

## CLASS and ECERS-3 with 3-year-olds

### *How CLASS and ECERS-3 measure safety and adequate supervision of children in 3-year-old classrooms*

The DOE uses the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS-3) and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) to measure quality and provide support to all Early Childhood programs. Both tools are nationally-recognized measures of quality, connect with student outcomes, and relate both to the Early Childhood Framework for Quality (EFQs) and the Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF). Both tools are appropriate for classrooms with three-year-olds and consider active staff supervision to monitor and ensure children's physical safety as well as their academic and emotional needs. Classroom environments and supervision should support children so that they feel emotionally safe to express themselves and take appropriate risks. For the ECERS-3 assessment, evaluators conduct a random classroom selection, including 3-year-old classes, and observe that classroom for 3 hours, starting at the beginning of the school year. For the CLASS assessment, evaluators observe all classrooms in cycles of 20 minutes, spending at least 50 minutes in each classroom, and 3-year old classes are included starting in January.

#### **Ensuring safety of materials, toys and equipment in 3-year-old classrooms:**

The ECERS-3 does not specifically outline materials that pose a safety hazard and/or which ones should (or should not) be used in 3-year-old classrooms; similar to four year-olds, this is based on children's varying developmental levels. Therefore, materials and supervision should be tailored to meet the needs of the children in the class. When offering materials, toys, and equipment to children, consider the manufacturer's intended age for use and the ages and development of the children in the class. Materials that are labeled a choking hazard should be stored until children turn three.

- Choking hazards are typically considered for children who are under the age of three, since they are more likely to put toys in their mouths. As a result, the *Consumer Product Safety Commission* (CPSC [www.cpsc.gov/smallparts](http://www.cpsc.gov/smallparts)) has a "Small Parts Regulation," to prevent toys that pose a choking hazard from being marketed for use by children younger than three. Materials, toys, and equipment that are labeled as choking hazards and/or intended for use by children three years and older should not be accessible to children in the classroom that are under the age of three.
- Based on children's development, certain materials that are typically age-appropriate may now pose a safety hazard. For example, if there are three-year-olds in the classroom who frequently put materials in their mouths, toys with small parts may be considered a major safety hazard and should therefore not be within their reach. In addition, if children are regularly playing inappropriately with blocks or other heavy toys, then lighter blocks, such as those made out of cardboard, soft vinyl, or homemade blocks, may be more developmentally appropriate for them. If unit blocks are not initially available to children due to safety concerns, teaching teams should strategize ways to support children to appropriately engage with these types of blocks (or any other materials/toys) and introduce them as children become ready.

#### **Providing careful supervision:**

Supervision is a key factor in ensuring children's safety in all Early Childhood programs. Both the CLASS and ECERS require that staff actively monitor children around the classroom to ensure physical safety.

- Consider the age and developmental needs of each child and the activity they may be engaged in to determine the level of supervision necessary.
- Some activities require closer supervision (for example, during carpentry or cooking activities).
- At no time should children ever be left unsupervised.

#### **Toileting/Diapering:**

Children may be ready to use the toilet or engage in toilet learning at different ages. Toileting is an important part of a young child's emerging independence. Positive adult-child interactions (considered in both the ECERS-3 and CLASS tools) and convenient toileting provisions (e.g. child-sized toilets and sinks, accessible soap and paper towels for hand washing) can facilitate self-help skills. For older children that may still be in diapers or pull-ups, proper diapering procedures should be followed to make sure conditions are sanitary. *Caring for Our Children* provides step-by-step instructions on the proper diapering procedure (<https://nrckids.org/CFOC/Database/3.2.1.4>).

**Step 1:** Get organized. Before taking the child to the diaper changing area, perform hand hygiene if hands have been

contaminated and gather diapering supplies.

**Step 2:** Lead or take the child to the changing table/area, keeping soiled clothing away from you and any surfaces you cannot easily clean and sanitize after the change.

**Step 3:** Clean the child's diaper area or support the child to do this independently as they are able.

**Step 4:** Remove the soiled diaper and clothing without contaminating any surface not already in contact with stool or urine.

**Step 5:** Put on a clean diaper and dress the child, or support the child to do this independently

**Step 6:** Child's hands should be washed and then they can return to a supervised area.

**Step 7:** Clean and disinfect the diapering surface/area

**Step 8:** Wash hands

It is strongly recommended in the [3-K for All & Pre-K for All Policy Handbook](#) that 3-year-old classes be located in classrooms that have access to a bathroom and sink within the classroom. In cases where bathrooms are not located inside the classroom, it is important that an adult always accompanies a child to the bathroom and provides adequate supervision.

A designated private "changing area" should be located within the classroom where diaper changing may take place. While it is strongly recommended in the *3-K for All & Pre-K for All Policy Handbook* for programs to have a diapering changing table in classrooms where diapering may occur, when space is limited an acceptable alternative may be an elevated, non-porous, changing surface (such as a cot, used solely for this purpose). These surfaces should be easy to clean and sanitize. If a diapering surface is used, a disposable covering should be placed on the surface and changed after each use. In addition to changing this covering, the surface must be disinfected with a bleach and water solution or an EPA approved disinfectant (please follow the manufacturer instructions for proper disinfecting procedures). If a changing surface is not used, the changing area should be checked and sanitized if surfaces in the area came in contact with stool or urine residue (this may include the floor where the child stood or the walls surrounding).

#### **Items/Indicators in the ECERS-3 with variances for 3-year-olds:**

##### Item 8 Meals/Snacks:

Indicator 5.4 requires that children be encouraged to help during meals and snacks. This may include helping to serve, set the table, clear plates, etc. However, the amount of responsibility expected from children would vary based on their age and abilities. Children will require varying levels of support from staff to do this successfully especially younger group of children in 3-year-old classrooms.

##### Item 19 Music and Movement:

Indicator 7.3 requires that children age four and older be encouraged to experiment with rhyming in songs and thinking of words that rhyme. This would not be required if children in the classroom observed are not four years old.

##### Item 24 Math in Daily Events:

Indicator 7.3 requires that children aged four and older are given more complex math-related tasks. This would not be required if children in the classroom observed are not four years old.