

Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS-R)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Question	Date	Answer
Picture of a stool from a glider that a center made stationary and is using for the teachers to sit on. Would this be considered preschool-sized vs. adult-sized since it is still so low to the ground and not much support?	11/8/13	Please see page 24 and 27 in All About the ITERS-R book. Credit could be given at 5.5 for use of the stool but not for 7.4 "Comfortable adult seating" definition.
A concern is being able to be at eye-level, within arm's reach, and comfortable seating for a toddler teacher. I pointed out in the notes for clarification for Item 2 Furniture, indicator 5.5 offers very large blocks, cubes, or preschool furniture should work for eye-level and within arm's reach, however it would not meet in 7.4 Comfort. What suggestions would you offer the program? What have you seen that works well in programs?		In providing TA, you may want to have the director/teacher read the passage for 7.4 in the All about the ITERS-R Book. It has a good description of what comfortable means and pictures to assist. The intent of this indicator is for the comfort and support of the teacher. I would point out that working in an infant or toddler room is very demanding physically; there is a lot of lifting, bending, and squatting which can be hard on the back and knees. A comfortable, adult-sized chair helps teachers and what is required at 7.4.
If a two-year-old room has time for the children to write their name, but has all the required appropriate materials for them to play with during free time, how would Item 15 Find motor be scored? In other words, if they are doing one thing not developmentally appropriate, how will it affect the score? Where else do you think it might be affected? 31 Group Play?		It is difficult to give an answer without seeing it in practice. However, questions I would have: Are children being forced to stay at the table and write their names? Is this a group time? If it was a group time or children are made to wait at the table it could affect "much of the day" and #31 Group times. How are the interactions between teachers and children if children are made to stay and doing something they are not interested in? So you can see, it is difficult to answer without actually seeing how this activity is being conducted.
One of the toddler classrooms I observed has a slide in the room. There is carpet underneath the slide but the director had asked me if there was anything specific relating to the fall zone for indoor climbers. I looked through the ITERS and saw specifics about outdoor fall zones but not indoor climbers.		The same rules apply for gross motor equipment indoors and outdoors. If the slide is more than 18 inches, it will need adequate cushioning and fall zones.

<p>One of the teachers I work with had a question about using salt and ice for science. Typically they try to stay away from using food products for activities, however, is salt considered food? Will they get marked down if they choose to do this activity?</p>		<p>There is no indicator where they would get marked off for using salt in a science activity.</p>
<p>The classroom teachers feed infants who are eating jar food and/or cereal in car seat carriers. They prop the carrier in a way so that the baby sits upright. I know they will not score well in the area of health/safety because they are feeding the babies on the floor, but I'm wondering if there are any other areas that would be impacted by this practice. The seats do seem to me to be comfortable and supportive. There is a safety belt in the seat as well. The high chairs they have are very uncomfortable looking and the teachers shared that the infants slip and slide in them. Ultimately, I am going to advise that they purchase comfortable, supportive high chairs, but in the meantime I'm not sure which recommendation to give on their current feeding practices.</p>		<p>We consulted with the authors of the scale and here was the response from Thelma Harms: "The infant seats, adjusted as they are to have the child sit up comfortably, seem a safer choice than the current ill-fitting high chairs. I would be worried about the following health issues: having the teachers sit on the floor and having the feeding-related items touch the floor; not being able to wash and sanitize the surface on the infant seat where the child's finger-food and his hands touch the surface; whether the babies are held for bottle feeding. These issues should be addressed in scoring (namely Item 2)." I believe you are wise in suggesting they purchase comfortable, supportive high chairs.</p>
<p>In a classroom where all children are under 12 months except 1 who will have just turned a year, does art, blocks, etc. need to be available?</p>		<p>See definition of age requirements on page 7, the one child/one month rule.</p>
<p>If blocks are out in the classroom, will they be assessed even if the majority of children are under 12 months? In other words, if they do not have sets of 10 blocks but there are some out even though not required, will they still assess them? I just want to make sure I am giving the right information.</p>		<p>If children are under 12 months of age, blocks will not be assessed even if they have them within the classroom.</p>
<p>Many puppets or dolls have beads for eyes, they are sewn in, but I was wondering if the beads are considered choking hazards? (If so, how many sites are going to have to lose many of their puppets?)</p>		<p>Beads and buttons are choking hazards for infants, toddlers, and two year old children.</p>
<p>Pg. 12, Item 2, 5.3, Furniture that promotes self-help in routines: What is an example for an infant room (6 wks-15 mos.) that would meet the furniture requirement for independence? The example the book gives is a step stool near the sink but obviously that is not developmentally appropriate for the babies.</p>		<p>All About the ITERS-R, page 22 states, "Infant seats that support young infants in a semi-sitting position allow babies to see more of what is going on around them. Molded plastic seats, bouncy seats, etc. work for this purpose; however, teachers need to watch carefully to make sure that the child has materials to play with that are interesting to him/her.</p>
<p>Can I please have two examples of age appropriate diversity materials for the infant classroom's dramatic play area?</p>		<p>Diversity materials can be throughout the classroom. According to All About ITERS-R, page 305, diversity materials can include puzzles,</p>

		dramatic play food, clothing or props, and puppets. A soft tool set would count as a material representing diversity.
Item 1: Indoor Space - 5.1: Definition of "ample space."		The ERS authors use the example of toilet stalls in the bathroom at the airport: regular stall is sufficient; handicapped stall has ample space. Programs might not have a lot of control over this rating.
Item 2: Clarification of space for personal belongings		If hooks are used for personal belongings, they must be spaced out enough so that children can hang coats so that they do not touch in order for this to potentially count as sufficient cubby space. Also, if all belongings are placed in bags which are hung on hooks, this can be counted as sufficient cubby space, even if the bags are touching, as long as each child has a reasonable space for their belongings. If there is a substantial amount of overlapping with the bags, so that it is difficult for children to access their things, then the space would not be sufficient. Generally the score is based on what is observed and possible scenarios for different times of the year are not considered.
A provider wanted to know if the assessors would accept homemade blocks made and covered with duct tape, some providers had mentioned not to use duct tape.		I am not aware that there is a problem with duct tape; homemade blocks are acceptable.
If a classroom has 2 large single stall restrooms that are connected and used only for that classroom, can the cots be stored in the restroom still be considered convenient?		This is hard to give an answer to without seeing the bathroom and where/how it is located within the room. If teachers have to leave the room to access cots this is not considered convenient because it reduces supervision at a busy time of the day. It is hard to give a definitive answer without seeing it in practice.
I was wondering when a 2 year old room should be assessed as ITERS-R or ECERS-R? I have had this come up a few times lately and I wanted to get a solid answer for my providers.		In the ITERS-R spiral book, page 5 under Administration of the Scale #1, it states that "The scale is designed to be used with one room or one group at a time, for children from birth through 30 months of age." The ECERS-R is designed to be used with children 2½ through 5 years of age. I would suggest that they make their decision based on the age of the majority of children in the classroom.
If a center has hired a guard rail company to put up a guardrail to protect the playground from parking lot, is that okay? Would bollards be better and are they the only protection considered safe?		This is difficult to answer without seeing what is being ordered, how it will be installed, what kind of protection it provides for the playground. Credit has been given to programs that have installed steel posts with metal guardrails spaced out in front of a playground; the above concerns were taken into account when determining whether they would be considered effective protection.

<p>Are wooden fences considered safety hazards?</p>		<p>This answer depends on many factors related to each specific wooden fence. The assessors would take into consideration the condition of the fence, spaces between boards in the fence, whether there are splinters or peeling paint on the fence, long bolts, sharp protrusions, etc.</p>
<p>If a room has children that are a mixture of 2 ½ up AND under, which scale do they go by for assessments? What age does the youngest one need to be in order to use the ECERS?</p>	<p>4/9/15</p>	<p>The director and/or teacher can determine which scale to be used for the Two year old classrooms.</p> <p>On page 5 of ECERS-R, it states that the scale is designed for children from 2 ½ to 5 years of age.</p> <p>On page 5 of the ITERS-R, it states that the scale is designed for children from birth through 30 months of age.</p> <p>In our state, toddlers are defined as 12 months through 35 months.</p> <p>This is the director's / program decision; not a decision made by the assessors or specialists. However, if you would be given TA to a program, you would want the program to be thinking about the ages and abilities in a two year old classroom.</p> <p>Things to think about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there materials available for ALL ages and abilities in the classroom? • If there are children between 24 and 30 months in the classroom, are there activities and schedule appropriate for their age and abilities-are they having to sit for long periods in large group times?
<p>On the verification protocol, we are asked to remind the program about possibly needing documentation to verify their playground surfacing meets the ASTM requirements. The program in question has two different types of surfacing; one is recycled rubber mulch and the other is sand covered by artificial turf. Will either of these surfaces need this verification document?</p>	<p>7/14/15</p>	<p>Loose fill rubber mulch needs a depth of 6 inches which is to be measured; no documentation is necessary.</p> <p>Astro-turf, covering any type of cushioning, needs site-specific documentation to verify it meets the critical fall height of the equipment requiring protective surfacing.</p>
<p>When the room we were observing went to the playground another class came out. Do we watch all of the children and teachers or only the ones from our classroom?</p>		<p>When observing Gross Motor outdoors or indoors, we watch all teachers and children interactions because it is hard to identify all children of a group.</p> <p>When in the classroom, we only observe the teacher and children from that classroom.</p>

<p>After we went back inside another class was in the room for a few minutes. Again do we count all of the kids or only the ones from our classroom?</p> <p>I ask this because a child from the other room uses a walker. This would change some of our scores because of accessibility.</p>		
<p>Is it appropriate to give the children a cut out shape (Christmas Tree, star, diamond, etc.?) And let them use crayons, markers or paints to create on, since I can't use ditto sheets?</p> <p>How does this differ from giving each child a rectangle (piece of paper) or a circle (paper plate)? Especially related to individual expression and facilitating appropriate use of materials.</p>		<p>Yes, the provider would earn credit at indicator 3.4 Some individual expression permitted in art materials. However, if this was the majority of art experiences offered to the children she would earn a no for indicator 5.3 Individual expression encouraged.</p> <p>The note for clarification states, "Individual expression encouraged means that 85% of the time when art materials are used, children can do "free art" and are not required to follow an example. Individual expression means that each child may select the subject matter and/or art medium, and carry out the work in his or her own way." The goal is to allow the children to select the subject or choose what materials they want to use to create a piece of art.</p>
<p>If sinks are low enough, so steps are not needed, do I still need to provide 2 different provisions to support independence?</p>		<p>Yes. Low open shelves and a child-sized table would count as other examples. **Low sinks would count as one of the self-help provisions.</p>
<p>When a teacher says during the interview that they do not watch television with the children, but there is a TV with kids' movies in the classroom or just outside the classroom – how do the assessors address this?</p>		<p>We accept the teachers/providers answer in the interview.</p>
<p>When a teacher says they go outside during the appropriate temperatures (and does go outside during the observation), but it appears that no other classes have gone outside and you see classes using the gross motor room. How is this addressed?</p>		<p>Again, we have to take the word of the teacher. Part of the integrity of this system is to honor the word of the teacher/provider. We recognize there is a percent of programs that try and manipulate the system. But, at the end of the day we find it is difficult to hide "quality." We believe for the most part we are able to capture a fairly accurate picture of the overall quality for children. We also are impressed that most teachers/providers are quite honest in their answers.</p>
<p>For the higher levels in display, classrooms should have "non-sexist images" where the children can easily see. Does this need to be a picture of a male nurse next to a picture of a</p>		<p>There needs to be some comparison but it does not need to be so specific. For example if you have a father and mother cooking together or a female</p>

female nurse or a female firefighter picture next to a male firefighter? Or is it only one picture of a male nurse or female firefighter that is needed?		police officer and a male fireman (both in uniforms).
Can corn meal be used in the sensory table instead of sand in the infant/toddler classrooms?		All About the ITERS-R, page 140 states that finely milled corn meal, as well as flour, sawdust or cornstarch, is an inappropriate material for the sensory table because it might cause asphyxiation if inhaled by children.
If half or more of the babies are sleeping, is it okay to play soothing music?		It is ok to play soothing music at naptime.
Can a provider sit on the floor with a baby and feed the baby a bottle on her lap?		All About the ITERS-R, page 24 states: "Sitting on the floor while feeding children is not acceptable because the staff members' hands are likely to become contaminated when they sit down or stand up."
Can a toddler classroom have a "smelling station?" The teacher uses paint cups with the lids and inside the cups are garlic, cocoa powder, spices, etc... that the children smell.		The classroom can have a smelling station; however, the assessors will be looking at the safety of items in the cups and supervision of the activity. Finely ground materials, like cocoa powder and spices, as well as corn meal, flour, cornstarch, and sawdust, are inappropriate materials because they can be inhaled by children and cause asphyxiation. The size and toxicity of the item, as well as supervision of the activity would also be considered.
How long is an infant allowed to lay in their crib after they wake up? I know they can be placed in a crib for up to 15 minutes while happy before falling asleep and 2-3 minutes unhappy before falling asleep but I am unsure about when they wake up.		Infants should be taken out of their crib when they are awake and ready to play.
Also, when the toddlers and two year olds wake up before naptime is over, often times they are expected to stay on their cots, is this okay if they are given a book or puzzle to play with?		This depends on how interested the child is with these activities and the length of time they are required to stay on cots.
Is it counted against a toddler teacher if she reads to the children at the table while they are eating lunch?	9/26/13	with many QRS questions, it would be hard to answer this without being in the classroom to observe this practice. Many times ratings are the result of several factors observed throughout the observation. Questions I have for you: What is the intent of this activity? What is the benefit to children? Meal times are great opportunities to have rich language experiences and provide intentional conversations and modeling for children. These back and forth conversations have the potential to increase scores in language items as well as support individual child outcomes (i.e.—encouraging a picky eater to try a new food, etc.).

<p>I am working with a program that has a digital picture frame in their infant, toddler, and two's classrooms and the pictures in it are only of the children in the classroom. This program's philosophy includes exposure to technology for all children, but I've never seen one of those picture frames in a classroom before. Would that affect their score at all?</p>	5/11/15	<p>We all are in consensus that we would not count the digital picture frame against the infant/toddler/two's classroom if it is just used as a picture frame; however, I would still say "it depends" on how it is being used. For example, children pass by and look at their photo or photos of children in classroom would be considered ok and not really screen time. However, if children were planted in front of the frame and had to look at it like a slide show, that might be taken into consideration as screen time.</p>
<p>I was at a program Friday and the infant classroom had their clear bins, no lids, velcroed to the shelves. What is the situation with Velcro?</p>	5/26/15	<p>To best help you answer the question, you would need to refer to the definition of accessibility in the ITERS-R: "Children can reach and are allowed to use toys, materials, furnishings and/or equipment. Toys on open shelves must be within easy reach of children. No barriers can be present to prevent children from reaching them."</p> <p>The bins did not have lids, but were children able to reach and allowed to use the materials? Was the Velcro keeping the bins on the shelf and not allowing easy reach or use of the toys/materials for children? Did children have access to the materials?</p>
<p><u>ITERS #2 Furniture for routine care and play, 3.1</u> – "Enough furniture for routine care." I had a teacher from a toddler room ask me about whether she had sufficient tables and chairs in her classroom. Their room is licensed for 10 children. They have one table and chairs that seats 8 children and a small Lego table that seats 2 children. Her initial question was whether it was ok that all the children weren't sitting together. I said that was ok, but asked if she was able to sanitize the Lego table and she yes, she could. My initial thought was the Lego table was ok for this item because it is not looking at health, just whether they had enough furniture, but the All about Book says that "the piece of</p>		<p>I would give credit at 3.1 since they have enough chairs for all children.</p>

furniture must be usable for its intended purpose". Can I give her a Y at 3.1?		
Under item 1, Indoor space, if the threshold coming into the building is over ½" and unbeveled, do we score a no at 5.3 even if the classroom meets the other requirements?		Yes, you would score no at 5.3.
Under item 2, Furniture for routine care and play, if adult seating is available, but staff do not use it, do we still score 7.4 yes?		We think this would be scored yes if it is available. Only if they do not have it available would be scored no-doesn't say in All About or spiral that they need to be seen using it, just that it is available. Also, they would need enough adult furniture available for each adult who would need to use the furniture.
Under item 12, helping children understand language, we heard several uses of NO-not a nice choice, not on the kitchen, they are not all for you, etc. I would score no at 3.4, what do you think?		If there are too many "no's" 3.4 would be scored no. There should be very few no's; there may be some instances when "no" is used in a reasonable way (stop child from hurting another child) but look of a positive response with the "no" and response of the child to what the teacher says. The environment should be set up so the teacher does not have to say no.
Under 16, Active physical play, if a playground is situated next to a parking lot and the program does not have bollards, where would you give a no, 3.3? Also is the fence is not 4' all the way around the playground, were would you give a no?		You would score safety issues for Item 16 at 5.5.
Under 19, blocks, if the program has 20 vinyl blocks, some with textures and some just solid cubes, can you give credit for 2 sets of blocks even though they are the same "type"?		No, this would not be 2 sets of blocks; they are the same type.
Under 31, Group play activities, if all the children go to do an art activity during free play, you know how toddlers stick together, would you consider it a group activity? If it is considered a group activity, is it ok that there are two tables, next to each other, but not touching, with 9 children, 6 at one and 3 at the other, for 5.2 group size.		Under Notes for Clarification: "Group activities are staff initiated and have an expectation of child participation." So, if the teacher called them to table, pulled them from play, announced the activity and all were expected to be there, then I would consider it a group activity. If there were two tables and nine children there to do the art activity, I would find it unusual that all nine children voluntarily moved to the tables for the art activity?? The group size seems ok; the other issue would be supervision depending on what art materials were used and how well they were being supervised.

Under 32, Provision for children with disabilities, if the staff report there is a child with a disability enrolled in the classroom, but absent that day, do we score the item?		Yes, Item 32 would still be scored.
For ITERS item 3, I know that vinyl covered blocks count as a soft toy...if they have a set that includes 10 of these blocks, does each block count as a soft toy (equaling 10 soft toys) or only as 1 soft toy? Would homemade felt finger puppets count as a soft toy?		<p>I checked in on this with our ITERS lead assessors and we all agree that the felt puppets are an “it depends” answer on what we would see: if they are flat, felt finger puppets-then “no” they would not count for a soft toy. If they are of the “stuffed” variety of finger puppet, then we would probably give credit. I would strongly encourage you to give TA that small finger puppets really do not meet the intent of the Item/indicator on many soft toys.</p> <p>Also, it is not that difficult to find soft toys (Goodwill-even if you need to wash them, there are many ways to get soft toys!) at a reasonable cost-they probably could get some donated by parents or grandparents!</p> <p>You are correct that each vinyl block would count as one soft toy so if they had 10 soft, vinyl covered blocks that would = 10 soft toys.</p>
I know children cannot be forced, but when teachers repeatedly say “Johnny come and sit down with us”, but they do not physically make the child join them – is that appropriate. What if the teacher walks to where Johnny is at and Johnny runs over and sits with the group?		It depends, but it would probably appear to an assessor that “Johnny” is feeling “forced” to come back over to circle (what is the intent of the teacher going over to him??)
How is it looked at when the teachers tell the children to sit on their bottoms when they are on their knees or laying on their tummies?		Would need to see the reaction of the children.
What if they do a ½ hour or longer group time, but all the children seem engaged?		The clock starts ticking after 20 minutes even if they are all engaged (rare to see all engaged by this length of time). A group time (planned or waiting time) can be a total of 20 minutes-period, anything after that starts the clock ticking for MOD.
Is corn starch or sand ok in sensory bottles?		Yes. ***Just a note to make sure they are sealed well so that tops would not come off.
When toddlers walk to a park, is it ok to loosely tie a soft cloth around their wrist attached to a rope, so they stay together?		This is not specifically addressed in the ITERS-R. If children were walking to a park, the outdoor area would not be easily accessible (indicator 5.1). Also, it would be important to make sure safety issues

		were considered. For example, what would happen if one child tripped and fell down?
When using the ITERS if the teacher makes homemade paint, can the paint smell like “grapes”, “cherry” as she is using Kool-Aid or is this going to be an issue.		<p>In the new additional notes, art materials that smell like edible foods are not given credit as art materials and it also states that they should not be used. I believe the intent to this would be that young children would get a confused message and may try eating the art materials. This could potentially be a health or safety issue depending on the age of the children. In terms of assessment, we would not count it as an art material. If we observed children eating the art materials it could raise issues of supervision, health or safety.</p> <p>I think it is important as you give training and technical assistance to help providers understand the “intent” of the items and indicators in the scales. This will help them as they make their choices on what to do in the classroom.</p>
I have been rereading the All about book for ITERS-R and regarding enough space Item 1: Page 8 AAB shows 1.3.1d says this room has “enough space”, however when I look at the pictures there is clearly not 3’ between the cribs and the last bullet point under the description of indicator 3.1 says room to arrange cribs to meet the sanitation space requirements for nap (Item 8..3.2) without sacrificing too much play space. Please justify this for me.		I think it would be safe to assume that on page 8, the cribs have solid ends so they are spaced back to back to meet the health requirements. Most of the cribs I have seen in classrooms have solid ends and at this time we are not adopting the new additional notes from #8 of the ITERS-R.
Item 2: on page 22 in regards to 5.3 it says: Infant seats that support young infants in a semi-sitting position allow babies to see more of what is going on around them. So if a program has low open shelving and infant seats (like the one in picture 2.5.5a, Page 24) would this count for two different provisions, or would they both count for play?	4/25/13	Usually in an infant room, we would count the low open shelving and/or the infant seats as supporting independence for play. High chairs, for infants who are able to sit, would count for routines as well as steps up to sink. I would just want to caution that whenever infant seats are used it can impact “much of the day” when infants are left in these seats and they do not have access to toys.
Also in regards to 3.4-if plastic high chairs are used with attached trays, and foot rests, but no padded seat cushion, and no safety straps, would credit be given. Since the chairs would be slippery I think not. But I also wonder about the need for safety straps if the tray is attached?		This would be difficult to answer without seeing how infants are actually sitting in the high chair. If we observed infants slipping and sliding in a chair then we would say the seat was not comfortable and supportive.

<p>Item 4: If a changing table is placed against the wall, but with a glance, the only staff member in the room can see the rest of the children, is this considered ok if there are no hidden areas of the room?</p>		<p>Again, this would be difficult to answer without seeing the classroom, knowing the scheduling of staff, etc. What I would be able to say: diapering tables facing the wall are one major problem with visual supervision; usually you would not be able to see all of the play area at a glance while diapering an infant. If there is only one staff member in the room for periods of time, that would be considered another major problem with room arrangement. Food preparation and handwashing areas also need to be considered when there is one staff member in a classroom.</p>
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