomes
- Like so many of you, we learned from our use of the ECERS-R in the field and in research
Differences between the Scales

Personal Care

- Greeting/Departing has been eliminated
- Nap/Rest is incorporated in the health practices item
- In the 3’s level credit can be given if at least 75% of the children have the components required for the meal or snack observed
- Sanitary conditions: Level 3 = some attempt, Level 5 = usually followed (75%). Level 7 = most of the time
- Interactions during meals and snacks emphasized
Differences between the Scales

Timing Access to Materials

- In ECERS-R SPOD is 1/3 of the time the center is open. ECERS-3 does away with SPOD.
- In ECERS-3 the access to materials must be observed for one hour of the 3 hour assessment that takes place when most children are present and should be actively engaged.
- Accessible—25 minutes of the 3 hour observation.
- Time of outdoor access to sedentary activities is not counted until children have had the time required for vigorous gross motor.
- Usually all materials required must be accessible for the whole time required.
Differences between the Scales

Gross Motor

• Time requirement: 1.3 is scored Yes if gross motor activities are provided for less than 10 minutes of the observation

• A more realistic approach to hazards in the gross motor items is used
Differences between the Scales

Health Practices

Level 1 = No attempt at sanitary practices
Level 3 = Some attempt
Level 5 = Frequent attempt to do procedures correctly
Level 7 = Consistently used correctly
Differences between the Scales

Safety Practices

- Major vs minor hazards (better defined and more examples given)
  - A **major** safety hazard is one where the risk of serious injury is very high.
  - A **minor** hazard is either one where the consequences would not be as great, or the accident would be less likely, due for example to the nature of the supervision, the characteristics of the children in the group, and the amount of exposure to the hazard.

- In ECERS-R major hazards (indoor/outdoor) are combined in a single indicator. In ECERS-3 they have been separated
  - Indicator 3.1 = no more than 3 major hazards in the outdoor environment
  - Indicator 3.2 = no more than 3 major hazards in the indoor environment
  - Indicator 5.1 = no more than 2 major hazards present (indoors and outdoors combined)
Differences between the Scales

• Scoring rules in ECERS made more exacting in ECERS-R and ECERS-3; alternative scoring
• Increased emphasis on pre-academics: Requirements for an appropriate approach
• Sand/water item is incorporated into Nature/science
• General supervision incorporated throughout scale
• Adult-related items dropped
New Items in ECERS-3

3 Math items
• Math in Daily events—Not about having math materials but how math is drawn into the lives and activities of the children...
• Understanding written numbers—how staff introducing numbers to children in a meaningful way...
• Math materials and activities—not just about access to materials, but instead about how staff use and teach with the materials in a way that engages children.
New Items in ECERS-3

5 Language and Literacy items

- Helping children to expand vocabulary—importance of what staff talk about.
- Encouraging children to use language—we want them to talk!
- Staff use of books with children—are children engaged?
- Encouraging children’s use of books—do children show interest?
- Becoming familiar with print—identifying letters is not enough.
New Items in ECERS-3

• Individualized teaching and learning
• Transitions and waiting times (many of the indicators in this item were formerly in the Schedule item in ECERS-R)
Both Social and Teaching Interactions are considered throughout ECERS-3

Individualized Teaching and Learning

- More emphasis on matching teacher interactions with the child’s abilities and interests to engage the children.
- Level 1: Teaching content is all the same for all the children (days of the week recited, writing your name, same book for all).
- Level 3: Staff ask children questions that they are able to answer during free play activities.
- Level 5: Staff ask questions as general practice (identifying shapes, colors, counting) children respond well during activities.
- Level 7: Interested & meaningful learning going beyond academic skills. Staff do this as they circulate around the classroom.

This is a regular part of what they do.
### Staff use of books with children

1. **1.1 Staff do not use books with children during the observation.** *  
   - Book times are unpleasant or not engaging for many of the children (Ex., children forced to listen; punitive atmosphere; children crowded; can’t see book; children’s reactions are considered interruptions).  
   - Staff reading or use of books with children is dull, disinterested, and/or unenthusiastic.*  
   - Inappropriate book observed being used with the children (Ex., reading a book that has frightening content, gives a negative social message, or shows prejudice; that is too long for children or too difficult to understand). *  

2. **3.1 Staff read a book with children at least once during the observation.** *  
   - Book time is arranged to encourage children’s engagement. (Ex., children can easily see book; are not crowded; books used that interest children; reading of appropriate length).  
   - The majority of children appear to be engaged for most of the time when books are used (Ex., children may lose interest for short period, but then become interested again; one child is not interested but others are).  
   - Staff show some interest and enjoyment in books.  

3. **5.1 Staff read books to children during the observation, either to the whole group, small group, or individually.** *  
   - Accommodations are made for children who require additional support during book time (Ex., children not fluent in classroom language, with developmental delays, or who do not do well in large groups have special provision such as smaller group).*  
   - All children participating in the activity are actively engaged during each book time. (Ex., staff is supportive and reads with interest, children appear to enjoy book time and pay attention).  
   - Staff show much interest and enjoyment in books (Ex., read with animation, responds to children who are looking at books). *  

4. **7.1 Appropriate books that relate to current classroom activities or themes are read to or used with children. * Observe once  
   - Staff and children frequently discuss the content of a book in a way that engages children.  
   - Staff use books informally with children, with more than one example observed. * Observe twice  
   - Staff use books with children to help answer questions and to provide information on things children are curious about. * Observe once

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**Sample draft item with highlighted changes**  
(Please do not copy or distribute)
## Understanding written numbers*

1.1 No print numbers in display are shown with pictures that show what the number means.

1.2 No obvious print numbers found in classroom toys or materials accessible to children. *

1.3 Inappropriate expectations for children to be able to read or write numbers (Ex., reading or writing numbers is too difficult, many mistakes in answering questions; preschoolers required to complete worksheets that are too difficult; staff respond negatively when children are not interested).

### 3.1 Some print numbers in display are accompanied by pictures that show what the number means (Ex. signs for number of children allowed in center with figures to represent the number; poster with numbers and corresponding objects).

### 3.2 Some play materials with numbers are accessible for at least 25 minutes during the observation (Ex., toy telephones, numbers on play kitchen furnishings, play money; number stencils in writing center). *

### 3.3 When children play with materials credited in 3.2, staff sometimes point out the numbers and talk about them in a way that interests children. * Observe once

### 3.4 Staff sometimes relate print numbers to corresponding number of pictures or objects (Ex. staff points to number on puzzle or in counting book and helps child count number of pictures that match.). Observe once

### 5.1 At least 3 different play materials that help show children the meaning of print numbers are accessible for at least 25 minutes during the observation (Ex., puzzle with number on one piece dots on matching piece; puzzle with numbered fingers on a hand; matching picture/number card game; simple number card games).

### 5.2 Materials credited in 5.1 accessible for at least 1 hour during the observation.

### 5.3 Staff show children how to use materials and talk about the meaning of printed numbers (Ex., count objects with child and read the number; use “first, second, third” as child uses printed number sequence; point out numbers rulers or thermometers showing how they indicate differences in size or amount). * Observe once

### 7.1 At least 5 different appropriate materials that help children attach meaning to print numbers accessible for at least 25 minutes during the observation.

### 7.2 Materials in 7.1 are accessible for at least 1 hour during the observation.

### 7.3 Staff frequently show children how to use the number materials and talk about the meaning of printed numbers. *Observe twice

### 7.4 Print numbers are sometimes related to number of fingers shown by staff or children (Ex. when reading number book; looking at number poster; when using toys showing number). Observe once

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**Sample draft item with highlighted changes**

(Please do not copy or distribute)
Feedback from field test

- Providers will really see a difference in the indicators that typically caused problems in ECERS-R.
- Less focus on the number of materials and more focus on how they are used and the interactions which happen around the materials.
- Interactions are not just a subscale but are now embedded throughout the instrument.
- Language and literacy items are great addition to an already great instrument!
Feedback from field test

• Great to see the shift of emphasis from materials to practice.
• The new 3 year old cutoff in the instrument is a good idea.
• No longer relying on information gathered from the staff interview strengthens the scale.
• Impediments to a more distributed scoring in Supervision of Gross Motor, Safety, Health Practices & Personal Care have been addressed.
• The notes for clarifications are more detailed and very helpful.
Current status of ECERS-3 and next steps

- First draft complete
- Basic field test for reliability
- Revision
- To be published late 2014
- After publication:
  - Ongoing testing of reliability and validity, using Item Response Theory
  - We hope to work with many of you on incorporating the ECERS-3 as part of your QRIS
Training opportunities for the ECERS-3

• Reliability training available from the authors and other properly trained individuals

• Online video training outlining the differences for experienced ECERS-R assessors

• Detailed indicator by indicator explanations online courseware will be developed
In Summary...

• The new ECERS-3 is a major revision to the ECERS-R

• Features include:
  • Better scaling of key ECERS-R items for more accurate measurement
  • Less emphasis on materials and more on interactions based on the individual child’s abilities
  • Expanded items for math, language and literacy

• We expect that the ECERS-3 will be a better predictor of child outcomes than what’s currently available

• www.ersi.info
Questions, Reflections, Comments
For More Information

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