

GA Additional Notes for the ITERS-3

The GA Additional Notes provide supplementary information for the Environment Rating Scales so that participants in the assessment portion of Georgia's Quality Rated (Voluntary Improvement System) may correctly interpret and score items found within the scale. A primary aim for the notes is to further define or explain requirements of certain items to improve inter-rater reliability or consistency among assessors working with Quality Rated (QR).

Participants in Quality Rated should be aware of the following:

- Unless otherwise specified Quality Rated assessors use both the GA Additional Notes for the ITERS-3 and the ITERS-3 Additional Notes for Clarification created by the authors (available at <http://www.ersi.info/index.html>).
- GA Additional Notes provide further clarification to assist in the interpretation of the scale and the Environment Rating Scale Institute (ERSI) Additional Notes for Clarification.
- The GA Additional Notes are updated (approximately) every 6-12 months and QR assessors conduct assessments using the most current notes. Child care professionals are encouraged to download and use the most current version of the notes from the Quality Rated website.

The GA Additional Notes were compiled and further developed by members of the QR management team, especially by our State Anchors and Anchor Advisors. In April 2012 with permission from Debby Cryer and Thelma Harms, the Additional Notes for Clarification for the ECERS-R, ITERS-R, FCCRS-R, and SACERS were retrieved from the Environment Rating Scale Institute (ERSI) website (<http://www.ersi.info/index.html>) and used for the basis for the GA Additional notes. Since then, Quality Rated has made modifications and additions to the notes as described below.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE SCALE, Item 4, page 9.

To calculate whether required amounts of time were provided for children, it is best to wear a digital watch or use the digital clock on your tablet. Even though required times are a minimum, because of possible timing error, we allow a 2-minute exception for group times and gross motor times because it is so difficult to track time to the second for these longer periods of time. However, no more than 2 minutes can be found to be lacking or exceeded to meet time requirements.

EXPLANATION OF TERMS USED THROUGHOUT THE SCALE, Age Ranges for Infants, Toddlers, and Twos, pages 11-13.

When scoring indicators with a specific age range requirement, if a child in that age group is enrolled but not present during the observation, score any indicators that can be scored based on observed evidence, such as room arrangement and furnishings. Score any that have access requirements as NA, if the indicator only asks about the age group that is not present. If the indicator asks about other age groups and children in those age groups are present, score based on the groups that are present.

GENERAL GA NOTES FOR THE ITERS-3

Refer to Environment Rating Scale Institute (ERSI) website ITERS-3 General Additional Notes for Clarification for definitions of terms used in the scale.

Accessible- During the observation, children can reach and use the required toy, furnishing, material, or equipment. ITERS-3 has varied guidelines for determining access for nonmobile children and mobile children found on pages 11-12 of the scale book. An additional GA resource, entitled *ITERS-3 Access Summary*, has been developed to further clarify ITERS-3 access guidelines and can be found on the Quality Rated website at www.qualityrated.ga.gov in the ERS Resources section.

Appropriate: Used in various items to mean safe and age- and developmentally- suited for the children in the group being observed. In determining whether the requirements for “appropriate” are being met within the context of a particular indicator, consideration is given to whether the children’s needs for safety, protection, stimulation, and positive relationships are being met in ways that are supportive and meaningful.

Engaged: Children are observed to be interested and paying attention. Although children may be well behaved, look closely to determine whether they are actually engaged in what is going on. Scoring decisions are made based on the children’s level of engagement and whether staff can positively re-engage children if they do lose interest.

Forced Participation: According to ITERS-3, page 80, “forced to participate” means children are strongly encouraged or made to participate in group play activities. If children are not engaged or enjoying an activity, are often reminded to participate, and there is no alternative of leaving and doing something else, then children are being forced to participate.

Conversation: Multiple back and forth verbal or nonverbal exchanges of communication that are meaningful to the child, typically occurs between a teacher and child or between children.

Handwashing and hand sanitizer use: The 2019 edition of *Caring for Our Children* (page 118) states that hand sanitizers can be used in place of handwashing unless hands are visibly soiled. Use can be by adults and children, but handwashing is preferred for children under age 2. However, GA licensing does not allow the use of hand sanitizers in lieu of handwashing; therefore, QR assessors are required to only count handwashing as acceptable when scoring these indicators. If hand sanitizer is used after handwashing or when running water is not accessible (such as on the playground), the product must contain 60-95% alcohol, manufacturer’s instructions are followed, and very close supervision of children is provided to ensure proper use and to avoid ingestion or contact with eyes and mucous membranes. Be sure to check that the manufacturer’s directions for use are followed exactly, because if not, do not give credit for any time when not followed. You should ask to see the original container with directions for use if it is not observable. If children are not closely supervised when using the sanitizer, consider in supervision–related indicators for the item specifically, and in Safety and Supervision. To get credit for correct handwashing the time for rubbing soapy hands together (out of the flow of water), before rinsing is 20 seconds. Antibacterial soaps should not be used. Children using shared art or sensory materials must wash hands, both before and after use. Handwashing or use of a hand sanitizer is required for all ERS observers upon entering the program.

Safety hazards: According to the ITERS-3, page 30, a major hazard is one where the risk of serious injury is very high, such that it might cause enough harm to require a hospital or doctor visit. A minor hazard is either one where the consequences would not be great or an accident is not likely, due for example to the nature of the supervision, the characteristics of the children in the group, or the likelihood of exposure to the hazard. When evaluating safety hazards in the outdoor environment, the *Playground Information to Use with the Environment Rating Scales* resource document is used, which is based on The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) guidelines. This resource can be found on the Environment Rating Scale Institute (ERSI) website (<http://www.ersi.info/index.html>).

Some/sometimes/occasionally: Denotes a presence in the environment, and at least 1 example usually must be observed unless the guidelines require more examples.

Moderate: Denotes that something can be sporadic but should not be unusual to observe throughout the observation.

Most: Means more than 50% unless the guidelines for specific indicators require more.

Usually/generally/frequently/often/much: Denotes a regular or prevalent practice, meaning that things occur for 75% of the time during the 3-hour observation period, unless the guidelines for specific indicators require more.

SPACE AND FURNISHINGS

ITEM 1: Indoor Space

Indicator 3.1 and 5.1: Base scoring on the indoor space available to accommodate the maximum number of children allowed and consider the schedules of the children. If all children sleep during the same scheduled nap time, then only some space for play is required to be available when mats/cots/cribs are in use for children who may not fall asleep. If children are on individual sleeping schedules, then the space must exist for mats/cots/cribs to be in use without sacrificing any play space. Requirements for distance between sleeping surfaces are 18" for 3.1 and 36" for 5.1.

Indicator 3.2: Adequate ventilation requires that the room is not stuffy, smelly, or otherwise in need of obvious further ventilation. Ventilation control is not required to be located inside the classroom at this indicator, but it is required to exist via some method within the building. If dark shades or blinds are closed and most natural light is blocked, score No. If light colored shades or blinds are closed and enough natural light is coming in that the room appears light even while the blinds/shades are closed, score Yes.

Indicator 3.2 and 7.1: For natural lighting to be considered direct natural light, it must be from a window, door, or skylight within the classroom being observed. Natural light from hallways or neighboring classrooms, even if only a half wall separates the two, do not count.

Indicator 5.2: If windows/doors are used for ventilation purposes, screens are required. Ventilation controls credited here must adequately enable the teacher to control ventilation of the entire classroom. Exhaust fans in restrooms or over diaper changing tables do not count as methods for classroom ventilation control.

ITEM 2: Furnishings for care, play, and learning

Indicator 3.1: Enough furniture of each type is required for the number of children present: routine care, play, and learning.

Indicator 5.1: All furniture needs are based on the maximum number of children allowed to enroll. Consider individual storage needs required throughout the year. Adult seating that is reasonably comfortable for the teacher is required to be available for use.

Indicator 5.2: At least one example of furniture that supports self-help is required for each age group present during the observation. It is possible that one example may meet the needs of more than one age group.

Indicator 7.1: More than one example of routine care furniture that encourages personalized care of children is required. Adult seating that is reasonably comfortable for the teacher is required to be observed used and counts as one example. A chair that meets the needs of one staff member may not meet the needs of another.

ITEM 3: Room Arrangement

Indicator 5.1: Math materials may be included in a fine motor interest center if they encourage the use of fine motor skills. One or two materials that do not encourage fine motor skills are acceptable if they do not interfere with fine motor play. A cozy area that meets the four requirements of an interest center as defined on page 20 in the ITERS-3 scale book can also be counted.

ITEM 4: Display for children

General Note: Rugs, wall mirrors, and other furnishings do not count as display. Center signs are not considered for credit in this item, unless they also provide meaningful display information to children, such as large photos of the children or commercial posters showing children playing in the centers. To count as display, items must be displayed from the beginning of the observation; items added during the observation will not be considered.

Indicator 3.3: “Some” means one or more pieces of children’s artwork.

Indicator 5.1: Children’s art, work is not considered for this indicator.

Indicator 7.1: Two or more photos of currently enrolled children, their families, pets, or other current familiar faces are required. Photos of previous teachers or children do not count.

PERSONAL CARE ROUTINES**ITEM 5: Meals/snacks**

General Note: USDA guidelines will be credited only by evidence observed during the observation. Items that are required by the food program to have nutrition labels to determine the adequacy of guidelines met will not be credited. As such, breaded meats, including chicken nuggets and fish sticks, will only be credited for proteins since adequacy of the breeding to count towards grain requirements cannot be determined by observation.

Indicators 1.2, 3.2, and 5.2: If a planned snack is observed in addition to a meal, then nutritional component requirements must be met for both. If an extra, unplanned snack is offered to children, nutritional components are not required to be met. Unplanned snacks do not occur daily, and they are

typically snacks provided to tie one or more children over until lunch can be served or as part of an occasional learning activity. Food served for celebratory occasions, such as birthday parties or holiday celebrations, is not required to meet the USDA guidelines for meals or snacks.

Indicator 3.2: All required components must be offered to at least 75% of the children.

Indicator 3.3: Any attempt in any category can receive credit.

Indicator 5.2: All required components must be served together to all children.

Indicator 5.3: Much attention in all categories must be observed to receive credit.

Indicator 7.1: A teacher must remain within arm's reach of any child who is eating or drinking.

ITEM 6: Diapering/ Toileting

General Note: Diapering procedures are based on best practices outlined in Caring for Our Children, 4th edition, and a list of the procedures can be found on the Environment Rating Scale Institute (ERSI) website (<http://www.ersi.info/index.html>). When using these procedures, please note that use of a paper liner is optional. It is permissible to use a non-porous changing surface that is cleaned and sanitized between each use. When cleaning the diapering surface, it is permissible to spray the surface with a soapy water solution prior to wiping it with a paper towel or to use a soapy water solution directly on the paper towel and then rinse. Either cleaning procedure must then be following with a bleach-water solution allowed to sit for at least 2 minutes or a disinfectant applied according to label directions.

General Note: Observed instances of parents/family members who change diapers or assist with toileting should be considered in the samples taken to score these indicators.

Indicator 3.2: All children must have diapers visually checked or changed or are encouraged to use the toilet within the 3-hour observation and no obvious problems are observed.

Indicator 5.2: All children must have diapers visually checked or changed or are encouraged to use the toilet at least every 2 hours and no obvious problems are observed.

ITEM 7: Health

General Note: Observed instances of parents/family members who assist with handwashing should be considered in the samples taken to score these indicators.

Indicator 1.3: Consider all nap evidence observed, regardless of whether cots/mats are set up for use during the observation. If any lapses in sanitary provisions are observed, consider how significant the lapses were in preventing sanitary nap/rest provisions. If most observed evidence did not ensure sanitary nap/rest provisions, score this indicator as Yes.

Indicators 3.3 and 5.3: Sleeping surfaces must be observed set up for use to score these indicators. If nap set-up is not observed, score these indicators NA.

ITEM 8: Safety

General Note: Raised edges on diapering tables measuring less than 6 inches from the top of the diapering surface are considered indoor safety hazards.

Indicator 5.4: If no unsafe actions are observed, score Yes.

LANGUAGE AND BOOKS**ITEM 10: Encouraging vocabulary development**

Indicator 5.2: To receive credit here, teachers must be observed intentionally repeating words during single interactions with children for the purpose of learning those new words, and examples should be heard often during the observation.

ITEM 11: Responding to children's communication

General note: Ignoring is considered a negative response.

ITEM 12: Encouraging children to communicate

General note: Ignoring is considered a negative response.

Indicators 5.1, 7.1, and 7.2: Examples must be observed in play and routines.

ITEM 13: Staff use of books with children

General note: If no books are observed to be used with children, score 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3 Yes. Score 1.4, all 3's, all 5's, and 7.1 and 7.2 as No. Score 7.3 as NA if all children observed are infants, otherwise score it as No also.

Indicator 5.3: The two examples required here must be from two different pictures with two different children, but it can occur during the same book time.

Indicator 5.5: Multiple books are not required but extended interest must be observed at least once.

ITEM 14: Encouraging children's use of books

Indicator 5.2: There is no access time requirement for this indicator. The term "accessible" in this indicator just refers to whether children can reach and use the books.

ACTIVITIES**ITEM 16: Art**

Indicators 1.2, 3.3, and 5.2: Do not make assumptions about what art materials are accessible, used, or how they are supervised from looking at the display only. If unsafe materials in the display are within reach of children but not accessible during the observation, consider these in the Safety item instead.

Indicator 3.5: “Individual expression” means that children are allowed to use art materials in their own creative way, and children are given the opportunity to select the subject matter of the art, the medium in the art activity, or use their own ideas in creating the art. General topics for art work or the art materials used can be selected by the adult, but the child should be able to decide the way in which they are used, within the rules of acceptable use. Craft projects that all look the same and coloring sheets do not count as examples of individual expression.

ITEM 18: Blocks

Indicators 3.2 and 5.2: Accessories must be stored near blocks and be obvious that they are intended for use with block play. Accessories must add to and not interfere with block play. Large vehicles cannot count as accessories unless large blocks accompany them.

Indicator 5.1: Access to blocks is required throughout the observation, at the level required for the ages of children being observed.

Indicator 5.2: Although the note for clarification in the scale book on page 50 mentions unit blocks for this indicator, unit blocks are not specifically required. The guidelines in the note for clarification should be followed for any blocks of varied shapes.

ITEM 19: Dramatic play

Indicators 1.1, 3.1, 5.1, and 7.1: Dress up clothes are not required for infants. Older infants are not limited to only soft dolls.

ITEM 20: Nature/science

Indicator 5.4: Kinetic sand is considered an acceptable sand substitute.

ITEM 22: Appropriate use of technology

General Note: “Electronic media” includes any device used that has a screen with moving images, pictures, or print, including toys that are designed to imitate electronic devices.

ITEM 23. Promoting acceptance of diversity

Indicator 1.1, 3.1, and 5.1: When crediting non-traditional gender role materials, a contrast with a traditional gender role material is not required.

Indicator 5.1: For non-mobile infants, credit can be given for accessibility if they are able to see the diverse materials.

Indicator 5.2: Cultural music played during the observation counts as one example.

ITEM 24: Gross motor

General note: “Appropriate” means that what is being evaluated in the indicator is both safe and age and developmentally appropriate for the children using it. The location of “stationary equipment” is not moved by the children as part of their play, such as but not limited to climbing structures, swings, spring rockers, and slides. The location of “portable gross motor equipment” moves as a part of gross motor play, such as but not limited to wheel toys, balls, and wagons.

Indicators 3.1, 5.1, 5.2, and 7.1: Although the word “appropriate” does not appear in these indicators, appropriateness of the spaces must be considered when scoring.

Indicators 1.1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.5, 5.2, and 7.2: If no outdoor space is used during the observation because weather did not permit outdoor play, evaluate any on-site outdoor space that is ever used by the group. If toddlers/twos never use an outdoor gross motor space, score these indicators as No.

Indicator 3.3: On the CPSC playground sheet, beneath the Age-appropriate Equipment chart, note the list of equipment that is not appropriate for specific age groups. This equipment is never appropriate and is considered “extremely dangerous” for this indicator.

INTERACTION

ITEM 25: Supervision of gross motor play

Indicator 7.2: Must be observed at least once during the observation.

ITEM 27: Peer interaction

Indicator 5.3: Intentional attempts to guide and facilitate appropriate peer interactions are required and must be observed often.

Indicator 5.4: Individual and small group play should be observed to be the prevalent practice in the classroom during the observation. Although large groups can occur, they should be limited, and individual and/or small group play should occur more frequently.

ITEM 28: Staff-child interaction

Indicator 5.4: Singing with children will count as an example of playfulness.

ITEM 29: Providing physical warmth/touch

Indicator 5.3: It should be observed to be a consistent practice of all teachers in the room to provide intentional, positive guidance to encourage gentle touches among children when children are being rough with one another. When no roughness is observed, at least one instance of a teacher encouraging gentle touches as an act of appropriate affection must be observed.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

ITEM 31: Schedule and transitions

Indicator 1.5: This indicator applies to 2 or more children.

Indicator 5.3: If ignoring is observed to cause distress, consider it a negative interaction.

ITEM 32: Free Play

Indicator 3.1: Free play is expected to occur for every child.

ITEM 33: Group play activities

Indicators 1.1 and 5.1: For nonmobile children, look to see if the children are interested in the group play, as evidenced by their facial expressions, where their attention seems to be, and body language. If they are not interested and are not moved to an alternate activity they are interested in, they are being forced to participate.

Indicator 5.3: If all children are engaged, alternate activities are not required.