

GA Additional Notes for the ECERS-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 ECERS-3 and the ECERS-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 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.

GENERAL GA NOTES FOR THE ECERS-3

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

Accessible: Children can reach and are allowed to use toys, materials, furnishings, and/or equipment. Toys on open shelves must be within easy reach of the children. No barriers can be present to prevent children from using them. Time counted toward materials being accessible will only be credited when all children have reasonable access and are not compelled to be doing something else. If children **are required** to participate in teacher led group activities, these times will not be included in the time count for accessible to other materials, even if these smaller groups occur during an otherwise free play or center time schedule. Read the extensive description for *Accessible* in the scale on page 10. At the lower levels of quality (3), access must occur for 25 minutes within the 3 hour observation period and at the higher levels when no other time requirement is stated. In many instances the higher levels (5 and 7) require access for more than 25 minutes and in those cases the time is increased to 1 hour during the 3 hour observation period. Note that if a program uses sedentary materials outside or in indoor gross motor areas, access to these materials will not be included in the time count for accessibility of said materials unless there is time to access them in addition to the minimum time requirements needed for vigorous active play (15 minutes).

Appropriate: Used in various items to mean 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 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 or not they are actually engaged in what is going on. Scoring decisions are made based on the children’s level of engagement and whether or not staff are able to positively re-engage children if they do lose interest.

Handwashing and hand sanitizer use: The 2011 edition of Caring for Our Children (page 113) states that hand sanitizers can be used in place of handwashing unless hands are visibly soiled. Use can be by adults and children 2 years of age and older. 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 also in safety practices. 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. Handwashing or use of a hand sanitizer is required for all ERS observers upon entering the program.

Individualized teaching: Does not look like one size fits all. Staff who individualize think about what is best for children and their development, strive to produce real and lasting learning, apply the principles of best practices and child development, and are intentional about everything they do. Individualizing means that staff can enable children to reach goals that are both challenging and achievable and meet their individual needs.

Interest Center: A well-defined play area set up for a particular kind of play may be classified as an interest center. There are 4 aspects to think about when determining if a play area meets the requirement for being an interest center, all four must be met in order for the area to become defined interest area instead of a play area:

- Is the area clearly defined with the materials of a certain type of play gathered together, specifically for that type of play? If several other types of materials were included in this play area and their use would cause interference then this aspect of the definition would not be met.
- Were the materials stored by type? This would require some sort of sorting into containers, e.g. sorting of people, vehicles, and animals into different containers and shelf spaces in a block center. If not, then this part of the definition was not met.
- Was furniture needed so the materials could be used appropriately and comfortably? If not, then this aspect of the definition was not met.
- Was there enough space for the play with the materials so children could easily access them? Was there enough play for the number of children allowed in the area at one time, or was the space used for multiple purpose such as a table and chairs used for both art and science materials? If not, then this aspect of the definition was not met.

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

Staff: This may include volunteers and other special staff members who works for part of the observation with the children as a whole group or smaller groups. If children go to a special class or have a special teacher come to their room regularly (i.e. weekly) such as the library visit for story time, going to a computer or art lab, or having a special music teacher or foreign language teacher come into the room etc., all interactions and activities by these teaching staff will be included in scoring decisions. One-off guest visitors such as a dentist, fire fighter, parent reading, etc. who is not a regular part of the program would not be included in scoring decisions unless their interactions were extremely negative.

Usually/generally/frequently/often: Denotes the regular or prevalent practice in the environment, meaning that things occur for 75% of the time during the 3 hour observation period and are usually accounted for in the higher levels of quality (5 & 7). Specific numbers may be listed for different items and generally includes a variety of materials.

Weather permitting: Children participate in outdoor activities almost every day, unless there is active precipitation or public announcements that advise people to remain indoors due to weather conditions such as high levels of pollution and extreme cold or heat that might cause health problems.

SPACE AND FURNISHINGS

ITEM 2: Furnishings for care, play, and learning

Indicator 3.4: Must be accessible for 25 minutes.

Indicator 5.3: Indicator should read: Two pieces of furniture...used or obviously usable.

Indicator 5.4: Must be accessible for 25 minutes.

Indicator 5.3 and 7.2: If easel is not set up for use, do not count. If separate sand and water tables, count as 1 item; do not count at all if lid stays closed. All housekeeping/dramatic play furniture together=1 item. Plastic woodworking bench is a dramatic play prop; do not count as a separate furniture item. CAN count: specially designed library bookcase, wooden puppet theater, Lego table used only for Legos, special writing hutch with materials, train table used only for train, light table with materials (turned on or child-friendly turn-on), specially made listening center, 3-sided station with built-in computer.

ITEM 3: Room arrangement for play and learning

Indicator 3.2 and 5.2: “Interest centers” must meet 4 requirements: 1) sufficient space for type of play encouraged and # of children allowed, 2) relevant materials are present and accessible to children, 3) materials organized by type, 4) furniture provided if needed. Reading interest center can include a listening center, if headphones are used. Do not count the computer as an interest center due to the time limit constraints in item 27.

Indicator 3.2: Must be accessible for 25 minutes.

ITEM 4: Space for privacy

Indicator 3.1 and 3.2: Refers to informal child-created space for privacy.

Indicator 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3: Refers to teacher-created space for privacy.

Indicator 7.1: Can be any child playing alone, in any situation, not just a child using the designated space for privacy.

Indicator 7.2: Do not give credit if there is no designated space.

ITEM 5: Child-related display

General note: To count as a display the items must be available most of the day and be in a space that is easily visible to the children. Equipment used to display items for short periods such as a teacher using a felt board to display items in a story at circle time, or a smart board used during circle time to show the calendar or weather chart, do not count as display.

Indicator 5.4: Cannot be at group time—must be during free play and/or routines.

ITEM 6: Space for gross motor play

General note: “Major hazards” are 1) likely to result in serious injury to a child, 2) require medical care, and 3) be in popular areas where children frequently come into contact with them. Playground next to quiet parking area with no active vehicles, no playground equipment near the fence, and no bollards protecting the fence = minor hazard. Locks on gates not a hazard if the group can exit through building. Otherwise, it’s a minor hazard.

Indicator 3.1: Regular-use space carries more weight in scoring, even if what is observed is a somewhat crowded indoor space on weather permitting days.

Indicator 3.2: Change “no major hazards” to “not many major hazards,” any major hazards should not be in areas frequently used by children.

ITEM 7: Gross motor equipment

Indicator 3.1: “Some” means portable OR stationary equipment.

Indicator 3.2: Change “both portable and stationary” to “portable OR stationary.” Consider stationary equipment not being used, if children visit another space.

Indicator 3.3: Only count skills stimulated by appropriate equipment. When considering skills stimulated by equipment not used by children, only consider stationary equipment, not portable.

Indicator 5.1 and 7.1: Stationary equipment required.

Indicator 5.3 Both portable and stationary equipment are required.

Indicator 5.2: If 5.1 is scored NO due to a limited amount, 5.2 also has to be scored NO.

PERSONAL CARE ROUTINES**ITEM 8: Meals and snacks**

Indicator 1.1: Can consult posted menu to determine if USDA standards “not usually followed;” if menu not posted, score on what is observed.

Indicator 3.2: Credit given if the appropriate food is offered, even if child refuses an item.

Indicator 5.2: Components can be on table or verbally offered at same time as other components to give credit.

Indicator 7.3: Give credit for actively teaching proper meal handwashing.

ITEM 11: Safety practices

General note: When weighing hazards, take into account: 1) likelihood of injury, 2) supervision, 3) way space is used, and 4) seriousness of injury likely.

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

ITEM 12: Helping children expand vocabulary

Indicator 5.1: Listen for **much** descriptive language (adjectives, adverbs) used throughout the day.

Indicator 7.1: Observe 3 examples. Less common words.

ITEM 13: Encouraging children to use language

Indicator 3.4: With ESOL students, look for much encouragement for child to name objects, teachers make a real effort to communicate with the children in both their first language and English.

Indicator 3.5: Environment should “flow” and be conducive to conversation (example: few disruptions with directives).

ITEM 14: Staff use of books with children

General note: Books or stories without pictures count if children can respond to it as a book reading (i.e., eBooks, story on paper, Bible story, etc.) Animated eBooks with moving pictures are scored at Item 27, appropriate use of technology.

Indicator 3.1 and 5.1: Staff must finish reading the book to count as a reading (or finish a meaningful portion of a longer book).

Indicator 3.3: Determine across multiple book times if several occur, score based on the majority of the children’s engagement during at least 50% of the book times.

Indicator 5.4: Must draw interest to books several times, which can occur during formal or informal readings. Do not count telling children to get books during transitions to as a filler activity.

Indicator 7.4: Observe books used as a resource.

ITEM 15: Encouraging children’s use of books

Indicator 5.2 and 5.4: Any time would count as long as the child chose to independently use the books, and it was not required by the staff. Independence and choice is the key. Even if children choose which book to look at during a transition, it is not an example of this indicator if the staff told them to choose a book, even if there were other choices such as “Choose a book or a puzzle”.

Indicator 5.3: If dramatic play materials such as puppets are stored in the book area, it is not a defined reading interest center. A defined reading interest center can include books on c.d. or tape so long as headphones are used.

ITEM 16: Becoming familiar with print

Indicator 5.2: Can point out name or number on cubby and explain its meaning; must point to print and draw child’s attention to it giving some explanation for why or how it is used.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

ITEM 17: Fine motor

Indicator 3.1: Choices include different levels of challenge.

Indicator 3.3: Pertains to materials credited in 3.1.

ITEM 18: Art

General Note: No credit given for coloring predesigned pages, coloring book sheets, ditto sheets etc. (scored in Fine Motor).

Indicator 1.3: Need to see staff encourage the use of art materials to score NO.

ITEM 19: Music and movement

Indicator 3.4: Children are generally engaged every time, unless they are allowed to engage in another alternate activity they are interested in.

ITEM 20: Blocks

Indicator 1.2: Must see staff encourage.

Indicator 3.1: Either unit OR large hollow blocks are acceptable; 1 type of accessory in sufficient quantities to prevent sharing issues.

Indicator 5.3: Three types of accessories in sufficient quantities are required. Unit blocks are required.

Indicator 7.1: Cannot be in same space as unit blocks unless the space is sufficiently large enough to be able to adequately build with the large blocks without interfering with the use of the unit blocks.

ITEM 21: Dramatic play

Indicator 1.3: Staff must encourage use of dramatic play materials, (not just say the center is open).

Indicator 3.2, 3.3, and 5.3: Must include the children’s use of dramatic play props and not just be imaginative conversations that sometimes occur while children play outside (pretending to be a princess in a castle etc.)

Indicator 5.1: Wealth of props does not need a 2nd theme.

ITEM 22: Nature/science

Add to first note for clarification, p. 56: Tools not required to be kept with the materials—consider teacher intent.

Indicator 5.1: All items including books must be in Science center to count. (i.e., to count, puzzles and plants etc. must be in Science center, not elsewhere.) Sand/water can be elsewhere. Do not have to have “collections” of items—for example, 5 different natural objects are okay.

Indicator 5.3: Have to see or hear staff actually or comment or interact with children to count. For example just seeing a recycling bin would not be enough evidence.

Indicator 7.2: Could be an outdoor garden if all components of the indicator are observed.

ITEM 23: Math materials and activities

Indicator 3.3: Does not have to include the use of materials.

Indicator 7.3: Must observe being done during the 3-hour observation (displays do not count).

ITEM 24: Math in daily events

Indicator 3.3: Just rote counting with no practical event associated is scored NO.

Indicator 7.2: Can be during routines or group.

ITEM 25: Understanding written numbers

Indicator 3.1: Must be at eye level to children. Two different examples by type, for example center labels to determine the number of children allowed is one type and each center label is not counted separately.

Indicator 5.1: Look for 3 examples of 1:1 correspondence in materials—books are ok, but not display.

ITEM 26: Promoting acceptance of diversity

Indicator 5.3: May be pictures, books, or play materials.

Indicator 7.1: Foreign language vocabulary use counts.

ITEM 27: Appropriate use of technology

Indicator 1.3: Any comment about what a child is doing at computer counts as staff involvement (example: simple tech assistance, comment about a character, etc.), just turning the computer on and loading the program is not enough.

Indicator 3.2: Indicator pertains only to the passive and inactive watching use of TV/video, dancing to an exercise video would be considered in 5.2.

Indicator 5.2: Pertains to use of media other than TV/video, including computers, tablet, iPad etc.

INTERACTION

ITEM 28: Supervision of gross motor

General note: If another adult provides instruction or assistance such as a sports coach or lifeguard, include their interactions as staff, although the actual teachers should be weighed more heavily in the score.

ITEM 29: Individualized teaching and learning

Indicator 3.1 and 3.2: Some = one or more.

Indicator 3.3: Questions match children's interest and ability. One or more example must be observed.

Indicator 5.3: Any interaction that moves a child to learn counts.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

ITEM 34: Free play

General note: Time counted toward free play can start when most children are dismissed to free play. For examples time is not discounted for slow eaters or when a teacher may be talking to a couple of children who on their way to free play got into a conflict.

Indicator 3.2: Should be scored Yes unless supervision during free play is extremely lax or staff are very uninvolved with children during all or much of the observed free play time.

Indicator 5.3: Ample and varied materials/equipment accessible for the most children allowed at any time. The materials must provide a wealth of variation so there needs to be a lot of materials across the classroom.

ITEM 35: Whole-group activities for play and learning

Indicator 3.2: Whole-group activities are arranged to encourage children's engagement. As long as the group time wasn't initially set up without the basics, credit can be given as long as staff responded appropriately if the group time began to fall apart and does not force the time to continue.

Indicator 7.3: If children do not try to leave a large group, but they are not actively engaged and the teacher does nothing to try and re-engage them or offer them the choice of leaving, then leaving is not considered an option.