




# Module 4

## The Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale, Third Edition (ECERS-3) and Purposeful Play



Division of Early Childhood Performance Team

# Covid-19 Considerations

*The information offered in this module is based on best practices as measure by the ECERS-3 tool. While highly aligned with best practices for health and safety during the Covid-19 pandemic, it may not reflect all aspects of the most current policies and requirements.*

*For specific information on ECERS aligned early childhood practices and the latest Covid-19 guidance, please refer to the resources included in this course.*

# Covid-19 Considerations

Please refer to the Purposeful Play/Center Time section of the Covid guidance document for more specific information pertaining to the topics covered in this module.

# Objectives

## Participants will gain an understanding of:

- The meaning and importance of purposeful play
- Room arrangement and clearly defined centers
- The common term in the ECERS-3: Accessibility
- Implementing smooth transitions
- ECERS-3 Activities Items 17-27
- The various interactions encouraged in each center

# Purposeful Play



- Purposeful Play
- Item 3: Room arrangement for Play and Learning
- Accessibility
- Transitions
- Item 34: Free Play
- Activities and Interactions

# Purposeful Play

- Play is an important vehicle for developing a variety of skills outlined in the PKFCC.
- Children are more likely to be engaged and learn when they can select their own materials with staff support.
- Communication and social emotional development is supported through meaningful interactions with staff, peers, and a variety of materials.

# Purposeful Play

- All children should be able to access and choose from the materials in the *Activities* subscale for at least **1 hour of the observation, not including:**
  - transitions
  - cleanup
  - **small groups** that are mandatory (not children's choice)
  - **optional mealtimes**

## Things to consider

### Item 3: Room arrangement for play and learning

- A variety of play areas
- At least 5 clearly defined interest centers
- The classroom is arranged for easy supervision
- Play activities are not interrupted
- Active and quiet areas are separated



# Play Area Vs. Clearly Defined Interest Center

## Play areas:

- Are spaces to play
- Can be within another play area
- Can be with materials for different types of play

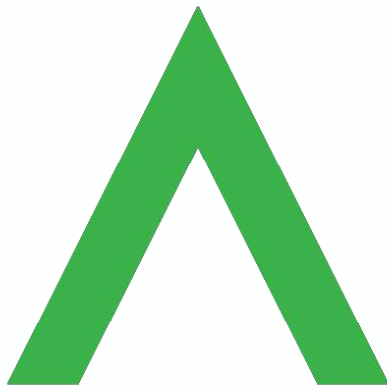
## Clearly defined interest centers:

- Only have materials for a specific type of play
- Offer appropriate space for the activities allowed
- Have materials and furniture to use them in the same space
- **Typically include the Cozy Area, Blocks, Dramatic Play, Reading, and Nature/Science Centers**

# Accessibility

Spaces, materials, furnishings, and equipment are considered “accessible” during the three-hour observation when children:

- 1) Can easily reach and use (e.g., not on high shelves or in containers with difficult-to-open lids)
- 2) Are not required to do something else (e.g., participate in a mandatory activity or complete a meal).



A three-hour observation window is used as a “*time sample*” representing what typically occurs during daily routines and play (e.g., meals, toileting, Center Time, and gross motor play).

# Accessibility in High Quality Programs

The table below shows daily free play time requirements:

Program Length	6 hr. 20 min	8 hr.	10 hr.
Indoor Free Play	2 hrs. 7 mins.	2 hrs. 40 min	~3 hrs. 20 min
Outdoor Gross Motor Play	1 hr.	1 hr.	1 hr.

## Things to consider:

### Item 33: Transitions and waiting times



- Transitions are smooth, gradual, and individualized.
- Staff are prepared for the next activity.
- Staff supervise and follow up carefully to ensure children are productively engaged.
- Waiting times do not exceed 3 minutes during any transition.
- The schedule is posted in the room where it can be easily seen (facing into the classroom if posted on the door).

# Transitions

- Are transitions (including routines e.g., handwashing and toileting) done individually, in small groups or in one large group?
- What are children doing between activities and routines?
- Is the time set aside for transitions between events realistic?

# Item 34: Free Play



## *What is it ?*

Children are allowed to select materials and companions and manage play independently with staff support.

## *Why is it important?*

Free play is when children learn how to make decisions, interact with peers and develop theories about the world around them.

## Item 34: Free Play

### Things to consider:

- **Time:** Any 3-hour period should include:
  - At least 1 hour of free play activities
  - 30 minutes outdoors (weather permitting)
  - A meal
  - A transition
- **Activities:** Many varied toys, games and equipment should be provided, indoors *and* outdoors
- **Supervision and interactions** should:
  - Keep children safe and healthy
  - Help children develop critical thinking skills
  - Facilitate engagement in play

# Activities and Interactions

- Item 17: Fine motor
- Item 18: Art
- Item 19: Music and movement
- Item 20: Blocks
- Item 21: Dramatic play
- Item 22: Nature/science
- Item 23: Math materials and activities
- Item 24: Math in daily events
- Item 25: Understanding written numbers
- Item 26: Promoting acceptance of diversity
- Item 27: Appropriate use of technology





# Many and Varied Materials



The types of activities and materials children can access will:

- Allow staff to support children with materials
- Determine skills that can be practiced
- Support understanding of logical relationships
- Help develop reasoning skills
- Broaden their experiences
- Support language learning
- Encourage creativity

# Item 17: Fine Motor



## *What is it ?*

Activities when the majority of the group is required to participate in the same staff-led activity.

## *Why is it important?*

- Good eye-hand coordination is especially important as children learn self-help skills and become ready for academic tasks that require greater motor control.
- The types of activities and materials children can access in the classroom determine the kinds of fine motor skills they can practice.

# Item 17: Fine Motor



## Things to consider:

At least 10 materials with 1 from each category:

- Organized for easy access and cleanup
- On different levels of difficulty
- With a convenient place to use

### Examples

#### Interlocking Building Materials

- Legos
- Lincoln Logs
- Bristle Blocks
- Gears
- Snap Cubes

#### Art materials

- Crayons, markers
- Pencils
- Paints
- Tools (e.g., hole puncher, tape)
- Clay

#### Manipulatives

- Beads/strings
- Nuts and bolts
- Pegboards
- Pattern blocks
- Zip, snap, and button toys

#### Puzzles

- Floor puzzles
- Wooden inset puzzles
- Knobbed puzzles

## Engage children by:

### Item 17: Fine Motor



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- Showing or using materials with the child
- Having back-and-forth conversations related to activity
- Expanding children's vocabulary
- Helping children in understanding concepts

# Item 18: Art



## *What is it ?*

Activities and materials that allow children to show their creative expression.

## *Why is it important?*

Children develop fine motor and spatial reasoning skills as they experiment with shapes, lines, space, and the combination of colors along with a variety of materials.

# Things to consider:

## Item 18: Art



At least 1 material from each category:

- Individual expression encouraged
- 3-dimensional activities provided
- Relates to current themes or interests

### Examples

#### Drawing Materials

- Paper
- Crayons
- Markers
- Colored pencils
- Pens
- Chalk

#### Paints

- Tempera
- Finger paints
- Watercolors

#### 3-Dimensional

- Play dough
- Clay
- Wood scraps
- Recycled materials

#### Collage Materials

- Felt scraps
- Feathers
- Yarn
- Ribbon
- Foam/wooden shapes

#### Tools

- Child-sized scissors
- Hole puncher
- Tape
- Stamps
- Stencils

## Engage children by:

### Item 18: Art



- Joining in or teaching how to use more complex materials
- Having back-and-forth conversations related to activity
- Taking dictation of their work or encourage older ones to write their own captions



# Item 19: Music



## *What is it ?*

Activities with music and/or movement as the primary content.

## *Why is it important?*

- Helps children develop gross motor skills
- Encourages creativity
- Exposes children to different cultures
- Encourages expressive and receptive language development



## Item 19: Music and Movement



### Engage children by:

- Singing or participating in dance/movements with them
- Encouraging them to join along in dancing, clapping, or singing along
- Pointing out/experimenting with rhyming words, sound repetition, or do finger plays with them

# Item 20: Blocks



## *What is it ?*

Materials that children use to build different types of structures. they do not restrict children by having pieces fit together in a special way.

## *Why is it important?*

- Blocks challenge children to carefully place and balance materials to create a variety of structures.
- A variety of blocks help children learn about math concepts as they play.

## Things to consider:

### Item 20: Blocks



- Provide enough blocks and space for 3 children to play in a clearly defined
- Provide small people, vehicles, and animal accessories
- Organize blocks by type
- Store blocks and accessories on open shelves
- If the space allows, provide large hollow blocks indoors or outdoors to enhance play

# How can staff ensure that the classroom has a “Special Block Area”?

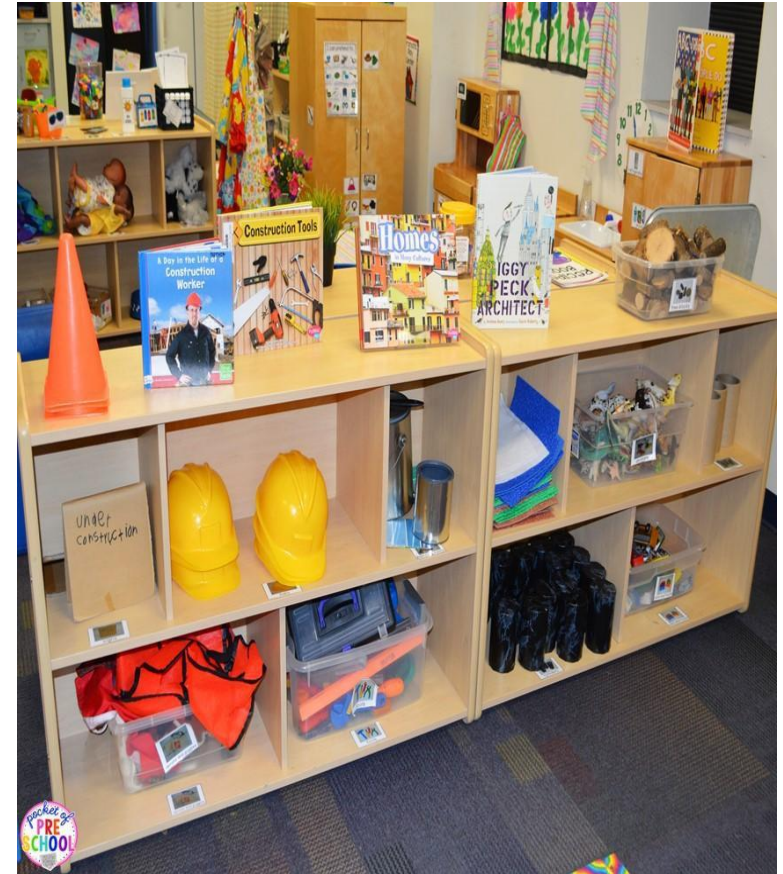


- Only offer materials and accessories specific to block building in this area (interlocking toys, such as floor puzzles and train tracks, are not considered block materials)
- Provide a space that allows children to play with blocks and accessories with minimal interruptions
- Provide a flat surface for building



### This Block Center:

- Is large enough for 3 children
- Has enough blocks for at least 3 children to build sizeable structures
- Provides a flat surface for building



### This Block Center:

- Contains materials that may distract children from block building



# What types of accessories can I have in the Block Center?



## Engage children by:

### Item 20: Blocks



- Having conversations with them as they use blocks
- Taking dictation of their creations and structures
- Pointing out math concepts in an interesting way (e.g., more/less, size/shape, measurement, quantity)

# Item 21: Dramatic Play

## *What is it ?*

Activities when children pretend or act out various roles.



## *Why is it important?*

- Children practice many skills and attempt to understand what happens in their world
- Engaging in dramatic play helps children practice language skills, develop social skills, and work through emotional difficulties.



# Item 21: Dramatic Play

## Things to consider:

- Provide access to many and varied dramatic play materials
- Provide props for play in a housekeeping theme, with additional housekeeping and/or occupational props for children to act out what they observe in their lives.
- Clearly define the Dramatic Play Center, with enough space to play and organized storage.
- Include at least four props that represent diversity



# What is considered...

## Varying Gender Identities



# Additional props for play



The materials in this Dramatic Play Center allow children to act out family roles

Many props and accessories provide a variety of options to allow for in-depth play

## Item 21: Dramatic Play



### Engage children by:

- Supporting them as needed with play materials
- Joining in on their play
- Having conversations with them as they use materials
- Talking about numbers (e.g., discussing menus with prices, making signs and price tags)



# Item 22: Nature/Science



## *What is it ?*

Activities that provide children the opportunity to explore the natural world

## *Why is it important?*

- Children are curious about and fascinated by the natural world around them.
- Providing nature/science materials and activities, including plenty of exposure to the outdoor world, gives children a wider base from which to develop vocabulary and understand basic natural concepts.

# Things to consider:

## Item 22: Nature/ Science

- At least 15 materials, some from each of the 5 categories, in a clearly defined center



### Examples

#### Living Things

- Houseplants
- Sprouting seeds
- Class pet
- Aquarium with fish
- Terrarium

#### Natural Objects

- Leaves
- Insect specimen
- Rocks
- Shells
- Pinecones
- Seeds

#### Factual Books/Games

- Nature picture matching cards
- Nature/science puzzles
- Factual nature/science books

#### Tools

- Magnets with objects
- Magnifying glasses
- Color paddles
- Flashlights

#### Sand or Water with Toys

- Sand/water table or bin
- Shovels
- Rakes
- Sifters
- Measuring cups



Living things for children to observe and care for, with staff support



At least 5 nature/science non-fiction books within the Center



Sand/water play with appropriate toys



# Item 22: Nature/ Science



## Engage children by:

- Talking to them about nature/science topics.
- Using daily activities to promote nature/science learning.
- Modeling how to respectfully and positively treat the environment (e.g., recycling objects, avoid wasting water).
- Initiating activities for measuring, comparing, or sorting using materials.



Use everyday events to learn about nature/science



Discuss the weather at CircleTime



Take care of a classroom pet



# Item 23: Math Materials and Activities

## *What is it ?*

Activities that provide hands-on experiences to explore quantity, size and shape to build the foundation for later abstract math learning.

## *Why is it important?*

Young children become interested in math/numbers if their math experiences have a purpose and match their abilities



# Item 23: Math Materials and Activities

## Things to consider:

- Offer at least 10 different materials, with at least 3 from each of the

### Examples

#### Counting/Comparing Quantities

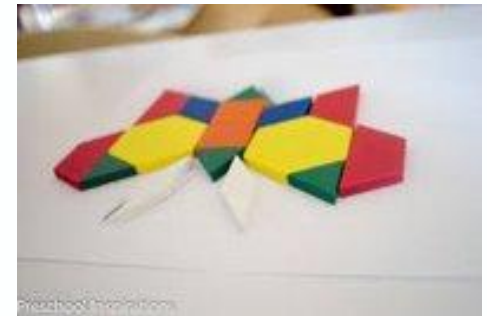
- Unifix cubes with number trays
- Bear counters with sorting bowls
- Dominoes
- Pegboards with numbers printed and holes to match

#### Measuring/Comparing Sizes and Fractions

- Measuring cups and spoons with materials
- Balance scale with things to weigh
- Measuring tapes with objects to measure
- Puzzles, games, or toys showing parts of a whole

#### Familiarity with Shapes

- Shape sorters
- Pattern blocks
- Shape stencils
- Geoboards
- Unit blocks with outline labels on shelves
- Puzzles with geometric shapes



## Engage children by:

# Item 23: Math Materials and Activities



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- Providing information or asking questions
- Setting up/joining in on their play while using math materials
- Encouraging them to use their fingers to represent numbers
- Relating math materials/activities to current themes or topics of interest
- Asking questions that stimulate reasoning
- Offering math activities that require more input

# Logical Relationships

Help children make connections and develop logical thinking structures, such as:

- same/different
- classifying
- sequencing
- one-to-one correspondence
- spatial relationships
- cause and effect



# Reasoning

Young children use reasoning when they play games, classify items, solve problems, observe their surroundings, and listen to others.





How can staff encourage this child to talk through and explain her reasoning after sorting these?



Let's practice...

# Item 24: Math in Daily Events

## *What is it ?*

Daily events consist of the parts of the daily schedule, such as playtimes, non-math large and small group times (if they occur), transitions, and routines.

## *Why is it important?*

Connecting math to daily events helps children see the value and use of math in a meaningful way and helps them generalize math learning to many types of experiences in their lives.



# Item 24: Math in Daily Events

## Things to consider:

"*Math talk*" is the use of math words and concepts to help children see the use of math in everyday events, and to help them generalize math learning.

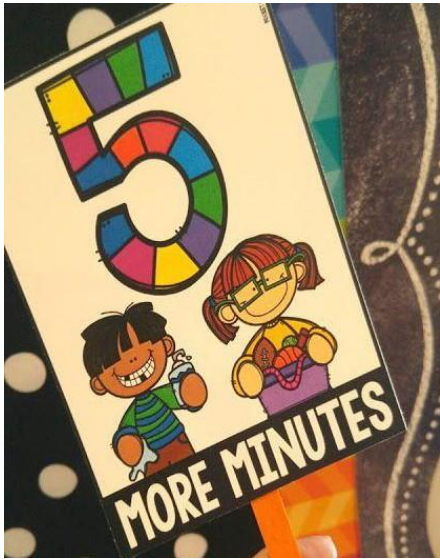
*Daily events* include routines, transitions, and non-math focused play.

When staff use "math talk," math becomes valuable in children's everyday lives, and it becomes meaningful to them.

- Concepts such as 1:1 correspondence, quantity, size, and adding/subtracting becomes understandable







Using daily activities to promote math/number learning

Announce how many minutes before clean-up



Count the amount of steps to get to the playground



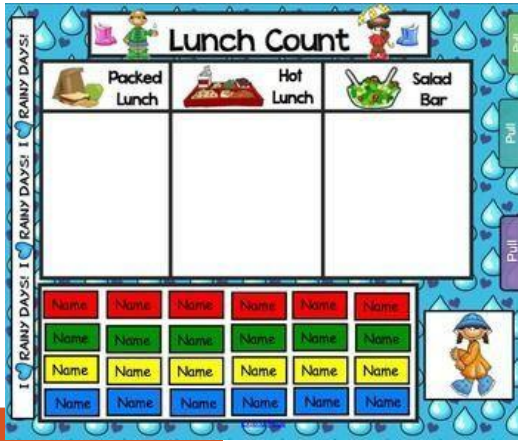
Compare how many children are present or absent at CircleTime

# Things to consider:

## Item 24:

# Math in Daily Events

Use "math talk" with children:



- Using number words in conversations (e.g., talking about how much, how big, which part)
- In transitions and routines (e.g., "Five more minutes until cleanup"; counting while handwashing)
- When playing with non-math materials in other centers (e.g., counting blocks in a tower in the Block Center)
- During large-group times (e.g., counting children present during a morning meeting)



## Engage children by:

### Item 24: Math in Daily Events



- Helping children connect numbers and shapes in the environment (e.g., talk about shapes of traffic signs during walk to the park, count number of days on calendar until a birthday)
- While playing in non-math areas, encouraging children to explain their own math reasoning (e.g., "How do you know if one more person can play here?")
- For older children, giving them more complex math-related tasks (e.g., count number of children to figure out how many are missing)

# Item 25: Understanding Written Numbers

## *What is it ?*

Activities and interactions that help children make connections between written/printed numbers and quantities.

## *Why is it important?*

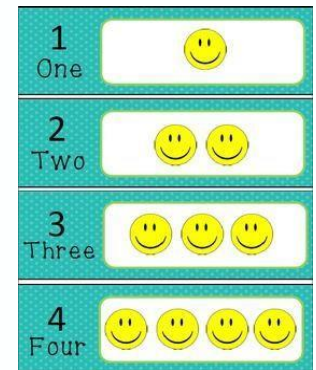
When staff draw connections between numbers and quantities they represent, these concepts become meaningful to children over time.



# Things to consider:

## Item 25: Understanding written numbers

- Helping children make connections between a written/printed number, and the quantity it represents using:
  - Play materials with numbers
  - Displays with print numbers and matching pictures
  - Play materials showing the meaning of print numbers





## Engage children by:

# Item 25: Understanding written numbers



- Encouraging and showing children to use the many developmentally appropriate materials with printed/written numbers and talk with them
- Relating print numbers to the corresponding number of pictures or objects
- Using fingers to show the quantity represented by print numbers.

# Item 26: Prompting Acceptance of Diversity



## *What is it ?*

Positively acknowledging the differences and similarities between groups with respect to race, religion, culture, ability, age and gender

## *Why is it important?*

Diversity in classroom materials, activities and interactions provide the foundation for attitudes about differences.

## Things to consider:

# Item 26: Promoting Acceptance of Diversity



- Materials (books, displayed pictures, accessible play materials) show diversity (race, culture, **age**, ability, and non-traditional gender roles)
- Include diversity in learning activities
- Allow both boys and girls to follow their interests
- Have positive conversations about the similarities and differences among people

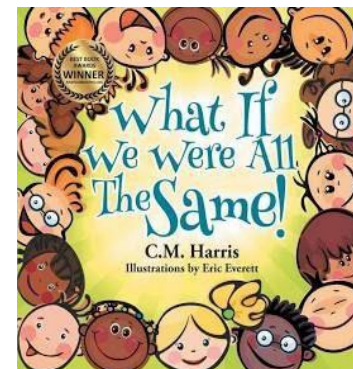
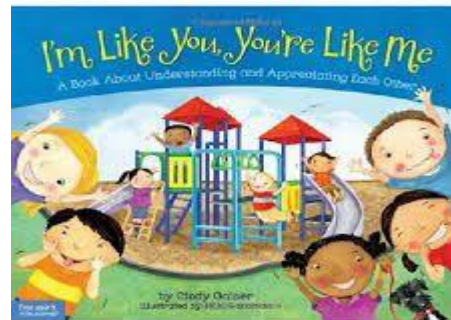
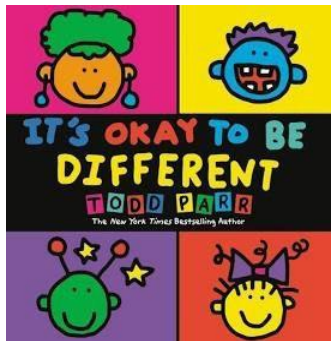


# Examples of Diversity

## Displayed pictures



## Play materials



## Books

# Item 27: Appropriate use of Technology

## *What is it ?*

Electronic media/technology (e.g., Smart Board, iPad, computers used during activities.

## *Why is it important?*

It is not required that electronic materials are used in early childhood classrooms.

However, if developmentally appropriate materials are used for a limited time, they can supplement regular hands on activities, add information to what children are learning and provide another type of experience.



# Item 27: Appropriate use of technology



## Things to consider:

- Use materials that are appropriate and educational
- Ensure that alternative activities are accessible while audio/visual materials are being used
- Use materials that encourage active involvement and creativity
- Use materials to extend classroom themes and activities

# Item 27: Appropriate use of technology

## Things to consider:

Media use can be "passive" or "active":

- "Passive" is when children are not actively involved (e.g., use of TV/Video, Smartboards operated by staff only)
- "Active" is when children can control and manipulate what appears on the screen (e.g., singing/dancing videos, having conversations about what children are watching, or making choices on a game)



Limit children's use of technology

- Up to 10 minutes for passive use
- Up to 15 minutes for active use
- Help children use and set timers
- Utilize a log to track usage





# Keeping Track of ScreenTime



Consider all instances that children are exposed to screen time



# Item 27: Appropriate use of technology

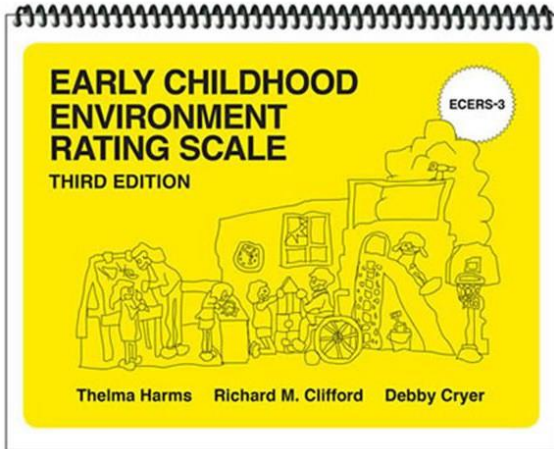


## Engage children by:

- Helping think through problems presented by software
- Encouraging them to explain how to complete a task
- Discussing the content of materials



# For more information on ECERS-3

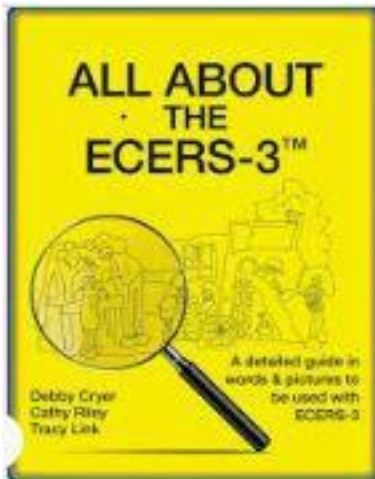


- Please also visit the program assessment page on DECE's website for additional educator resources:

- <https://infohub.nyced.org/partners-and-providers/early-childhood/early-childhood-educators>

- Review the Frequently Asked Questions page

- For other information on ECERS-3 not specific to NYC, please visit <http://www.ersi.info/>.





# Thank you!

Please fill out the feedback survey and leave it on your desk.

**You can also scan the QR code to fill it out online**

