



The [Early Childhood Framework for Quality \(EFQ\)](#) describes the DOE Division of Early Childhood’s shared vision for high quality early childhood programming in New York City. The EFQ describes the key practices of family engagement, rigorous and developmentally appropriate instruction, professional collaborations, and leadership that support children in gaining the knowledge and skills outlined in the [New York State Prekindergarten Learning Standards \(NYSPLS\)](#). Grounded in the DOE’s vision for school improvement across the pre-K to 12 continuum, the DOE Framework for Great Schools, the EFQ establishes a shared set of expectations for early childhood programs across all settings. High-quality and enriching learning environments are critical to supporting student development and learning across all five domains of the NYSPLS, and are embedded in the Early Childhood Framework for Quality.

The DOE’s Division of Early Childhood Education (DECE) uses the [Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – 3²](#) to measure the extent to which programs are successful at reaching elements of the EFQ related to respecting and valuing differences, creating safe and positive environments, and advancing play-based learning and responsive instruction. The ECERS-3 tool is used widely in early childhood settings across the country, and there is a consistent relationship between ECERS-3 scores and a wide range of child development outcomes.

The observations conducted and/or the reports prepared as part of the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – 3 (ECERS-3), or any other assessment of the early childhood program, shall be used only for purposes of assessing the quality of the early childhood program generally and shall not be placed in any staff’s official file or used in any action or employment-related decision involving an individual DOE employee (including, but not limited to, any letter to file, rating or tenure determination), and shall not be introduced by the DOE in any disciplinary proceeding, grievance or arbitration, case or action. Furthermore, the DOE agrees that the results of the ECERS-3 assessments will not be used in any evaluation of any CSA member nor will the reports about ECERS-3 assessments identify specific CSA members by name in any way.

Table of Contents

2021 – 2022 School Year Specific Questions	2
The ECERS-3 Tool	3
Assessment Notification and Planning	6
Assessment Day Details	7
ECERS-3 Results	9
Resources	10
ECERS-3 and Other Frameworks	11

² <http://www.ersi.info/>



2021 – 2022 School Year Specific Questions

1. When will programs be notified that they are being assessed?

In order to give feedback to as many programs as possible while remaining flexible to possible changes in capacity or protocols due to COVID-19, programs will be notified on assessment on a rolling basis throughout the school year. Programs will have a minimum of eight weeks of notice from their initial notification email till their scheduled assessment date.

2. How will my assessment be scheduled to acknowledge the unique circumstances of this school year?

Evaluators will contact programs with a minimum of two weeks of notice to schedule assessment dates. They will ask programs if they would like to have a brief phone call to go over assessment protocols and answer any questions the program may have. This optional call is intended to give program leaders a chance to connect with their evaluator and understand all procedures and protocols before the assessment date.

3. Are there any enhanced health and safety protocols for this year?

Evaluators will follow all DOE health and safety guidelines including any applicable vaccine requirements, health screenings, and reporting appropriately if they test positive for COVID.

If a classroom or the whole program is required to close due to COVID cases on the day when the evaluator is scheduled to visit, please alert the evaluator as soon as possible.

4. When will assessments occur?

Assessments for this school year will be conducted between January 2022 and June 2022. Program leaders will be contacted by a DECE staff member or program evaluator with additional information about scheduling and the observation process. Please note that the program evaluator will work with program leaders to schedule the program's assessment day, which they will also confirm by email.

Assessments must take place on a typical day of school in which the daily schedule is roughly followed. School days that may be on either side of holidays, or that include regular schedule changes for children (such as one day of the week that is consistently shortened) are considered typical.



ECERS-3 Tool

5. What is ECERS-3?

ECERS-3 is an observational tool used to assess early childhood learning environments. The evaluator observes the early childhood classroom and looks for specific indicators of quality across the following areas:

Space & Furnishings	Personal Care Routines	Language and Literacy
<p align="center">7 Items</p> <p>Examines indoor and outdoor space, furnishings, room arrangement, and other factors related to the physical space.</p>	<p align="center">4 Items</p> <p>Examines the content and practices around meals and snacks, hand cleaning among children and staff, and other health and safety practices.</p>	<p align="center">5 Items</p> <p>Examines the amount and quality of language used, number and content of books, accessibility to these materials, and the extent to which teachers encourage communication and use language to support development.</p>
<p>EFQ Alignment: Element 2: Create safe and positive environments Element 3: Advance play-based learning and responsive instruction</p>	<p>EFQ Alignment: Element 2: Create safe and positive environments</p>	<p>EFQ Alignment: <u>Element 1: Respect and value differences</u> <u>Element 2: Create safe and positive environments;</u> <u>Element 3: Advance play-based learning and responsive instruction</u></p>
Learning Activities	Interaction	Program Structure
<p align="center">11 Items</p> <p>Measures the range of materials that are available in the classroom, how staff interact with children as they use them, promote understanding number concepts, the amount of time that children can freely access these learning materials, and the use of computers/TV.</p>	<p align="center">5 Items</p> <p>Examines the extent to which teachers are effectively supervising children, using appropriate disciplinary strategies, providing opportunities for children to talk, and maintaining a positive climate.</p>	<p align="center">3 Items</p> <p>Examines the daily schedule, the amount of time children are in large groups, transitions, and staff support for individualized learning.</p>
<p>EFQ Alignment: <u>Element 1: Respect and value differences</u> <u>Element 3: Advance play-based learning and responsive instruction</u></p>	<p>EFQ Alignment: <u>Element 1: Respect and value differences;</u> <u>Element 2: Create safe and positive environments;</u> <u>Element 3: Advanced play-based learning and responsive caregiving</u></p>	<p>EFQ Alignment: <u>Element 1</u> <u>Element 2: Create safe and positive environments;</u> <u>Element 3: Advance play-based learning and responsive instruction</u></p>

The DECE developed the Early Childhood Framework for Quality (EFQ), which describes our shared vision for high quality early childhood programming in New York City. Programs use the EFQ to guide their practice in a way that advances positive outcomes for all children and families. DECE staff use the EFQ as the foundation for the quality supports provided to programs, including on-site support and professional learning. This resource ensures that all DOE early childhood programs, regardless of setting or location, are held accountable to the same standards and supported to meet the same expectations of quality.



The EFQ is comprised of 6 Elements:

1. Respect and value differences.
2. Create safe and positive environments.
3. Advance play-based learning and responsive instruction.
4. Promote families' roles as primary caregivers, teachers, and advocates.
5. Work collaboratively towards continuous quality improvement.
6. Demonstrate strategic leadership.

6. Why ECERS-3?

The ECERS-3 has been used in major studies of early childhood programs throughout the United States and the world. As a result of the consistent relationship between ECERS-3 scores and a wide range of child development outcomes, ECERS-3 has been widely adopted by many state preschool and/or child care assessment programs. ECERS-3 is a reliable and well tested instrument; it is a consistent way to measure quality across all programs.

While the tool itself does not measure student performance outcomes, the connections between ECERS-3 and child outcomes is an important reason why it is used by DECE. The ECERS-3 tool, in conjunction with other data, allows DECE to assess the extent to which early childhood programs are successful at implementing DECE's elements of high quality early childhood programming. The combination of ECERS-3 and CLASS, which focuses on interactions, is an important way that the DECE understands the extent to which early childhood programs prepare children for future academic success, build positive relationships among children and adults, and ensure that children develop a strong sense of self.

7. What does "time sample" mean?

The ECERS-3 observation is conducted in the morning, when most children are in attendance and the most active, for a window of [3-hours considered a "time sample"](#) of typical classroom practices during:

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

8. What are the time requirements?

According to DECE and the ECERS-3 tool, high quality programs prioritize offering children daily free play activities, both in morning and in the afternoon, during Center Time in the classroom as well as outdoors during gross motor play.

The amount of time during the 3-hour time sample when materials and equipment are "accessible" to children impacts a variety of ECERS-3 indicators that ultimately affect the overall ECERS-3 score. This is because the ECERS-3 is structured around the theory that children are able to engage deeply with materials and develop a wide range of problem solving, language, and other



skills when they have sufficient time to play. The play-based learning that happens in centers provides opportunities for rich and meaningful learning across the NYSPLS domains.

Materials are considered “**accessible**” when children:

- 1) Can easily reach and use (e.g., not on high shelves or in containers with difficult-to-open lids);
- 2) Are not required to do something else (e.g., participate in a mandatory activity or complete a meal).

While the ECERS-3 will only consider evidence collected during the 3-hour time sample, the rest of the day/week will also be considered to ensure that afternoon practices are aligned with DECE expectations for high quality programming.

DECE recommended daily time requirement for:

- Indoor free play/Center Time, specific to program length, is:
 - 6 hr. 20 min day - 2 hrs 7 min
 - 8 hr day- 2 hrs 40 min
 - 10 hr day - 3 hrs. 20 min
- Outdoor gross motor play, weather permitting is 1-hour for all program types.

Opportunities for indoor free play and outdoor gross motor activities should occur both in the morning and afternoon so that children have many opportunities throughout the day to be active and use materials. This means that at least a 1-hour of total indoor free play/Center time daily requirement and at least 30 minutes of daily outdoor time requirement should occur in the morning and the remainder of the time can happen in the afternoon to satisfy the daily time requirement.

Please see [here](#) for a specific sample schedule based on program types/length.

9. What considerations does the DECE make for programs given the unique challenges of offering early childhood education in New York City?

The ECERS-3 must be used in the same way across all programs because DECE uses the ECERS-3 as a standard, consistent way of measuring program quality in New York City. Having a consistent way of looking at program quality allows the DECE to estimate appropriate coaching supports and view progress over time. The ECERS-3 looks at the learning environment across 470 indicators organized into 37 items. Overall, the ECERS-3 aligns with the expectations outlined in the Early Childhood Framework for Quality, making it an appropriate and helpful tool for understanding the quality of learning environments around the city. However, there may be several ECERS-3 indicators that are not critical to your program’s approach to implementing the EFQ, or do not align to your approach.

The tool measures many indicators. Any one item or indicator requirement alone is unlikely to significantly impact overall ECERS-3 scores. Research relates the *overall* average, rather than the score on any one item, to child outcomes. Program Leaders who do not agree with the ECERS-3



requirements should consider the effect on the overall score and decide whether it is important to change the practice in your program.

More information is available in the preface of *All About the ECERS-3*.

The *NYC DECE Additional Notes for the ECERS-3* outlines scoring changes that the DECE has made to make the tool a better fit in the context of New York City. This document is updated annually as needed. You can access these notes on the DOE website. If you have any questions on ECERS-3 requirements, please reach out to programassessment@schools.nyc.gov.

10. Some things measured in the ECERS-3 are difficult to control or not possible to change.

Why does the ECERS-3 measure these things?

While program type, geography, building limitations, and other factors may impact scores on individual indicators, the ECERS-3 gives an overall picture of program quality. In order to collect data that can be compared to city, national, and global norms, all programs are assessed with the same scale. The preface to *All About the ECERS-3* provides more information on scoring items that are not fully within a program's control in the "Understanding the meaning of ECERS-3 scores" section.

11. Who should I contact if I have questions about the requirements of particular ECERS-3 items?

Program leaders should first review the *All About ECERS-3* and the *DECE Notes for Clarification* and then contact programassessment@schools.nyc.gov if there are still questions that need to be clarified.

Assessment Notification and Planning

12. Who is notified about the assessment?

- **DOE CONTRACTED NYCEECs AND CHARTER SCHOOLS**: Notification is sent from programassessment@schools.nyc.gov to each site's main contact and instructional contact on file. Program leaders should notify their operations analyst to update contact information.
- **EarlyLearn**: Notification is sent from programassessment@schools.nyc.gov to the instructional contact and main contact on file. Program leaders should reach out to earlychildhood@schools.nyc.gov if there is a change in contact that needs to be updated.
- **DISTRICT SCHOOLS**: Notification is sent to the principal of the school and to the superintendent from programassessment@schools.nyc.gov.
- **PRE-K CENTERS**: Notification is sent to the Early Childhood Director of the school and to the superintendent from programassessment@schools.nyc.gov.

13. Who will schedule and conduct the assessment?



A trained Early Childhood Program Evaluator will conduct the ECERS-3 assessment. Program evaluators undergo a rigorous training and regular reliability checks throughout the year to ensure they are using the ECERS-3 tool to fidelity.

Program evaluators are required to take their DOE photo identification to sites where they are conducting program assessments, and can provide identification if asked.

14. What should my program do before the assessment occurs? How should we prepare?

You are strongly encouraged to make your staff aware of this FAQ document, [DECE Additional Notes for the ECERS-3](#), and the ECERS-3 webinar series available at bit.ly/nycprogramassessment. In addition, program leaders should inform their staff of the date and time of the assessment. The assessment does not require any additional preparation as it is intended to capture children's experience on a typical day at their site.

15. If I know a certain period of the year will not be typical for my program (for example, my only lead teacher will be out for several months on parental leave), who should I contact?

Reach out to programassessment@schools.nyc.gov as soon as you are aware of any scheduling conflicts that may impact a portion of the school year for your site.

16. What should I do if my program closes on account of inclement weather on the day of our scheduled ECERS-3 assessment?

- **NYCEECs ONLY:** It is the responsibility of each program to notify its evaluator and the DECE of closure due to inclement weather or unexpected issues that result in program closure, as soon as that decision is made. Please email the program evaluator **and** programassessment@schools.nyc.gov.
- **DISTRICT SCHOOLS ONLY:** The evaluator will not visit your school if a school closure is announced. He/she will reschedule your assessment when school resumes.

Assessment Day Details

17. What should teaching staff do during the assessment?

Your staff should continue with normal instruction as they would on any other day. Programs should not adjust their daily schedule on the assessment day because it is important that evaluators observe a typical day of instruction. Children are sensitive to changes in their daily routine. A change in the schedule on the day of the assessment could result in atypical children's behavior.

18. Will the evaluator interact with staff or children on the assessment day?

Before the assessment, if time allows, evaluators may introduce themselves to staff, explain the assessment procedure, and ask specific classroom information (e.g., enrollment, ages, allergies, special needs). In the event that this is not possible due to classroom activities taking place, evaluators will collect this information from program leadership. During the observation, evaluators



will not interact with staff and/or children; they will be careful not to interfere with regular classroom activities while observing children indoors/outdoors.

Program leaders who anticipate difficulty in providing this accommodation should contact programassessment@schools.nyc.gov.

19. How long will the assessment take?

The assessment consists of a 3-hour observation, with some time added if needed to observe a meal, outdoor/indoor gross motor spaces, and/or materials.

20. What should I do if there is a substitute teacher in one of the classrooms on the day of assessment? What should I do if the teacher is not able to make it on the day of the assessment?

If known in advance, program leaders should let evaluators know via email as soon as possible if a teacher will be absent on the assessment date. Depending on the size of the program and the amount of days that the substitute teacher has been in the classroom, the assessment may be rescheduled. In addition to contacting the evaluator, program that have a long term teacher vacancy should reach out to TRQ at 718-935-4627 or teachnycprek@schools.nyc.gov for assistance.

21. Do program leaders need to be at the program on the day of assessment?

While program leaders are not required to be present at the program on the day of assessment, arrangements should be made for a staff member to greet the evaluator on the scheduled assessment date and show them to the randomly selected classroom.

22. Who should be in the classroom during the assessment?

Any staff who are regularly in the classroom should be present during the assessment. This includes SEITs, floating teachers who regularly enter the classroom, or any other staff who are there on a typical day. Staff who are not usually in the classroom should not be there during the assessment.

23. Can one of the program leaders be present in the classroom during the assessment?

While program leaders are welcome to enter the classroom as part of their normal routine, they should not engage with children, or perform any classroom tasks when the evaluator is observing. Because pre-K and 3-K children are sensitive to changes in their regular routine, extra adults in the classroom can impact ECERS-3 scores.

24. How are evaluators for each program chosen? Who will schedule the assessment?

All ECERS-3 evaluators undergo rigorous training before conducting official assessments, and the DECE checks to ensure they are accurately using the ECERS-3 tool through numerous



co-observations during training and throughout the school year. ECERS-3 evaluators are assigned to programs based on multiple factors, including:

- **Language:** For dual language programs and programs that have indicated a language other than English is spoken during the day, an evaluator who understands that language is assigned, when possible.
- **Geography:** Evaluators are assigned to programs based on location.
- **Conflict of Interest:** Known relationships and prior experiences with program staff are considered when making assignments in order to avoid a conflict of interest.



ECERS-3 Results

25. Will I have a chance to debrief with my evaluator after the assessment?

Evaluators will be available to briefly [debrief with program leaders](#) for about 15 minutes after the assessment. While they will not be able to share specific scores, they will be able to describe some observation highlights, considerations for health and safety that are actionable, and provide feedback regarding the daily schedule.

26. When will I receive my results?

ECERS-3 reports are emailed to program leaders, principals, and Early Childhood Directors on a rolling basis from programassessment@schools.nyc.gov. Yahoo and AOL users should mark this email address as “not spam” in order to prevent the reports from filtering into spam folders. Program leaders can expect to receive their reports by email within approximately six weeks of the assessment.

DISTRICT SCHOOLS: Superintendents will also receive the report.

27. What will the results look like once I receive them?

An ECERS-3 report consists of the overall average ECERS-3 score, subscale scores, and detailed notes that include justifications of the scores given (for items with scores less than five).



Perfect scores are neither expected nor required. Higher average total scores (not perfect scores), are related to better child outcomes, and a classroom can create a high score in a variety of ways, with differing strengths and challenges.

28. How will the results of the assessment be used by the DECE?

Data collected during the 2021 - 2022 school year will be used in all the standard ways that DECE uses assessment data. Assessment results will be used in conjunction with other information for a variety of purposes, including:

- **Contract Renewals:** The DECE will consider these assessments when they make contract renewal decisions for NYCEECs.
- **Support assignments:** the DECE will use these results to prioritize the supports that are currently provided to programs and determine what additional supports will be needed in the future. These supports are delivered through Instructional






Coordinators, Social Workers, professional learning opportunities offered to teachers and program leaders, and other support provided.

- **Research:** The DECE will use assessment results to understand the efficacy of supports offered by the division such as professional learning opportunities.

The observations conducted and/or the reports prepared as part of the ECERS-3 assessment, or any other assessment of the early childhood program, shall be used only for purposes of assessing the quality of the early childhood program generally and shall not be placed in any teacher's official file or used in any action or employment-related decision involving an individual DOE employee (including, but not limited to, any letter to file, rating or tenure determination), and shall not be introduced by the DOE in any disciplinary proceeding, grievance or arbitration, case or action. Furthermore, the DOE agrees that the results of the ECERS-3 assessments will not be used in any evaluation of any CSA member nor will the reports about ECESR-3 assessments identify specific CSA members by name in any way.



Resources

29. What ECERS-3 resources does DECE offer to programs? What other resources are recommended to prepare for the assessment?

A number of resources are available to those wanting to learn more about the ECERS-3 tool:

- In the year of their assessment, programs will be mailed a copy of the All About the ECERS-3 Book. If programs being assessed would like an ECERS-3 scale they can email programassessment@schools.nyc.gov and one will be sent to them.
- Changes to the indicators and the information in the book can be found in the [NYC DECE Additional Notes for the ECERS-3](#).
- The DECE has developed a webinar series to walk staff through the scale and some of the requirements. To view the webinars, please visit Protraxx.
- Additional ECERS-3 documents and specific guidance are available at bit.ly/nycprogramassessment.



ECERS-3 and Other Frameworks

30. How does ECERS-3 relate to the Early Childhood Framework for Quality?

The Early Childhood Framework for Quality describes the DECE’s vision for high quality early childhood education. The ECERS-3 assesses the extent to which programs are successful at reaching elements of the EFQ related to respecting and valuing differences, creating safe and positive environments, and advancing play-based learning and responsive instruction.

31. How does ECERS-3 relate to the New York State Prekindergarten Learning Standards (NYSPLS)?

New York State Prekindergarten Learning Standards (NYSPLS) focuses on expectations for what students should know and be able to do by the end of the school year to be on the path toward college and career readiness. ECERS-3 measures the learning environments that are designed to support this student success. The NYSPLS and ECERS-3 are well-aligned because the instructional aspects of ECERS-3 focus on language reasoning skills and problem solving, which are both critical components of the NYSPLS.

