



Tips for Using the SCHOOL-AGE ENVIRONMENT RATING SCALE

- ***Be sure there are interest areas with a clearly defined purpose.*** Interest areas should be conveniently equipped and promote independent use by the children. Interest areas that should be available for use include: arts and crafts, blocks and construction, drama and theater, language and reading, math and reasoning, and science and nature. If homework is part of the program, there must be a separate area that has suitable furniture and provides a quiet space.
- ***Be sure that materials in the program are accessible.*** To be considered accessible, children must be able to reach and use materials by themselves during the times that the materials are available for use. If materials are stored in closed spaces, they can be considered accessible only if it is observed that children can freely access and use the materials when allowed. This access must be provided as part of the usual daily routine, with few exceptions.
- ***Arts and crafts are not the same thing.*** Even though school-age children are able to follow instructions and patterns to create a specific craft project such as a wallet or bracelet, they should have a variety of art materials accessible for free choice to use for individual expression on a daily basis. Craft projects should only be used occasionally.
- ***Remember to follow proper handwashing procedures.*** Handwashing for children and adults requires that both hands be washed with liquid soap and rinsed thoroughly under warm running water for at least ten seconds. Hands should be dried with individual paper towels that are not shared. Using antiseptic waterless washes, gloves, or wipes does not count as a substitute for handwashing. If the same sink is used for handwashing and food-related routines, it must be sanitized after toileting use by spraying the sink and faucets with a bleach-water solution.
- ***Don't forget to use proper procedures for meals and snacks.*** Tables should be washed with a soap/water solution, dried with a paper towel, and then sanitized with a bleach-water solution before and after being used for meals and snacks. The bleach-water solution must be allowed to sit for at least ten seconds before being wiped dry. Children should not be allowed to eat snack on the floor and food should not be placed directly on the table surface without a plate, paper towel, or napkin.
- ***An outdoor area should be used for daily gross motor activities year-round, weather permitting.*** In Illinois the term “weather permitting” means temperatures between 25 and 90 degrees, taking into consideration the wind chill. For example, if the temperature is 30 degrees, but 18 degrees with the wind chill factored in, it is not expected that children have outdoor play time.
- ***Be aware of potential safety issues.*** Medicines and other hazardous substances must be kept in a locked storage space; evacuation procedures must be practiced monthly at a time when school-age children are present; parents must be notified if their child is absent without prior notification; and parents must be required to notify staff if their child will be late or absent. Visit the Environment Rating Scales Web site (<http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ecers>) for a link to “Playground Information to Use with the Environment Rating Scales.”