

## The ECERS-3 Three-Hour “Time Sample”

ECERS-3 is scored only based upon what occurs during a 3-hour observation. Evidence collected during the 3-hour time sample determines the score for all Items and Indicators. Each program is unique, with daily schedules that best serve their community and varied programmatic needs. Given the focus on interactions in the ECERS-3, DECE wants to ensure that observations take place when it is best to capture interactions between children and staff at play.

The ECERS-3 observation is done during a block of 3 hours in the morning, on a “typical” day, when most children are in attendance. Additional time may be needed to look at materials and assess any additional outdoor/gross motor spaces used by children.

With this in mind, programs are asked to share a sample daily schedule and a recommended “*3-hour Time Sample*” (between 8:00 AM-1:00 PM) for the following components to be observed:

- o Center Time
- o Gross Motor Play
- o A meal/snack
- o Transition

Evaluators will consider the recommended time sample and review the shared daily schedule to inform Program Leadership of the approximate arrival/assessment start time.

On the day of the observation, evaluators will select a classroom at random and review their planned daily schedule to anticipate the amount of time they will be able to observe daily events within the 3-hour time sample recommendation. Based on this, they will confirm the exact assessment start time.

### Considerations for the components of the time sample:

#### Center Time

- Does Center Time occur at the same time every day?  
The ECERS-3 observation can take place any day of the week; therefore, it is important for Center Time to take place at the same time so everyday activities are predictable to children. Changes in the daily schedule that reduces the amount of time children can access and play with materials may impact the score of many Items/indicators.
- Is time allotted for Center Time exclusive of transitions (choosing centers, cleanup)?  
Transitions to centers and clean up can impact the amount of time children have to play. The length of transitions should be considered so that it does not take away from the amount of time scheduled for Center Time/free play.

#### Gross Motor Play

- Is the time allotted for gross motor play exclusive of transition time?  
Transitions to gross motor play (e.g., toileting, putting on outerwear, walking to the space) can impact the amount of time children have to play. The length of transitions should be considered so that it does not take away from the amount of time scheduled for gross motor play.
- What is the plan for Gross Motor Play on days when weather does not permit children to play outdoors?  
On [weather permitting](#) days, accommodations should be made for children to have the same amount of gross motor play and similar experiences indoors. This includes access to gross motor equipment.

- Do special weekly activities impact daily access to Gross Motor Play and equipment?  
The ECERS-3 observation can take place any day of the week; therefore, it is important for gross motor play to take place at the same time so everyday activities are predictable to children. Changes in the daily schedule that reduces the amount of time children can access gross motor space and equipment may impact the score of many items/indicators.

## Meal

- Is the beginning of the meal within 3 hours of the end of the previous meal/snack?  
As outlined by the [USDA](#), pre-K and 3K children should be served a well-balanced meal/snack every 2-3 hours. Time between meals is calculated from the end of one meal to the start of the next.
- Is this an optional meal/snack? If so, how is that handled?  
According to the ECERS-3, if meals/snacks are offered as an option for children during free play times, 10 minutes will be deducted to allow adequate time for children to eat. When young children are given the option to eat or play, they will often choose to play and will go without food for long periods of time which may impact their health.

## Transition

- Are transitions done individually, in small groups, or in one large group?  
Transitions that are carried out in smaller groups tend to be more successful in ensuring that children remain engaged and there are no long periods of time where children have nothing to do.
- Is the time set aside for transitions between events realistic?  
Transitions can sometimes impact daily events if the time allotted for them is not reflective of what really occurs. It is important to take note of how much time transitions actually take; for instance, if 5 minutes is set aside for clean up, but it takes 10 minutes, that additional 5 minutes is going to reduce the next activity outlined in the daily schedule.

\*If a meal is not served during the 3-hour time block, the observer will stay but interactions and language are not considered for scoring during this time.

## Lastly, this 3-hour block of time should:

- Be representative of what occurs in the classroom on a daily basis;
- Not include nap/rest time;
- Start when most children are likely to be present.