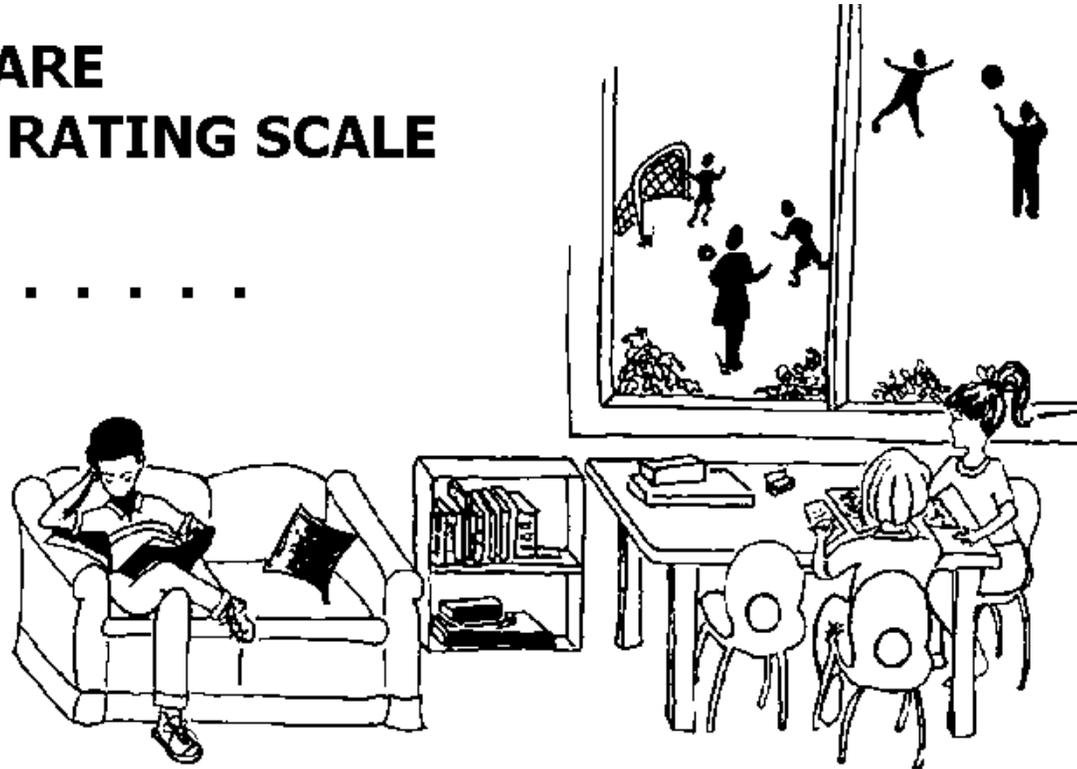


Training Materials for the **SCHOOL-AGE CARE ENVIRONMENT RATING SCALE** Updated Edition

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These Training Materials may be downloaded from the ERSI website at www.ersi.info or from the Teachers College Press website at www.tcpres.com.

The SACERS Updated Scale can be ordered online at www.tcpres.com or amazon.com or by phone toll free at 800 575 6566, fax: 802 864 7626.

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Training Materials for the SACERS Updated Edition

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GENERAL INFORMATION

The SACERS Updated Edition is one of four Environment Rating Scales using the same format and scoring system. These scales are published by Teachers College Press. To order copies contact Teachers College Press at www.tcpres.com. Additional information about the SACERS Updated and the other three ERS scales (ECERS, ITERS, and FCCERS) is available from the authors on our website, www.ersi.info. SACERS 101, an introductory online course that earns CEU credit, is now available. For details visit the ERSI website or contact Cody Carlton at cody.carlton@branaghgroup.com.

The SACERS is designed to assess the quality of a group-care setting for school age children 5–12 years old attending K–6th grade during their out-of-school time. This includes both part-day care before and after school as well as full-day care during school vacations.

The SACERS is used to assess program quality for different purposes, including research, program evaluation, and official quality recognition given by various agencies, including state QRIS. It is also used in training and technical assistance to improve the quality of school-age care and to prepare for accreditation offered by various professional organizations.

An expanded Scoresheet, similar to the ECERS-R Scoresheet, is included in the SACERS. It permits each Indicator in an Item to be rated Yes, No, or NA (not applicable), in addition to assigning an overall quality score of 1–7 to each Item. Additional copies of the Scoresheet may be made from the original that is included in the SACERS Updated Scale, or a printable PDF of the Scoresheet can be downloaded from www.ersi.info or www.tcpres.com.

The training materials in this packet were developed to orient observers to the

School Age Care Environment Rating Scale, Updated Edition (2014, Harms, Jacobs, & White). The following topics are included in this packet.

- A. Basic Rationale.
- B. How the SACERS is organized.
- C. Learning to score the SACERS.

A. **Basic Rationale for comprehensive program quality assessment.**

In order to provide school-age children with quality-of-life care and education during their out-of-school time, we must provide for the three basic needs of all children:

- **Protection** of their health and safety.
- Chances to **build positive relationships** with other children, and the adults who care for them.
- Appropriate **learning opportunities**.

There are two ways of measuring program quality, structural and process:

- **Structural indicators of quality:** features commonly regulated by states to provide a basic level of support for quality. Examples of structural indicators include:
 - Staff-child ratio
 - Group size
 - Teacher education
 - Price of care
 - Staff wages

Structural indicators are often addressed by regulations. They provide a minimal basis for quality, but cannot ensure that quality practices are actually being carried out in a particular program.

- **Process Quality Assessment:** observation of daily practice covering various levels of quality. Examples of process quality assessment include:
 - Interactions among people (staff-child, child-child, staff-parent)
 - Access to materials and activities.
 - Arrangement of space.
 - Schedule of the day.

Process quality assessment is based on observation of the ongoing daily program. It measures what children actually experience while they are participating in the program.

The SACERS Updated is a comprehensive or global observation instrument with Items to observe:

- Health and safety
- Interactions and relationships
- Opportunities for learning

It has established reliability and validity (see pp.1–3 in the SACERS Updated Scale)

The SACERS is designed to help programs meet the developmental needs of school-age children, whose characteristics include:

- Growth of competence.
- Broadening interest and community awareness.
- Value of autonomy.
- Importance of peer group and making friends.
- Admiration for teens and adults.

Programs for school-age care need to include:

- Recreation: outdoor play, sports, “down time.”
- Enrichment: variety of creative activities, trips, involvement of community resources.
- Support for academic skill development: homework time, remedial work if needed, engaging opportunities to enhance academic skills in play and real-life experiences.

Various agencies serve as Program Hosts to offer school- age care.

- Child care centers
- Schools
- Recreation programs
- Other community facilities (housing complexes, religious facilities)

B. How the SACERS is organized.

- The SACERS Updated Edition is composed of 47 Items organized in 7 subscales, as shown on page 3.
- Each Item is a 7-point Likert Scale that has four major quality levels: Inadequate (1), Minimal (3), Good (5), and Excellent (7). Additional Notes for Clarification and Questions to ask the staff may also be included. See Sample Item on page 4.
- Each quality level has numbered Indicators describing what to look for in the classroom. Indicators are scored *Yes*, *No*, or *NA* based on what is observed or reported.
- A copy of the current “Playground Information for Use with the Environment Rating Scales” and the USDA “Meal Guidelines” (or similar guidelines in other countries) need to be attached to the blank pages at the end of the SACERS Updated scale. These can be downloaded from the ERSI website at www.ersi.info.

C. Learning to score the SACERS

1. Review the Scoring System on page 5.
2. Complete the Scoring Practice Activity on page 8.
3. Do the Scrambled Item on page 9.
4. Complete the Sample Situations on pages 10, 11, 14, and 16.
5. Read about Further Training Requirements on page 17.

Items and Subscales of the SACERS Updated

Space and Furnishings

1. Indoor space
2. Space for gross motor activities
3. Space for privacy
4. Room arrangement
5. Furnishings for routine care
6. Furnishings for learning and recreational activities
7. Furnishings for relaxation and comfort
8. Furnishings for gross motor activities
9. Access to host facilities
10. Space to meet personal needs of staff

Health and Safety

11. Health policy
12. Health practices
13. Emergency and safety policy
14. Safety practice
15. Attendance
16. Departure
17. Meals/snacks
18. Personal hygiene

Activities

19. Arts and crafts
20. Music and movement
21. Blocks and construction
22. Dramatic play/theatre
23. Language/reading activities
24. Math/reasoning activities
25. Science/nature activities
26. Cultural awareness

Interactions

27. Greeting/departing
28. Staff- child interactions
29. Staff-child communication
30. Staff supervision of children
31. Discipline
32. Peer interactions
33. Interactions between staff and parents
34. Staff interaction
35. Communication between program staff and children's classroom teachers

Program Structure

36. Schedule
37. Free choice
38. Use of community resources

Staff Development

39. Opportunities for professional growth
40. Staff meetings
41. Supervision and evaluation of staff

Special Needs Supplementary Items

42. Provisions for exceptional children
43. Individualization
44. Multiple opportunities for learning and practicing skills
45. Engagement
46. Interacting with peers
47. Promoting communications

SAMPLE ITEM

Each Item has Indicators for 7 levels of quality						
Inadequate		Minimal		Good		Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4. Room arrangement

Item Name

<p>1.1 Use of space not defined (Ex: no interest centers in large room or several small rooms with no definition of specific purposes).*</p> <p>1.2 Space inconveniently arranged (Ex: traffic patterns interfere with activities).</p> <p>1.3 Supervision is difficult.</p> <p>1.4 No separate area for homework or other quiet study.* <i>NA permitted</i></p>	<p>3.1 At least one interest center with clearly defined purpose accessible to children.*</p> <p>3.2 Other play spaces are used by children.</p> <p>3.3 Easy visual supervision of centers and other play spaces.</p> <p>3.4 Designated area for homework or other quiet study.* <i>NA permitted</i></p>	<p>5.1 Three or more interest centers defined and conveniently equipped (Ex: water provided if needed, shelving adequate).*</p> <p>5.2 Quiet and noisy centers separated.</p> <p>5.3 Centers are arranged to promote independent use by children (Ex: labeled open shelves).</p> <p>5.4 Separate area that is quiet, not crowded, and has suitable furniture for homework or other quiet study.</p>	<p>7.1 Centers selected to provide a variety of learning experiences (Ex: area for art or other messy activities, computer corner, table for board games).</p> <p>7.2 Additional materials available to add to or change interest centers or rooms.*</p> <p>7.3 Furnishings do not overcrowd space.</p> <p>7.4 Easy access to areas where reference materials are stored (Ex: library is open, computer accessible).</p>
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The Indicators of each quality level are numbered

An * following an Item name or Indicator means that there is a note for clarification or a question.

There are sample questions for Indicators that are not easy to observe.

Notes for Clarification

- 1.1, 3.1, 5.1. An “interest center” is a place where materials are arranged for appropriately equipped play space. For example, an art interest center would have art materials near an easel or table on which materials can be used.
- 1.4, 3.4 Score.*NA* if doing homework or quiet study is not part of the program.
- 3.1. “Accessible” means children can get the materials easily by themselves.
- 7.2 “Available” means materials are somewhere in the center, but children may not be able to get them by themselves.

Question

- 7.2 Are there additional materials available to use with the children? Where are they stored? Can you give me some examples?

Instructions for Using the SACERS Updated

It is important to be accurate in using the SACERS Updated, whether you use the scale in your own program for self-assessment, or as an outside observer for program monitoring, program evaluation, or research. It is advisable to participate in a training sequence led by a reliable trainer, such as the training provided by the authors and their associates through the Environment Rating Scales Institute (visit ERSI at www.ersi.info).

Basic Procedures

- Read the entire scale carefully, including the Items, Notes for Clarification, and Sample Questions. In order to be accurate, all ratings have to be based as exactly as possible on the Indicators provided in the scale Items.
- The scale should be kept readily available and consulted frequently during the entire observation to make sure that the scores are assigned accurately.
- Examples that differ from those given in the Indicators but seem comparable may be used as a basis for giving credit for an Indicator.
- Scores should be based on the current situation that is observed or reported by staff, not on future plans. In the absence of observable information on which to base your rating, you may use answers given by the staff during the question period to assign scores.
- For U.S. users, current playground information, meal guidelines, and health recommendations from “Caring for Our Children” are available on www.ersi.info. For international users, country-specific guidelines and regulations should be used.

Scoring System

1. Ratings are to be assigned in the following way:

- When scoring an Item, always start reading from 1 (inadequate) and progress upward.
- A rating of 1 must be given if any Indicator under 1 is scored *Yes*.
- A rating of 2 is given when all Indicators under 1 are scored *No* and at least half of the Indicators under 3 are scored *Yes*.
- A rating of 3 is given when all Indicators under 1 are scored *No* and all Indicators under 3 are scored *Yes*.
- A rating of 4 is given when all Indicators under 3 are scored *Yes* and at least half of the Indicators under 5 are scored *Yes*.
- A rating of 5 is given when all Indicators under 5 are score *Yes*.

- A rating of 6 is given when all Indicators under 5 are scored *Yes* and at least half of the Indicators under 7 are scored *Yes*.
- A rating of 7 is given when all of the Indicators under 7 are scored *Yes*.
- A score of *NA* (Not Applicable) may only be given for Indicators or for entire Items when “NA permitted” is shown on the scale and on the Scoresheet. Indicators that are scored *NA* are not counted when determining the rating for an Item, and Items scored *NA* are not counted when calculating subscale and total scale scores.

2. Calculating scores:

- To calculate the *average subscale scores*, sum the scores for each Item in the subscale and divide by the number of Items scored.
- To calculate the *total mean score*, sum all the Item scores for the entire scale and divide by the number of Items scored.

3. Alternate scoring options:

- The first option for scoring is to stop scoring Indicators when you reach the quality-level score for the Item. This will require at least 3 hours to be set aside for the observation
- The second option is to continue to score the Indicators beyond the quality-level score assigned to the Item. This option gives additional information on areas of strength beyond the quality-level score, which may be helpful in making plans for specific program improvements and in the interpretation of research findings. A longer observation time of 3½ to 4 hours may be required.

Administering the SACERS Updated

1. Before you begin your observation, ask the person in charge of the program to give you a brief tour of the facility, including an overview of the space used and the organization of the program. If the program is organized into self-contained groups, select one group to observe, and follow it for the observation period. If the program is run as one large group, observe the entire program.
2. During the observation, be careful not to disrupt the ongoing activities
 - Maintain a neutral facial expression and body language.
 - Do not interact with the children unless you see something dangerous that must be handled immediately.
 - Do not talk to or interrupt the staff. You will have an opportunity to ask questions during the staff/director interview.

3. The rating scale should be kept readily accessible and consulted frequently during the entire observation. Be sure to read the Notes for Clarification when they are provided for an Item. All ratings should be circled and comments written on the Scoresheet while observing. Ratings should not be entrusted to memory for later recording. The Scoresheet provides a convenient way of recording the scores for Items, subscales, and a total score, as well as your comments.

- The working copy of the Scoresheet included at the end of the book may be photocopied from the scale or downloaded from www.ersi.info or www.tcpres.com.
- It is advisable to use pencil on the Scoresheet during the observation. The final Scoresheet entries should be written clearly and be dark enough to photocopy, should that be necessary. The scores you finally decide on should be circled.
- The Scoresheet may be marked to show which Indicators you need to ask questions about in order to get additional information. Underline the highest score that can be assigned to the Item based on your observation. Then put a question mark near the Indicator that requires a question. You may want to write a key word near the question mark to remember the reason for the question. By preparing your Scoresheet in this way, you can ask questions systematically in a short period of time. Remember to check to see whether sample questions are included for the Indicator(s) that you marked.
- The Scoresheet also includes pertinent reminders and space for recording your observations.

Guidelines for Questioning

1. There are some Indicators that will not be observed during your visit. Therefore, it will be necessary to interview the director or a classroom staff member to complete the SACERS Updated.

- Let the staff member know that you will need at least half an hour when she or he is free of responsibility for the children to ask questions about things you did not see.
- During your observation, note on your Scoresheet the Items and the Indicators you need to ask questions about.
- Take some time after the observation to review the sample questions. These questions are only suggestions. You should feel free to alter questions to make them more appropriate, or to add questions of your own.
- Ask questions on one Item at a time, and take notes or decide on a score before you move to the next Item.
- Ask only those questions needed to decide whether a higher score is possible.

2. It is important to ask questions in a nonjudgmental manner. We all know that questions can be threatening, so the observer needs to put as little pressure as possible on the person who is answering. It is also important to ask open-ended questions that do not give away the answer you are looking for.

Put yourself in the place of the staff member who has to answer the following questions. How would you feel about each of these questions?

- a. “Don’t you worry about the fact that none of your staff have first aid certificates?”
- b. “Because I was not here to see what happens when children come in and leave, could you tell me about how children’s arrival and departure is handled?”
- c. “Describe your cultural awareness curriculum.”
- d. “Are there additional materials to which children have access?”

You can see that questions which imply disapproval (such as “a”) put people on the defensive. Questions that include abstract terms (such as “c”) are hard to understand. It is better to be more specific in your questioning. For example, you might ask, “How do you handle holidays?” Questions that are prefaced by a short explanation about why you need to ask them (such as “b”) seem less threatening. Open-ended questions (such as “d”) about whether there are additional materials, also seems very matter of fact.

Terms Used Throughout the Scale

1. *Accessible*. The term “accessible” requires that children can reach and use materials by themselves, during the times that the materials are available for use. For school-aged children, if materials are stored in closed spaces, they can be considered accessible *only* if it is *observed* that children can freely access and use these materials. This access must be provided as part of the usual daily (or almost daily) practice, with only unusual exceptions. For example, if materials are accessible four days a week, but not accessible on a weekly special activity day, this would still be considered accessible. However, if the materials were accessible only once or twice a week, this would not be given credit as being accessible, unless otherwise specified in the Item. When the time for access is specified in an Item (for example, once a week or daily), base the score for accessibility on what is required in the Item. When the term “accessible” is used in an Indicator at the good (5) level of quality, it is required that children can reach and use the materials for at least 30 minutes in a typical

after-school program of 3 or more hours, unless another amount of time for access is specified in an Indicator. There is no specific amount of time required at the lower-quality levels, unless otherwise stated in the Indicators, but children should be able to have access for enough time to use materials productively.

2. *Gross motor.* “Gross motor equipment” includes *anything* provided for or regularly permitted by the staff to be used for stimulating gross motor activity. This includes manufactured, custom-made, and/or natural objects used for climbing, sliding, balancing, or other gross motor activity. It does not include objects meant to be used for other purposes, such as benches to sit on, shade trees, or shelves children are not supposed to climb. If other objects are used inappropriately, note this and score in the safety or supervision Items. Scores should be based on observation of how the gross motor space, equipment, and supervision function. Especially with unusual, natural, or innovative play opportunities, which may vary greatly, it is essential to observe carefully to see how children use these provisions and what hazards and problems they encounter. Minor potential hazards that do not cause any observed problems, such as tree roots, low branches, hills, benches, or low outdoor stages, should not be considered in scoring. Scores below 3 should be used only in situations that are very dangerous for children. There are two Items in the scale that consider safety issues in gross motor play space and equipment: Furnishings for gross motor activities (Item 8) and Safety practice (Item 14). Safety requirements for playground space and equipment are described in the “Playground Guidelines” available at www.ersi.info. A third Item, Staff supervision of children (Item 30), includes two Indicators, 1.1 and 3.1, that focus on the protection of children during gross motor play.

3. *Hand hygiene* (personal hygiene). *Caring for Our Children* (2011) states on page 113 that hand sanitizers can be used in place of handwashing, unless hands are visibly soiled. Use can be by adults and by children 2 years of age and older. Therefore the use of hand sanitizers is acceptable when scoring these Indicators as long as the product contains 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. Check to be sure that the manufacturer’s directions for use are followed exactly; if they are not, do not give credit. You should ask to see the original container with directions for use, if it is not observable.

If hands are visibly dirty, handwashing according to the required procedure is still necessary, although the time for rubbing soapy hands together before rinsing is changed to 20 seconds rather than the original 10 seconds. Use of antibacterial soap is not recommended in *Caring for Our Children*. Children using shared art or sensory materials, such as fingerpaint, must wash hands or use a hand sanitizer

according to directions, both before and after use. Proper hand hygiene is required before and after shared waterplay. Handwashing or use of a hand sanitizer is required for all ERS observers upon entering the program.

4. *Some.* The term “some” occurs most frequently in Indicators that represent a minimal (3) level of quality, although occasionally it occurs at higher levels. In determining when to give credit for “some” in an Indicator, consider the requirements in the parallel Indicators at the lower and next higher level of quality. For example, if under Inadequate no materials are required, then “some” would mean “one or more.” In cases where a plural is used with the term “some,” then more than one would be required to give credit. When terms such as “very few,” “very little,” or “rarely” are used under Inadequate, then “some” represents a midpoint between what is required for a score of 1 and a score of 5.

5. *Staff.* In all Items involving any type of interaction, “staff” refers to those adults that are in the classroom and who work with the children daily (or almost daily). This can include volunteers if they are in the classroom daily. Adults who are not a regular daily part of the classroom do not count in evaluating whether the requirements of the Item are met. For example, if a therapist, a parent, a director, or an owner of a program comes into the classroom and interacts with children for short or irregular periods, these interactions do not count in scoring *unless they are extremely negative*.

6. *Weather permitting.* The term “weather permitting” is used in the scale with regard to when children can participate in outdoor activities. “Weather permitting” means almost every day, unless there is active precipitation or extremely hot or cold conditions. Weather does not permit outside activity for children when there are public announcements that advise people to remain indoors due to weather conditions, such as high levels of pollution or extreme cold or heat that might cause health problems. It is sometimes said, “There is no bad weather; only bad clothes.” Therefore, children should be dressed properly and allowed outdoors on most days. This might require that the schedule be changed to allow children outdoor play in the early morning if it will be hot later in the day. Or it might require that the program ensure that children have boots and a change of clothes for a day when the grass is wet. After bad weather, staff should check the outdoor area before children go out, dry off equipment, sweep away water, and block off puddles, as needed. Programs with protected outdoor areas, such as a deck or patio, are more likely to be able to meet the requirements for allowing outdoor activity daily, “weather permitting.”

Updated SACERS Scoring Practice Activity

Circle the correct score for each Item reproduced below. Remember to start reading from 1 (inadequate) upward to the correct score. Note that indicators beyond the quality score have been checked. When completed, see page 18 for the correct answers.

<p>1. Indoor space 1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> <p>Y N Y N Y N Y N</p> <p>1.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>1.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>1.3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7.3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>25. Science/nature activities 1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> <p>Y N Y N Y N Y N</p> <p>1.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>1.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p style="text-align: right;">5.3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>2. Space for gross motor activities 1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> <p>Y N Y N Y N Y N NA</p> <p>1.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>1.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p style="text-align: right;">7.3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>26. Cultural awareness 1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> <p>Y N Y N Y N Y N</p> <p>1.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>1.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p style="text-align: right;">5.3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>3. Space for privacy 1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> <p>Y N Y N Y N Y N</p> <p>1.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>1.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p style="text-align: right;">5.3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>27. Greeting/departing 1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> <p>Y N NA Y N NA Y N Y N</p> <p>1.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>1.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>1.3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>4. Room arrangement 1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> <p>Y N NA Y N NA Y N NA Y N</p> <p>1.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>1.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>1.3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7.3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>1.4 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.4 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.4 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7.4 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>28. Staff-child interactions 1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> <p>Y N Y N Y N Y N</p> <p>1.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>1.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>5. Furnishings for routine care 1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> <p>Y N Y N Y N NA Y N</p> <p>1.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>1.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p style="text-align: right;">5.3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>29. Staff-child communications 1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> <p>Y N Y N Y N Y N</p> <p>1.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>1.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p style="text-align: right;">5.3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.4 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>6. Furnishings for learning and recreational activities 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Notes:</p> <p>Y N Y N Y N Y N</p> <p>1.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>1.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>30. Staff supervision of children 1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> <p>Y N Y N Y N Y N</p> <p>1.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7.1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p style="text-align: right;">3.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7.2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>

Scrambled Item

In the following SACERS item, the levels of quality are not placed in order. Read the indicators under each of the four quality levels carefully and decide which should be labeled inadequate (1), minimal (3), good (5), and excellent (7).

36. Schedule

- | (a) _____ | (b) _____ | (c) _____ | (d) _____ |
|--|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Basic daily routine exists that is familiar to children (Ex: arrival, snack, activities occur in the same sequence most days).- Written schedule is posted in center and generally represents what is observed.- At least one fine motor/language activity scheduled daily.- Some scheduled gross motor activity time indoors or outdoors (weather permitting) daily. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- No basic daily routine that is familiar to children.- Schedule is either too rigid, leaving little or no time for individual interests, OR too chaotic with many disruptions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Smooth transitions between activities (Ex: materials ready for next activities before current activities end).- Field trips and special activities scheduled (Ex: program takes advantage of special community events).* | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Flexibility is possible within the schedule (Ex: longer outdoor play period in good weather).- A variety of activities go on at the same time, some planned and some spontaneous.*- Regularly scheduled gross motor time daily for all children on a year-round basis outdoors (weather permitting) or indoors (Ex: variety of appropriate activities accessible so each child can find something active to do). |

When completed, see page 18 for the correct answers.

Sample Situations

In order to prepare for conducting a live observation, score the following four Sample Situations using the required Items reproduced in this training packet. For Situations 1 and 2, use **Item 36 Schedule**. For Situation 3 use **Item 7 Furnishings for relaxation and comfort**. For Situation 4 use **Item 23 Language/reading activities**. After you have completed the Sample Situations check your scores on the Answer Sheet. Before you do a live observation, make sure you read the “Terms Used Throughout the Scale” on page 6 of this training guide.

Sample Situation 1

After reading the following Sample Situation, use Item 36. Schedule, on page 12, to decide on a score.

You are observing in a school-age program that has 20 children ranging in age from 5 to 10 years. When the children come to the classroom at 2:45 they hang up their coats and put their backpacks in their cubbies. The snack is set out for 25 minutes, so that they may have snack as they wish. You notice that they are free to move to any one of several prepared activities set out for them in their room, including a sewing project with yarn and burlap on one table and a watercolor painting project on another. They may also select other activities from the cupboards in the room. There is a schedule posted on the wall that shows that both indoor and outdoor play are scheduled daily. At 3:45 you follow the whole group to the gym. A staff member explains to the

children that they need some exercise and they can't go outside because of the rain. At 4:20 when the games are whistled to an end, some of the children ask to stay and finish the game. The staff remind the children that a local basketball team uses the gym at 4:30 daily, so they must return to their room. The children grumble and shuffle their way back to their room. In the room, they are again allowed to select from a number of activities set out on the tables ready for use. When you ask the teacher about whether this group has any scheduled special activities, she says they do during teacher workdays or when children attend the program all day, such as during vacations

Using the scoresheet below, check each indicator and circle the correct quality score.

36. Schedule				1 2 3 4 5 6 7							
	Y	N		Y	N		Y	N		Y	N
1.1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3.1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5.1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	7.1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3.2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5.2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	7.2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
			3.3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5.3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
			3.4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>						

Sample Situation 2

After reading the following Sample Situation, use Item 36. Schedule, on page 12, to decide on a score.

You are observing an after-school program classroom with 17 3rd through 5th graders. As soon as the children are assembled and have put their things away, attendance is taken and they all walk over to the cafeteria to get their snack. After snack, they return to the classroom where they must do their homework for one hour. Some children ask to play board games, but the teacher says its homework time and they may read quietly to themselves if they have no homework. After homework time, the whole group goes outside to play on the playground. Three children ask whether they can bring some art materials out to finish a project left over from “art day” last week. They are told it’s not a good idea to bring the materials out, but they can finish their project on “art day” later in the week. During outdoor time, a number of parents come to pick their children up. The teacher takes the rest of the group

indoors for the last half hour and they are allowed to choose from a few activities that are not messy or hard to clean up. The activities permitted at this time have been set out on the teachers’ desk. You look for a written schedule but there is none in this room. There is a large blackboard in the hall with the words “cafeteria, outside, inside” where parents can find out where the children are. During the question time, the teacher is asked whether field trips and special activities are scheduled. The teacher says these can occur on Fridays when the children have free choice of activities such as visits to the library or special television programs they can watch.

Using the scoresheet below, check each indicator and circle the correct quality score.

36. Schedule				1 2 3 4 5 6 7						
	Y N		Y N		Y N			Y N		
1.1	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	3.1	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	5.1	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	7.1	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>			
1.2	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	3.2	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	5.2	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	7.2	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>			
		3.3	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	5.3	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>					
		3.4	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>							

	Inadequate 1	2	Minimal 3	4	Good 5	6	Excellent 7	
36. Schedule*								
1.1	No basic daily routine that is familiar to children.		3.1	Basic daily routine exists that is familiar to children (Ex: arrival, snack, activities occur in the same sequence most days).	5.1	Flexibility is possible within the schedule (Ex: longer outdoor play period in good weather).*	7.1	Smooth transitions between activities (Ex: materials ready for next activities before current activities end).
1.2	Schedule is either too rigid, leaving no time for individual interests, OR too chaotic with many disruptions.		3.2	Written schedule is posted in center and generally represents what is observed.	5.2	A variety of activities go on at the same time, some planned and some spontaneous.*	7.2	Field trips and special activities scheduled (Ex: program takes advantage of special community events).*
			3.3	At least one fine motor/language activity scheduled daily.	5.3	Regularly scheduled gross motor time daily for all children on a year-round basis outdoors (weather permitting) or indoors (Ex: variety of appropriate activities accessible so each child can find something active to do).		
			3.4	Some scheduled gross motor activity time indoors or outdoors (weather permitting) daily.				

Note for Clarification

- Item 36. If a schedule varies throughout the week, base the scores on what the children experience most of the time. For example, if the Friday schedule is more relaxed, while the rest of the week is more restricted due to time for homework, then base the score on the four days of the more rigid schedule.
- 5.2. For this Indicator, “planned” means staff-initiated; “spontaneous” means child-initiated.
- 7.2. Credit can be given if this happens only during school vacations or at other times when the children attend the school-age care program full-time.

Questions

- 3.4, 5.3. How are gross motor activities handled daily?
- 5.1. Can the staff make changes in the schedule on their own?
- 7.2. Are field trips and special activities a part of your program?
Can you give me some examples?

USE THIS ITEM TO RATE SAMPLE SITUATIONS 1 AND 2.

Inadequate
1

2

Minimal
3

4

Good
5

6

Excellent
7

7. Furnishings for relaxation and comfort

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| 1.1 No upholstered furniture, cushions, or rugs accessible for children to use. No provision for “softness” in environment. | 3.1 At least two provisions for softness accessible in the environment (Ex: small rug, bean bag chair or soft furniture for children’s use).* | 5.1 A considerable amount of softness regularly accessible to children (Ex: cushions in reading area, couches in music/listening area, several carpeted areas).* | 7.1 Planned cozy area accessible (Ex: a place to relax, read, listen to music). |
| 1.2 Soft furnishings are generally in poor repair (Ex: rugs dirty, tears in soft chairs/couches exposing padding). | 3.2 Soft furnishings are clean and in good repair (Ex: no tears in fabric, pillow covers washed regularly). | 5.2 Children have access to many soft furnishings for at least one-third of the time they are in care. | 7.2 Cozy area protected from active physical play. |

Note for Clarification

3.1, 5.1 In order for any soft furnishings to be given credit, they must be accessible to children. A small rug or bean bag chair can be given credit for 3.1 but not for 5.1, which requires soft furnishings large enough for several children to use in play.

USE THIS ITEM TO SCORE SAMPLE SITUATION 3.

Sample Situation 3

After reading the following Sample Situation, turn to Item 7. Furnishings for relaxation and comfort, on page 13, to decide on a score.

You are observing in a school-age group for 1st through 3rd graders, that starts at 3 p.m., and ends at 6 p.m. They are in a room ordinarily used by the special education class. The room has desks that can be moved and several large tables with chairs around them. The floor is carpeted. When the children come in after school, they help the teacher take out a thick foam rubber mat about 3 feet wide by 5 feet long covered in vinyl, and a number of bright, soft

cushions. Some of the desks are moved so the mat and a few cushions can go in a quiet corner of the room. A bookcase on wheels with the groups' books is rolled in near the mat. Several additional cushions, some fairly large, are left in a pile for the children to use as they wish. The rug, mat and cushions are clean and in good repair. The children have access to all indoor areas except for the hour they play in the playground outdoors.

Using the scoresheet below, check each indicator and circle the correct score

7. Furnishings for relaxation and comfort		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Y N							
1.1	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	3.1	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	5.1	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	7.1	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
1.2	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	3.2	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	5.2	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	7.2	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	

Inadequate
1

2

Minimal
3

4

Good
5

6

Excellent

23. Language/reading activities*

- | | | | | | | | |
|-----|--|-----|---|-----|--|-----|---|
| 1.1 | Little or no materials accessible to enhance the development of language/reading skills. | 3.1 | Some appropriate materials accessible to enhance the development of language/reading skills (Ex: books, story tapes or CDs, and language games).* | 5.1 | Many appropriate books and language games accessible daily (Ex: Junior Scrabble, Pictionary, Clue).* | 7.1 | Staff take children to library to borrow books weekly. |
| | | 3.2 | Staff are responsive and participate in language games when appropriate (Ex: play rhyming games or language games with children, offer help if needed). | 5.2 | Age-appropriate stories read or told at least weekly (Ex: felt-board pieces to supplement stories told to younger children; chapter books read in installments for older children).* | 7.2 | Children are encouraged to bring favorite books from home to share with the other children. |
| | | | | 5.3 | Children encouraged to use reading/writing in practical situations (Ex: read instructions for games, write letters to friends, retrieve information online).* | 7.3 | Staff help children create their own written material (Ex: stories, poems, newspapers). |

Note for Clarification

- Item 23. Materials include: **print materials** (books, dictionaries, encyclopedia); **audio materials** (story tapes or CDs); **games** (picture lotto, Pictionary, Taboo Jr., Outburst Jr., Cranium, Junior Scrabble, crossword puzzles).
- 3.1, 5.1 When deciding whether books and language games are “appropriate” consider the age and reading ability of the children in the group, as well as the message conveyed in the material. For beginning readers, books with a few words on each page; for advanced readers, chapter books. For all ages, attention should be paid to both the message in the story and to the illustrations. Graphic descriptions of violence or prejudice are unacceptable for all ages.
- 5.2. This can be done for the whole group, or for a smaller group of interested children.
- 5.3. To give credit, you must observe more than one instance during the observation.

Questions

- 7.1 Are visits to the library (either in school or to the community library) part of the program? How often do the children and staff visit the library?
- 7.2 Do the children bring books from home to share with the group? How is this handled?
- 7.3 Do staff periodically help children write their own stories, poems and newspapers? Can you give me some examples?

USE THIS ITEM TO SCORE SAMPLE SITUATION 4.

Sample Situation 4

After reading the following Sample Situation, turn to Item 23. Language/reading activities, page 15, to decide on a score

The group you are observing has 15 children who are in the 2nd and 3rd grades. They meet in a room where they are not allowed to use any of the materials or move the furniture. As the children come in they are asked to choose one of the three tables where materials have been set out. On one table you see coloring book pages and blank paper with felt tip pens. When they finish coloring their pictures, the children are asked to write a story about their pictures. On the second table there is a Junior Scrabble game in a box. On the third table there is a large box with more than 30 books. You look at the books and see that some are from the public library, and that there are books on various reading levels and on many topics of interest, including make-

believe, sports figures, and nature, and none of the books contain violent or inappropriate content. You observe that the teacher helps the children with writing stories, with figuring out the Scrabble game, and with reading instructions for other games. You notice that the children do not seem at all interested in the reading table. When you ask the teacher if she or anyone else reads or tells stories to the children on a regular basis, she says that she doesn't have time to do that and she thinks these children are too old for reading aloud anyway. She adds that they have plenty of time during school hours to use books, and even go to the library if they wish.

Using the scoresheet below, check each indicator and circle the correct score.

23. Language/reading activities

Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N				
1.1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3.1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5.1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	7.1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
			3.2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5.2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	7.2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
						5.3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	7.3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Further Training

Since most SACERS scores are based on observation of process quality, it is essential to practice using the SACERS in a real classroom. Live classroom observation is an important experience for all scale users, including classroom staff preparing to use the scale as a self assessment, directors and other administrators, providers of technical assistance and training, as well as for those who will use the scale as official assessors or researchers. Before using the SACERS in a classroom observation, read the following sections of the “Instructions for Using the SACERS Updated” on page 5–7: Basic Procedures, Administering the SACERS Updated, Guidelines for Questioning, and Terms Used Throughout the Scale.

The level of competence and accuracy required in using the SACERS varies with the purpose of the assessment. If the purpose is self assessment by classroom staff or the program director, then a reliability level of 75–80% would show a basic understanding of the scale. If the purpose of the assessment is to determine a quality score for official program recognition or increased subsidy, which is a “high stakes” assessment, then the assessor must be trained to at least an 85% reliability level and be free of any conflict of interest. Technical assistance providers and coaches also benefit from training to a reliability level of 85%, although their close relationship with the provider creates a conflict of interest, and their scores should not be used to determine rewards earned by the program. For a description of the various levels of training offered by the Environment Rating Scale Institute (ERSI) see our website at www.ersi.info.

To become a reliable user of the SACERS requires an average score of 85% interrater reliability over 3 consecutive field observations with a certified field supervisor who has been trained to a reliability level of 90% by the authors or their ERSI associates. Certified field supervisors must also have their reliability checked

yearly and maintain an interrater reliability score of 90%. Due to “observer drift” away from the correct score, all reliable scale users should have their reliability checked periodically.

The authors of the SACERS and their associates at ERSI provide several additional resources to answer questions that result from use of the scale. Questions about the scale may be addressed to ersquestions@gmail.com to have them answered by the authors and their associates. There are also “Additional Notes” posted on the ERSI website at www.ersi.info that answer frequently asked questions and give explanations to help in the interpretation of words or concepts in the scale that users have found difficult.

Answer Sheet

SACERS Scoring Practice Activity (page 8)

- Item 1 score 5
- Item 2 score 4
- Item 3 score 4
- Item 4 score 1
- Item 5 score 7
- Item 6 score 5
- Item 25 score 3
- Item 26 score 3
- Item 27 score 2
- Item 28 score 6
- Item 29 score 1
- Item 30 score 3

Scrambled Item (page 9)

a = 3, b = 1, c = 7, d = 5

Sample Situation 1 (page 10)

Score 4 because indicator 5.1 is scored *No*, since there is no flexibility possible in the schedule

- | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1.1 N | 3.1 Y | 5.1 N | 7.1 Y |
| 1.2 N | 3.2 Y | 5.2 Y | 7.2 Y |
| | 3.3 Y | 5.3 Y | |
| | 3.4 Y | | |

Sample Situation 2 (page 11)

Score 1 because 1.2 is scored *Yes*, which means that an unacceptable practice has been observed.

- | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1.1 N | 3.1 Y | 5.1 N | 7.1 Y |
| 1.2 Y | 3.2 N | 5.2 N | 7.2 Y |
| | 3.3 Y | 5.3 Y | |
| | 3.4 Y | | |

Sample Situation 3 (page 14)

Score 7

- | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1.1 N | 3.1 Y | 5.1 Y | 7.1 Y |
| 1.2 N | 3.2 Y | 5.2 Y | 7.2 Y |

Sample Situation 4 (page 16)

Score 3

- | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1.1 N | 3.1 Y | 5.1 N | 7.1 N |
| | 3.2 Y | 5.2 N | 7.2 N |
| | | 5.3 Y | 7.3 Y |