

## Additional Notes for Clarification for the ECERS-3

Be sure to replace older notes with newer notes. **Most recent changes are in orange:**

### Release Date

08-2015	Administration of the Scale, Explanation of Terms, Item 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31
11-2016	Staff, Item 1, 4, 6, 7, 11, 14, 15, 17, 23, 27, 28, 29
07-2018	Item 23, 24, 25
08-2018	Item 7
02-2020	Explanation of Terms, Item 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 35
08-2020	Item 25
01-2021	Item 31, 34

### Administration of the Scale. Item 2, page 7:

The three hours must be completed in one continuous block (e.g., 8:00 to 11:00am, 9:00 to 12:00 pm) at one time, and not broken up into smaller portions (e.g., 8:00 to 10:00am and 2:00 to 3:00pm).

### Explanation of Terms Used Throughout the Scale:

**Accessible.** When calculating time accessible count only time that all children have reasonable access. When some children have access and others do not (for example some children are in a teacher required small group or engaged in eating), then the average amount of time those children fail to have access is not counted in calculating time accessible. Exceptions to this rule are that access time may be counted when one or even a small group is involved in toileting, or some children leave the classroom to participate in special activities not offered to the whole group, such as therapy or special classes that parents pay for separately. Start timing only when all children have access and no child is waiting. Clean up time is not considered access time. These requirements hold true for all types of access (e.g., music, art, gross motor, etc.).

**Free play,** means that the child is permitted to select materials and companions and as far as possible manage play independently. Adult interaction is in response to the child's needs. Situations in which the children are assigned to centers by staff, or staff select the materials that individual children may use do not count as free play. Free play does not mean that all areas of the classroom must be open at one time, with all materials accessible. A more limited number of area choices may be available, since free play takes place if children are allowed to choose where they will play, and with whom, from the choices allowed. The allowed choices must include play areas or interest centers of varied types, where children are allowed to choose what to take from toy storage shelves. Free play is not credited when staff pre-select a material that children are allowed to use in the various play areas or centers, when children are not able to freely access other materials in the play areas/centers if they wish. There must be enough areas open so that children do not have problems with access to materials that interest them.

**Staff:** This note applies only to ECERS-3 and not to previous editions of the scale: Under some conditions, a special staff member may be observed working, for part of the observation, with children as a whole group or in smaller groups. For example, all children visit an art room or library, and special teachers work with them. Or a music teacher comes to the classroom and children have a choice of participating in the activities she does with them, or all children are expected to participate as a whole group. In this case, if the staff member works regularly with the children (e.g., once a week or more) consider the adult-child interactions as well as the activities in which the children participate when scoring. Do not consider special guests who visit the classroom, such as firefighters, or another community helper unless they are extremely negative with the children.

In addition, part-time staff members who come and go can be considered, such as "floaters" or other regular staff members who provide extra help or breaks for classroom staff. If they are present for only short periods, do not count their interactions as heavily as those of staff who work with the children for longer periods of the observation. However, if it is required that an interaction is observed a certain number of times, and the part-time floater is observed doing what is needed as evidence for the requirement, then this can be counted.

Routines. When the word “routines” is used in the scale, this refers to *personal care routines*, such as toileting/diapering, meals, handwashing, and arrival and nap preparation, if observed. When certain interactions are required during “routines,” it refers to these personal care routines and not to other daily activities such as transitions or group times.

<b>1. Indoor space</b>	1.2, 3.2	To score “Yes” to 1.2, more than one of the 4 problems must exist in the room. If any one of the issues listed in 3.2 is a problem, score “No” to 3.2.
	5.2	If the classroom has windows with shades or blinds on all windows that are closed throughout the observation, credit is not given since children do not experience natural light.
<b>2. Furnishings for care, play, and learning</b>	3.1, 3.4	Typographical error. The second and third sentences of the 3.4 note apply to the note for 3.1. They do not apply to indicator 3.4.
<b>3. Room arrangement</b>	5.2	The term <i>used</i> carries the same meaning as <i>accessible</i> for this indicator. The five interest centers must all be accessible for use for 25 minutes during the observation.
<b>4. Space for privacy</b>	5.3	If no problems are observed as children use spaces for privacy required in 5.1, score this indicator “Yes.”
	7.2	If no issues about having to share materials are observed, score “Yes.”
<b>5. Child-related display</b>	5.4	See definition of “routines” in the Additional Notes for Clarification, <i>Explanation of Terms Used Throughout the Scale</i> .
<b>6. Space for gross motor play</b>	3.1	The space used must be an outdoor space. Only when weather does not permit use of the outdoor space, can an indoor space be substituted.
	1.2, 3.2, 5.3	Consider the whole gross motor space when scoring. To give credit for “somewhat safe,” children should be observed using the space for gross motor freely, with plenty of reasonably safe space to run and use equipment, and without major hazards located in the areas children tend to use most frequently. There may be some major hazards in the space, but these are unlikely to cause a high risk of injury because they are not located in spaces most often used by the children. Children may come into contact with the major hazards occasionally, but not frequently. The major hazards must be very serious, and children must be frequently exposed to them, to score 3.2 “No.” For example, a popular high climber is located over a cement surface or the swings frequently used by children have little if any cushioned fall zone in front and behind them.
	5.1	If the space is large enough to meet the requirement of being spacious for the 30 minutes required in 5.2, other space(s) used for gross motor play can be smaller and are not considered in scoring here.

## 7. Gross motor equipment

- 3.1, 3.2, 5.1, 5.2, 7.1, 7.2 If the only outdoor gross motor equipment reported to be used regularly by the children is off-site, and children are observed using it during the observation, consider this equipment when scoring. If it is very close to the program facility, such as across the street or just down one block, so it is likely that children are taken to use it daily or almost daily, but the weather does not permit its use, observe the equipment for appropriateness and consider in scoring. If the equipment is located further from the building, and not used during the observation, do not consider it in scoring.
- At the minimal level, either portable or stationary equipment are allowed for scoring. Both are not required. At the 5 and 7 levels of quality, both portable and stationary equipment are required and must also be considered when scoring
- 3.3 Base score on the equipment regularly accessible to the children. Consider all on-site equipment outdoors, and indoor equipment if children are observed using it.
- 5.1 Base the score on all on-site equipment that is used regularly by the children. If weather does not permit use during the observation, outdoor equipment should still be considered. However, to score “Yes,” there must also be enough equipment accessible indoors to keep children active and interested if children must stay indoors due to weather.
- 5.2 The appropriateness of equipment is based on all equipment that is regularly accessible to the children when they can go outdoors, as well as any indoor equipment that is observed being used during bad weather.
- 5.3 Base score on the amount of time any equipment accessible to the children during the observation, either indoors or outdoors, or both.
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## 8. Meals/snacks

- 1.2, 3.3, 5.3, 7.1 Replace note in scale with the following:
- Since three important health practices are required (washing /sanitizing the eating surface, hand hygiene before and after eating, and serving uncontaminated foods), consider the extent to which each of these required health practices is followed. If there is little or no effort in two of the three health practices, (for example, handwashing is completely ignored, there is no attempt to clean tables, and/or foods are served under conditions that cause extreme contamination), then score 1.2 Yes. For all indicators, there can be minor lapses in following the handwashing procedure (not rubbing for the 20 seconds, but rubbing all hand surfaces thoroughly; not wetting hands first but soap still makes bubbles). However, hands should be cleaned reasonably well. If there is some attempt to complete practices, even if procedures are not done correctly, score 3.3 Yes. If there is a significant attempt to do all procedures, but the practices are completed with many minor errors, score 5.3 Yes. To score 7.1 Yes, all procedures must be done with only a few minor errors. When a flexible snack time is provided, and children come and go throughout a period of time, the same sanitary conditions are required, such as sanitizing the table between uses by different children, handwashing completed. If children use hands to eat, handwashing is required after eating to remove saliva and food.
- 1.3 Only score Yes if the atmosphere is obviously strongly negative, with many unpleasant staff-child interactions observed.
- 3.1 Children should be fed every two to three hours, unless sleeping. One meal or snack should be observed during the three hour observation to score 3.1 “Yes.” In addition, water should be offered between meals/snacks when children have been very active, upon request or if the air is very dry.

**9. Toileting/diapering**

If diapering is needed, the diapering procedure in Caring for Our Children is required.

- 3.1 The example referring to “toileting accidents” should not affect the score when a toileting accident is observed, but staff reminded and encouraged children to use the toilet, not ignoring the need for some children to get extra attention.
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**10. Health practices**

- 1.3 To score Yes, the exposure to smoking or smoke-related debris must present an extreme hazard to the children and be likely to cause a major health risk. For example, if many cigarette butts are observed within easy reach and supervision is lax, or a person is actively smoking in the immediate vicinity of the children’s play space for an extended period of time, score Yes. However, if the exposure to smoking or debris is very limited and does not present a high health or safety risk, and supervision decreases the risk, score No.
- 3.2, 5.2 If naptime is not observed, but cots and linens are observed to be stored with minor sanitary problems, (slight problem of contamination, such as a few edges of blankets touching) score 3.2 Yes, and 5.2 No. If there is a major problem with contamination, such as contamination of linens for each cot or floor sides of mats stored touching sleep sides of other mats, score 3.2 No.
- 3.3 Some interaction is required. All interaction observed must be either neutral or positive, with at least 2 examples of positive interaction. No negative interactions can be observed to score Yes.
- 5.3 If staff demonstrate most of the examples in the indicator score Yes. All examples are not required but handwashing should be carried out reasonably well, if not perfectly. If staff obviously give children the message that they do not seem to care for their own health, score No.
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**11. Safety practices**

- 5.1 There can be no more than 2 major hazards indoors and 2 outdoors to give credit. If there are more than 2 in either location, credit cannot be given.
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**12. Helping children expand vocabulary**

- 3.1, 5.1 See the definition of “routines” in the Additional Notes for Clarification, Explanation of Terms Used Throughout the Scale.

<b>13. Encouraging children to use language</b>	1.2,	This note is actually for indicators 1.2, 3.2, 5.2, and 7.2.
	3.2,	
	5.2, 7.2	
	3.5	There may be observed times, such as transitions, that are less relaxed, and there may be times when children are not allowed to talk, such as during short teacher-led group times or while walking in the hallway. However, to give credit, the environment should encourage rather than discourage talking for the vast majority of the observation.
	7.2	See the definition of “routines” in the Additional Notes for Clarification, Explanation of Terms Used Throughout the Scale.
<b>14. Staff use of books with the children</b>	1.2,	Book time is any time a book is read to or used with a child or a group of children. It can be formal or informal.
	3.2,	
	5.2, 5.3	
	5.4	This indicator can be met as staff read to the children or use books with them, formally, or informally, more than once during the observation. When doing these types of activities, they must demonstrate the interest or enthusiasm required in the indicator. The mere reading of a book to a child without showing enthusiasm or enjoyment, suggesting that a child go use a book, or briefly commenting on a child’s use of a book as they walk past may not be enough to meet the requirements of the indicator.
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<b>15. Encouraging children’s use of books</b>	1.2	If this happens twice during an observation, and 75% of the children are not interested, score “Yes.”
	3.2	To give credit, at least two examples of each type of book must be easily observed.
	5.3	If unrelated materials, such as dramatic play or fine motor, are observed being used in the area and would disrupt any book use, and staff do not redirect the play to another space, then the area is not considered a “defined reading interest center,” even if it was originally set up in that way.
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<b>16. Becoming familiar with print</b>	3.1	The note for 5.1 also applies to this indicator.
	5.3	To give credit for encouraging a more advanced child to write, staff must encourage or guide children as they write down what they have said (about their artwork or a note to someone, for example). Simply prompting children to write letters or write their name does not meet the requirement of this indicator.
	7.3	To give credit this must be observed 3 times during the observation.

**17. Fine motor**

- 3.4 To give credit, the materials required in 3.1 must offer the different levels of challenge.
- 5.3 To give credit, at least 2 different examples must be observed.
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**18. Art**

- 7.2, 7.3 To give credit for these indicators, two different examples must be observed for each indicator.
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**19. Music and movement**

General note for item: Since the definition of “staff” has been updated to include special staff who work with children on a regular basis (i.e, weekly), such as a music teacher or librarian, disregard the statement, “Do not count experiences provided by a special music teacher who is not present daily or almost daily, even if the music teacher is present during the observation.” The interactions with a regular weekly music teacher are considered in scoring this item, if observed.

- 5.1 Since the “many music materials” are required to be accessible during free play, disregard the portion of the original note that states, “or if used at group time there must be at least 1 instrument for each child participating.”
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**20. Blocks**

- 5.5 To give credit this must be observed twice.
- 7.1 Since play with large hollow blocks involves the use of large muscles, if heavy (not plastic or cardboard) large hollow blocks are provided outside or in an indoor gross motor space, the minimal time for gross motor activity of 15 minutes does not need to be met before counting the time towards accessibility of the blocks. The entire time spent in the gross motor space can be counted to meet the 25 minutes of access to large hollow blocks.
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## 21. Dramatic play

- 1.3 If staff are rarely, if ever, observed interacting positively with children using dramatic play materials, or the only observed interaction is to control disruptive behavior, such as fighting or the inappropriate use of materials, this indicator is scored Yes. If one example of staff paying positive attention to children in the dramatic play area is observed, or if staff encourage children to use the materials when no one has used them during the observation, score this indicator No.
- 3.2, 3.3 To score these indicators Yes, staff are not required to be in the dramatic play interest center when they interact with the children, as long as the children know that the staff are interacting with them about their dramatic play. For example, a child may bring a doll to a teacher and the teacher might talk about the doll play with the child, or the teacher may talk from another area, but is close enough for the child to notice the interaction.
- 5.3 At this level of quality, staff should circulate to the dramatic play center and have conversations with the children as they play there.
- 7.2 Replace original note with the following:  
To score Yes, observe either print or number talk at least once. Both print and number talk are not required to be observed.

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## 22. Nature/science

When scoring sand/water experiences, there should be a sufficient quantity of the sand or water so children can dig, scoop, pour, fill, and empty containers. Materials that cannot be used for digging, measuring, and pouring, such as Styrofoam packing materials, natural objects (e.g., pine cones, acorns, leaves for children to examine), or gelatinous sensory materials (e.g., goop, Jello) cannot be counted as sand/water substitutes. In addition, do not count foods (issue of wasting food) or materials that are hazardous to the children in the group, such as dried kidney beans, materials that children put in nose or ears, etc. Examples of appropriate substitutes would be millet bird seed or sterilized potting soil. Do not count mulch used as ground cover outdoors.

- 1.3 If the only observed nature/science staff involvement is negative, such as stepping on a cockroach indoors, killing a mosquito, or telling a child about her fear of snakes, then score this indicator Yes. However, if there are also positive instances observed, such as showing interest in plants, animals or the weather, and these outnumber the negative, score No.
- 3.1, 3.3 Sand and/or water can each be counted for both indicators.
- 3.3 When sand or water is provided for children's use outdoors, the time it is accessible can only be counted once the minimal time requirement for gross motor activity of 15 minutes is met.
- 5.1 Even though an outside garden is listed as an example in the original note defining the "living things" category, the garden cannot be counted to meet the requirements of 5.1, since as stated in the indicator, the materials counted to meet this indicator must all be located within a defined nature/science interest center (with the exception of sand and water).
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**23. Math materials and activities**

- 1.1, 3.1, 5.1 Since the use of unit blocks in construction encourages children to become familiar with size and shape, consider unit blocks as math materials for this item, whether labels are present on the shelves or not. One type of blocks is counted as one math material representing familiarity with shapes. For example, all unit blocks are one example, large hollow blocks are a second example
- 1.2 If either behavior is observed, score “No.” If neither is observed, score “Yes.”
- 5.3 If staff model showing fingers to represent numbers, this can count as “encouraging children” only if staff obviously encourage children to follow their model, or one or more children are observed copying what the staff does.

**24. Math in daily events**

- 1.2, 1.3 Score “No” if no math talk is observed being used during daily events.
- 3.1, 5.1 The terms “routines” or “daily routines” are the personal care routines considered in the items Meals/snacks, Toileting/diapering, and Health practices. They do not include other scheduled daily events, such as whole group or small group times.
- See the definition of “routines” in the Additional Notes for Clarification, *Explanation of Terms Used Throughout the Scale*.
- 3.2, 5.2, 7.2 In each of these indicators, the math talk must be about non-math materials, as stated in 3.2. Using math talk in relation to children’s play or clean-up of blocks is not credited here, since blocks are considered a math material and considered in Item 23, Math materials and activities.
- 3.3 For this indicator, any whole group can be considered including routines, transitions, or playing/learning. Additional examples of the math talk might include staff saying to the group, “First we will get our coats; second we will go out and then we can play”, How many people are allowed in the block center? Three, that’s right.”. “Remember we need to rub our hands for 20 seconds as we wash.”
- 7.2 The math talk must occur when children are playing and not involved in transitions or routines.

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**25. Understanding written numbers**

- 1.1, 3.1 The examples must be easily seen by the children and children must be able to clearly see the relationship between the printed number and the quantity it represents.
- At least one easily seen example must be observed to score 1.1 No. To give credit for 3.1, at least two easily seen examples must be observed.
- 3.1 At least 2 examples are required to score Yes.
- 7.3 The materials are those required in 5.1.
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**26. Promoting acceptance of diversity**

3.2, Replace the existing note with the following:

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If stereotyping or violence is shown with regard to any group, such as some “Cowboy and Indian” toys, then Indicator 3.2 should be scored No. Gender stereotyping should be considered here. Look for problems that would be easily obvious to the children. It is not necessary to search avidly for negative examples. Portrayals of men/boys doing traditionally male activities and women/girls doing traditionally female activities are acceptable for this indicator. However, do not give credit for 3.2 if gender stereotyping is portrayed negatively in any way. To give credit for the “non-traditional gender roles” diversity type, in 5.3, some evidence of non-gender stereotyping must be easily visible to balance the traditional roles shown. Examples of non-stereotyping in gender roles means showing males and females doing similar activities, such as both doing construction, both engaged in sports, or both caring for babies. For 3.2, when historic cultural traditions are represented, the images must be balanced with non-traditional modern representations. For example, if traditional African cultures are represented in materials, then current representations must also be included.

5.1, To give credit for materials, children must be able to easily experience them for at least one hour during the observation. For example,  
5.2 if the materials are located in play areas or interest centers, children must be able to play with them for the required amount of time. Pictures in the display must be easily viewed and displayed in spaces children access during the observation.

5.3 For the category of ages, seniors should be evident, since their depictions are often underrepresented in children’s programs.

**27. Appropriate use of technology**

The American Academy of Pediatrics released new guidance for the use of technology with young children. This guidance is provided for parents at home with their children, not for early childhood programs. Many children are often exposed to large amounts of technology at home, and it is not in their best interests to add to that in early childhood programs. Therefore, the ERS item is to be interpreted as written, with the earlier additional note.

3.2, The term TV/video represents a passive use of screen time with no active involvement (“the couch potato”). This use is limited to 10  
5.2 minutes during the observation. The more active use of screen time, such as active dancing or singing with a video, having conversations about photos on the tablet or making choices on a computer game are the “other electronic media,” and their use is limited to 15 minutes during the observation. The two separate types can be combined for a total of 25 minutes screen time during an observation but neither can exceed its time limit.

3.3 If electronic media is used with children for less than 5 minutes, and all children are interested and engaged, this indicator can be scored Yes, even though there may not be an alternate activity accessible. For example, if children all enjoy dancing for a few minutes to a program shown on a smart board, and no alternative is accessible, score Yes. However, this should not occur more than once during the observation or for longer periods of time.

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**28. Supervision of gross motor**

If classrooms are combined during gross motor times, consider the experiences of all children and the supervision of all staff.

If scoring this item when space is being shared with other groups, consider all staff and all children of about the same ages as those being observed.

7.2 To give credit, at least one example must be observed.

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<b>29. Individualized teaching and learning</b>	5.1	To give credit there must be many materials/activities accessible for an hour of the observation and most must be open-ended.
	5.2, 7.2	“Staff sometimes circulate” means that staff do not remain in one or two places throughout free play. Instead they move about occasionally to interact and teach children playing in different areas. However, they do not need to frequently move about the room, as would be required to provide much individualized teaching during free play. A few children may not receive any interaction. For 7.2, no children should be ignored while in indoor free play, and many should be interacted with in outdoor free play.
	5.3	“Most” means almost all observed staff-directed activities, with only minor problems that do not affect most of the group. When scoring, consider all staff-directed times, including group times, transitions, and routines, such as meals or toileting.
	7.1, 7.2	To give credit for these indicators, at least one hour of free play must be observed.
<b>30. Staff-child interaction</b>	1.4, 3.1	If activities with whole group are observed for at least 2 ½ hours of the 3 hour observation, score 1.4 Yes. In addition, 3.1 may be scored Yes, even if 1.4 was scored Yes.
	3.3	Although staff might appear to be neutral in their interactions, and sometimes mildly negative with children, as they attempt to manage out-of-bounds behavior, to score Yes, they must show interest in children’s activities, get along well with children , usually appear relaxed. If staff frequently appear irritable, disinterested or detached, or show extreme negative behavior with any child, score 3.3 No.
<b>31. Peer interaction</b>	1.1	“Most of the time” means for at least 2 ½ hours of the 3 hour observation.
	<b>5.1</b>	<b>If free play time is limited to less than an hour during a three hour observation, do not give credit.</b>
	7.1	Observe two examples to give credit.
<b>32. Discipline</b>	3.2	Usually means that staff maintain the control required to keep children from hurting themselves, one another or being destructive most of the time, with only a few exceptions during the observation. If there are constant minor problem behaviors, such as teasing, taking toys, not listening to staff, or running in the room, in which children do not really become upset or hurt, or even a few major problems that are not stopped, either caused by one or more children, score this indicator No.
	7.1	To score Yes, a total of two examples must be observed: one calling attention to a negative interaction and one calling attention to a positive. If there are no negative effects of children’s actions observed, two explanations of positive effects are required to give credit.

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<b>33. Transitions and waiting times</b>	3.1	To score this indicator Yes, no heavily negative staff-child interaction can be observed, or only one or two mildly negative interactions, during any transition. Even if children misbehave, the problem is generally handled in a positive manner. Score No when any obviously negative interaction (discounting one or two mildly negative interactions) is observed during any transition.
	5.2	To score “Yes” there can be no long delays observed, due to staff not being prepared, that cause children to wait for long periods.

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<b>34. Free Play</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>At least 20 minutes of outdoor free play (weather permitting) must be observed as part of the total 1 hour of free play required for this indicator.</b>
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<b>35. Whole group activities for play and learning</b>	1.2,	Score 1.2 Yes only when there are extreme problems observed with the way in which group times are carried out, so that most children cannot become or remain engaged throughout the activity. Score 3.2 No when problems, such as crowding, trouble seeing the book, or difficulty listening to peers causes many children to lose engagement for extended periods of time. Small problems with these issues that do not significantly affect children’s engagement or enjoyment of the activity should not cause this indicator to be scored No.
	3.2	