Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale

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The Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS-R) is a scale that is designed to be used with one room or one group at a time, for any children 2½ through 5 years of age (Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 2005 p. 5). When evaluating the importance of the ECERS-R Environment is defined broadly to describe in this scales to include the organization of outdoor and indoor space, the schedule, activities and the interpersonal interactions among staff, children and parents. The scale is composed of 43 measures, which are categorized into 7 subscales. The seven subscales consist of Space and Furnishings, Personal Care Routines, Language-Reasoning, Activities, Interaction, Program Structure, and Parents and Staff. These subscales are based a one to seven measure, with one being inadequate, three being minimal, five being good, and seven being excellent.

The first observation took place on November 4, 2014 at 8:25a.m. until 10:00 a.m. and the second observation took place on November 6, 2014 at 8:00 a.m. until 9:45 a.m. at the ASCDL Magnolia Observation Room. There was six staff present throughout the duration of the observation. There are a total of twenty children enrolled in the class and the highest number of children that were present was a total of thirteen children. There were no children that were identified as having any disabilities. Throughout my time observing on both days I experienced children dropping off, breakfast, toileting/hand washing, children engaged in morning activities as well as morning circle time. Out of the forty-three measures three measures were not applicable and thirty of the measures were rated as a seven.

Throughout the entire observations and when comparing the scores with my group we agreed upon the same scores and there were no inter-rater disagreements between the scores.

The table below shows the three observers average scores based on the 7 subscales and 43 items that were observed throughout the three hours.

Table 1:

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Domain | Observer 1  (McKenna) | Observer 2 (Jessica) | Observer 3  (Bre) | Average |
| Space and Furnishings | 6.5 | 6.5 | 6.5 | 6.5 |
| Personal Care | 6.83 | 6.83 | 6.83 | 6.83 |
| Language-Reasoning | 6.75 | 7 | 6.75 | 6.83 |
| Activities | 5.33 | 5.33 | 5.33 | 5.33 |
| Program Structure | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| Parents & Staff | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 |

When comparing the classroom quality to the overall rating scale it goes to show that within the Magnolia Classroom the overall scores were considered excellent due to the preschool having to follow such specific guidelines that they must meet within the classroom. Starting with the first subscale, Space and Furnishings, all of the furniture that is both indoor and outdoor is accessible for all of the children, as well the furniture being accessible for the adults and all of the furniture in good repair. Throughout the classroom there are numerous windows as well as blinds to keep the light out during naptime as well as allowing light into the classroom for most of the day. In the classroom there is more than enough space for various activities, including each of the areas is distinguished, such as an area for relaxation on the couch while reading books, a kitchen, a dress up area, an oversized rug that is used for circle time and for other activities that include fine motor manipulatives, such as train sets and marble mazes. Each area is well defined throughout the classroom as well as having the appropriate amount of visibility to see all children within the classroom. When looking at the subscale regarding space for gross motor there were no major or minor safety hazards, as well as there were no major safety hazards indoors and only one minor safety hazard indoors is the hard tile floor throughout the classroom.

In regards to the Personal Care Routines subscale greeting and departing is the first measure mentioned. Drop offs are well facilitated between both the teachers and staff as well as between the child and parent/caregiver, if children are having a difficult time with drop offs the teachers are there to talk with the child and ease the drop off. With having to provide the children with Breakfast, Lunch and Snack proper sanitation procedures are taken care of including, proper hand washing before and after the meal, as well as proper wiping down of the table before and after meals. Observing how one prepares for naptime the cots are placed 36” apart from one another or separated throughout the classroom in a designated area. During my time observing I witnessed twelve children correctly use the toilet as well as being diapered if necessary, also after the children were done using the restroom I witnessed the twelve children wash their hands. When looking at the safety hazards there were no major or minor safety hazards outside, also there were no major safety hazards indoor, but only two minor safety hazards that we considered, which were adult hand washing to occur more frequently.

In regards to the Language-Reasoning subscale Books and pictures are open for the children to utilize at any time throughout the day, especially during naptime. Throughout the classroom it is essential for all staff to speak to children in a positive and encouraging way that promotes language and reasoning skills. For example children are to actively participate in signing during circle time as well as discuss what is happening during a situation and to also express their thoughts or feelings in a way that can be understood by another child or staff. Also, staff is encouraged to engage with the children on a deeper level to extended conservation. For example, staff ask simple questions such as, “What color is this shape?” or “How do you say this color in Spanish?” for the children to become engaged in conversation and provide answers to the questions they are asked.

In regards to the Activities subscale fine motor activities are open and available to children all throughout the day. Some fine motor manipulatives include scissors, tape measures, flubber, play dough, and small puzzles that are either categorized by shape, color, or numbers. Observing the art center, which is also open and available all throughout the day the children have access to makers, shaving cream and foam paint, individual notebooks, paints and an easel that has paper ready to paint on. For music and movement the children have a limited amount of time to access this area, only music is played during circle and naptime. For the block area children have access to both small and large blocks. Outside the children have access to a large sand area that includes a climbing structure, a playhouse as well as shelving to store bowls and utensils. Within the dramatic play area there are both male and female dress up clothes. The boys clothing includes, a basketball jersey, a cape, and a poncho and for the girls clothing this includes a snow white dress, Minnie mouse dress, and butterfly wings. The nature and science subscale was scored as inadequate due to during the observation nothing of nature or science was displayed throughout the classroom. For the math and number subscale counting puzzles, green, yellow and a blue time are made available for the children along with measuring cups, and puzzles with different sizes of shapes. The use of Television, video, and/or computers is not available to the children. When promoting acceptance of diversity in the classroom there are books that include different races and cultures.

In regards to the Interaction subscale throughout the classroom there is continuous supervision of the children as well as during gross motor activities. In regards to staff-child interactions staff greet children with an open and warm-hearted response, and with no discipline of any kind directed or give to any child within the classroom.

In regards to the Program Structure, the schedule, free play, and group time is all based upon the children and what they are needed each day, whether that is longer time outside, and a shorter circle time, or if they are engage in a certain activity and wish to stay longer, they staff is flexible and can make accommodations. Within the classroom there are no children with any known disabilities.

The final subscale is for Parents and Staff, in the main entrance of the classroom there is numerous bulletin boards regarding what is going on within the classroom as well additional information regarding information based children at different developmental stages. In regards to the staff interaction and cooperation, there are weekly meetings that are held to discuss the classroom as a whole and also for children and their individual needs.

After the ECERS-R presentation and the three hours of observation time spent in the Magnolia observation room I have learned that this tool is a main component of how the classroom is constructed. Each measure along with each subscale is looked at with a deep consideration when working in the classroom. Not only do the staff have to think in regards to the children and their interactions, but also the staff have to consider is there enough space for the children, are all of the personal care routines being implemented correctly and in a way that can be understood by the children, are they using appropriate language with the children that not only promotes further engagement, but also fosters independence. In thinking of terms of activities we have to ask is there enough activities that further their fine and gross motor skills, while still allowing them optimal room for growth. There is a large amount to consider when using this tool, but by following the specific guidelines that are provided in the ECERS-R we are doing the most important thing for the children, providing an environment that not only supports independence but also fosters independence. I consider this tool to be extremely helpful as well as reliable due to following all specific guidelines that allow the classroom to reach it’s potential seven and not only does the tool help improve the quality of the classroom but also improve the quality of social interactions among peers but also between the children and staff.

Reference

Harms, T., Clifford, R., & Cryer, D. (2004). *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised edition* (*ECERS-R)*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.