

## ITERS-3: Overview

### WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

Interactions between caregivers and children must have a sufficient level of social, language, and cognitive stimulation to have a positive impact on children's academic and social outcomes (Fuller, et al, 2010; Miervino, 2014). Children need language nutrition – language exposure rich in *quantity and quality* as providers talk, interact, and read with children (Weldon, 2014). A quality program must provide for the three basic needs all children have:

- Protection of their health and safety
- Building positive relationships
- Opportunities for stimulation and learning from experience

ITERS-3 addresses the Language, Cognitive, Social-emotional, Physical, and Health & Safety needs of children ages birth to 36 months. It assesses both what is contained within the environment and the teacher-child interactions.

### WHERE DO I START?

As you plan next steps in quality improvement, note that lower-level indicators reflect practices that are not adequate for the care and teaching of young children. The items at level 7 represent requirements for high-quality practice; therefore, providers should aim for the highest level of quality:

- Items at level 1 represent inadequate quality care
- Items at level 3 represent minimal quality care
- Items at level 5 represent good quality care
- Items at level 7 represent excellent care

### WHERE DO I FIND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION?

The Environment Rating Scales Institute website provides extensive information for quality specialists and providers: <https://www.ersi.info/scales>

- See explanation of terms and updates from ERSI: <https://www.ersi.info/additionalnotes>
- See supplementary materials: <https://www.ersi.info/resources-3rdeditions>
- The *All About ITERS-3* book provides detailed explanations, photos, and resources.

## WHAT ARE SOME KEY AREAS FOR GROWTH?

### **Enrich infants' cognitive and physical experiences.**

- All children should have a variety of toys and materials accessible to them. The youngest infants may require individualized treatment, including more holding and cuddling than older children in the group.
- Minimize the time non-mobile children are restricted by being placed in high chairs, bouncers, or playpens. Children should be unrestricted in movement and have full access to materials and interactions as much as possible.
- Staff should be on the floor with non-mobile children to engage them in conversation, read books, and share communication about a variety of toys, materials, and activities.

### **Facilitate active physical play outdoors at least one hour daily year-round, weather permitting.**

- In Illinois, the term “weather permitting” means temperatures between 25 and 90 degrees, taking into consideration the wind chill. Children should be monitored in cold weather, especially between 25 and 30 degrees, to ensure they are well-dressed. In warm temperatures and especially at 90 degrees, adults should monitor children carefully and ensure that they have appropriate sun protection and hydration.

### **Be aware of outdoor safety guidelines and hazards.**

- For a basic overview of playground guidelines and safety information, please visit the Environment Rating Scales Website:  
[https://www.ersi.info/files/ugd/83d677\\_50451a3538f047ec9210885c60db3544.pdf](https://www.ersi.info/files/ugd/83d677_50451a3538f047ec9210885c60db3544.pdf)
- If a playground has a poured or installed foam or rubber surface, site-specific documentation must be provided to verify that ASTM F1292 requirements are met.

### **Foster language development actively.**

- Talk with infants and toddlers throughout the day using language that is personalized and meaningful to children.
- Use specific words for actions and objects as you talk with children.
- Repeat words; talk about current, past, and future events; and explain the meaning of words to children.
- Respond to children's communication positively, show interest in what children communicate, and give individualized attention and responses to children.
- Initiate engaging conversations with infants and toddlers, as well as older children. Personalize conversations, pay attention to and answer children's questions, and participate in turn-taking conversations.
- Ask appropriate questions that children show interest in answering.
- Ask questions about what children are doing as you narrate their actions. “Are you rolling the ball?... Roll the ball to me! Your ball rolled over to me. I will roll the ball back to you.” Wait for children to answer after asking a question.

**Use books with children and encourage children to use books.**

- Read and use books throughout the day. Point to and name pictures, read text, talk about the story or pictures, and generally show interest in books.
- Encourage children to be actively involved in using books by patting, turning pages, or responding to questions.
- Have plenty of books available and accessible to children, and rotate books regularly.
- Give positive attention when children use books independently, interacting for as long as possible.
- Encourage active use of books and make books easily accessible. Staff may need to bring books to younger, non-mobile infants.

**Encourage peer interaction and provide physical warmth/touch.**

- Show understanding of children's developmental needs while providing opportunities for children to play alone or near other children.
- Model positive social interaction; talk about children's actions and feelings, and point out instances of positive social interaction among children.
- Provide warm physical contact during activities; respond positively to children's attempts to initiate physical contact with staff or other children.
- Vary physical touch, holding, or patting to meet children's needs, moods, or preferences.

**Ensure non-toxic, safe art materials.**

- Glitter is an inappropriate art material because sharp particles may cause eye injury if children rub their eyes or if particles are ingested.
- Foam pieces, packing "peanuts," and other small items are choking hazards.
- Shaving cream is toxic and labeled "Keep out of reach of children."
- Food may not be used as an art material.

**Music materials must be accessible to children throughout the observation.**

- Alternative activities must be available for children during group music activities.
- Music should not be left on throughout the day. When recorded music is used, it must not interfere with any other activity, such as reading or singing.

**Make blocks and accessories accessible to children 12 months and older.**

- See ITERS-3, page 50, for an explanation of blocks and accessories, including amounts considered "enough" for each age group.
- Block accessories include appropriately-sized toys that can be used with blocks to enhance block play, such as small vehicles, people, and animals.

**Provide nature/science experiences.**

- Children should have opportunities to experience the natural world daily, indoors and outdoors. This can occur by taking children outside to experience living things such as trees, grass, and birds, and by providing experiences with nature indoors, with living plants, an aquarium, or pets.

**Introduce math/number concepts informally and naturally, supported by materials.**

- See ITERS-3, page 56, for examples of appropriate math/number materials by age of children.
- Count objects for children, sing songs about numbers, and help older children become aware of printed numbers and their meaning.
- Compare shapes, quantities, or sizes, and show the number of fingers when using number talk.

**Know the limits for TV, videos, computers, and other media for infants and toddlers.**

- No media (i.e., cell phones, iPads, computers, television, or video) is allowable for children under the age of two.
- Media screen time is limited for children 2 years and older to 15 minutes during the observation; alternative activities must be available, and materials used are limited to those “good for children,” such as simple stories or dance activities.

**References:**

*Harms, T., Cryer, D., Clifford, R., & Yazejian, N. (2017). Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale, Third Edition, New York: Teachers College Press.*

*Cryer, D., Harms, T., & Riley, C. (2004). Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale, Revised Edition, Lewisville, NC: Kaplan Early Learning Company.*

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