

The [Pre-K for All Program Quality Standards](#) define the New York City Department of Education’s (DOE) vision for high-quality *Pre-K for All* programs. They describe 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 Foundation for the Common Core \(PKFCC\)](#). Grounded in the DOE’s vision for school improvement across the pre-K to 12 continuum, the DOE Framework for Great Schools, the Pre-K for All Program Quality Standards establish a shared set of expectations for pre-K programs across all settings. High-quality and enriching learning environments are critical to supporting student development and learning across all five domains of the PKFCC, and are imbedded in the Pre-K for All Program Quality Standards.

The DOE’s Division of Early Childhood Education (DECE) uses the [Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale - Revised Edition](#)¹ to measure the extent to which programs are successful at reaching Program Quality Standards related to the physical learning environment, health and safety, positive classroom culture, and engaging in meaningful activity. The ECERS-R tool is used widely in early childhood settings across the country, and there is a consistent relationship between ECERS-R 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 – Revised (ECERS-R), or any other assessment of the prekindergarten program, shall be used only for purposes of assessing the quality of the pre-kindergarten 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-R assessments will not be used in any evaluation of any CSA member nor will the reports about ECERS-R assessments identify specific CSA members by name in any way.

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¹ <http://www.ersi.info/>

ECERS-R Tool

1. What is ECERS-R?

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

Space & Furnishings	Personal Care Routines	Language-Reasoning
8 Items	6 Items	4 Items
Examines indoor and outdoor space, furnishings, room arrangement, and other factors related to the physical space	Examines the content and practices around meals and snacks and nap/rest, hand washing among students and staff, and other health and safety practices	Examines the number and content of books and language materials available, accessibility to these materials, and the extent to which teachers encourage communication and use language to support concept development
Mostly Captured in Quality Standard: The Physical Learning Environment	Mostly Captured in Quality Standard: Health, Safety & Well-being	Mostly Captured in Quality Standard: Engaging Children in Meaningful Activity
Activities	Interaction	Program Structure
10 Items	5 Items	4 Items
Measures the range of materials that are available in the classroom, the amount of time that children can freely access these learning materials, and the use of computers/TV	Examines the extent to which teachers are appropriately supervising children, using appropriate disciplinary strategies, providing opportunities for children to talk, and maintaining a positive climate	Examines the daily schedule, the amount of time children are kept in whole groups, transitions, and provisions for students with disabilities
Mostly Captured in Quality Standard: Engaging Children in Meaningful Activity	Mostly Captured in Quality Standard: Creating A Positive Classroom Culture	Mostly Captured in Quality Standard: Engaging Children in Meaningful Activity

When providing support to programs around the ECERS-R results, the DECE emphasizes the Language-Reasoning, Activities, and Interaction subscales. Program leaders are also encouraged to focus on scores in those areas when choosing areas on which to focus professional development for staff.

2. Why ECERS-R?

The ECERS-R 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-R scores and a wide range of child development outcomes, ECERS-R has been widely adopted by many state preschool and/or child care assessment programs. ECERS-R 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-R and child outcomes is an important reason why it is used by DECE. The ECERS-R tool, in conjunction with other data, allows DECE to assess the extent to which early childhood programs meet many of DECE'S



quality standards and prepare children for future academic success, build positive relationships, and develop a strong sense of self.



The combination of CLASS and ECERS-R, 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, ensure that children develop a strong sense of self, and meet the Pre-K for All Program Quality Standards.



3. What is the substantial portion of the day ECERS-R requirement?

When calculating scores, the ECERS-R considers the amount of time that children have access to a variety of materials and the opportunity to choose the learning centers in which they work. The amount of time that is made available for children to do this impacts a variety of ECERS-R indicators that ultimately affect the overall ECERS-R score. This is because the ECERS-R 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 learning centers provides opportunities for rich and meaningful learning across the PKFCC domains.

For these reasons, teachers should ensure that children have access to and can choose from a variety of learning center materials for a “substantial portion of the day,” and support children’s engagement in play during this time, making adjustments to the daily schedule as necessary.

The ECERS-R defines “substantial portion of the day” as 1/3 of the overall program time, and the DECE uses *Pre-K for All* hours as the program time.

4. How is program time calculated for programs that offer care and education beyond the DOE’s pre-K hours?

ECERS-R uses the length of the program to calculate “substantial portion of the day” and accessibility requirements.

Program time will refer to the amount of time that is funded by the DOE. For a full-day program, that is 6 hours and 20 minutes, and for half-day programs it is 2 hours and 30 minutes. EarlyLearn classrooms are full-day classrooms.

Since the start and end times of pre-K vary by setting, the site is responsible for informing the evaluator when the DOE funded pre-K hours begin and end. The ECERS-R **evaluators will only use the time that is funded by the DOE** to calculate whether or not children have sufficient access to play and learning materials, as well as engage in specific activities for a substantial portion of the day. Any care and education beyond these hours will not count toward ECERS-R requirements.

5. What considerations does the DECE make for programs given the unique challenges of offering pre-K in New York City?

The ECERS-R must be used in the same way across all programs because DECE uses the ECERS-R 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-R looks at the learning environment across 470 indicators organized into 37 items. Overall, the ECERS-R aligns with the expectations outlined in the Pre-K Program Quality Standards, making it an appropriate and helpful tool for understand the quality of learning environments around the city. However, there may be several ECERS-R indicators that are not critical to your program’s approach to implementing the Program Quality Standards, 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-R scores. Research relates the *overall* average, rather than the score on any one item, to child outcomes. If you do not agree with the ECERS-R requirements, 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-R*.

The [NYC DECE Additional Notes for the ECERS-R](#) 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-R requirements, please reach out to programassessment@schools.nyc.gov.

6. Some things measured in the ECERS-R are difficult to control or not possible to change. Why does the ECERS-R measure these things?

While program type, geography, building limitations, and other factors may impact scores on individual indicators, the ECERS-R 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-R* provides more information on scoring items that are not fully within a program’s control in the “Understanding the meaning of ECERS-R scores” section.

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

Review *All About ECERS-R* and the DECE Notes for Clarification. If you have further questions after reviewing these resources, contact programassessment@schools.nyc.gov.

Assessment Notification and Planning

8. 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.

ACS CONTRACTED NYCEECs (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.

9. Who will schedule and conduct the assessment?

A trained Pre-K Program Evaluator will conduct the ECERS-R assessment. Program Evaluators undergo a rigorous training. Evaluators also undergo regular reliability checks throughout the year to ensure they are using the ECERS-R tool to fidelity.

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

10. When will the ECERS-R assessment occur?

Assessments will be conducted October 2018 through the beginning of June 2019. Program leaders will be contacted by a DECE staff member or program evaluator with additional information about scheduling and the observation process. In most cases, program leaders will have at least two weeks advance notice of their assessment.

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.

11. **DISTRICT SCHOOLS ONLY:** Will the scheduling take the Quality Review schedule into consideration?

The DECE works with the Quality Review team to understand when Quality Reviews are taking place in order to avoid proposing assessment dates that overlap with your Quality Review. Because Quality Review dates are also scheduled throughout the year and sometimes change, in some instances the proposed date may be close to your Quality Review. If that is the case, or you are concerned by the timing as it relates to your Quality Review, please let your evaluator know as soon as possible so a different assessment date can be arranged.



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

You are strongly encouraged to make the FAQ document, DECE Additional Notes for the ECERS-R, [this webinar series](#), and *All About the ECERS-R* available to your staff, and notify them of the date and time of the assessment. The assessment does not require any additional preparation as it is intended to be an observation of the existing classroom environments in your site.

13. Does my program need to be ready for our assessment on the first day of school?

The first few weeks of pre-K are unique to the rest of the year, since all children and teachers are settling into a new schedule, environment, and are getting to know each other. In order to ensure that a typical day of instruction is observed and give children and teachers time to adjust to your pre-K schedule, the DECE does not conduct assessments until the sixth week of school. Programs are encouraged to introduce materials, expectations, and routines slowly throughout the first four weeks, to ensure that students are well acclimated to their classroom.

14. 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.

15. If I have 3-K at my site, when will my assessment take place?

The ECERS-R tool requires that children must be two and a half years old. Therefore, assessments for programs with 3-K classrooms may take place from late October 2018 – early June 2019. All 3-K and Pre-K classrooms are eligible to be chosen for observation by random selection on the assessment day.

Assessment Day Details

16. Which classrooms will be assessed?

The evaluator will randomly select one classroom to assess once arriving on site. All reports will be based on the observation of one class for a period of at least three uninterrupted hours followed by a 30 minute interview with the teacher. 3-K classrooms will be included in the random selection for assessment.

NYCEECs ALSO OPERATING PRE-K THROUGH EarlyLearn: If your site contracts directly with the DOE and also operates pre-K through the EarlyLearn program, all of the classrooms with pre-K students will be in the pool of classrooms from which the evaluator will select.

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?

Yes, teachers will be asked for information at the beginning of the assessment (e.g., the birth date of the oldest & youngest child in the class, the highest number of children that can be in the class at one time, the number of children identified with a disability and the type of disability).

Once the observation is underway, however, there will **not** be any interaction between the evaluator and the classroom teachers and staff. The evaluator will move around the classroom to observe environment and students in the classroom, being careful to avoid interfering with classroom activities. The evaluator will move

outdoors with the class if there is outdoor time built into the class schedule.

At the end of the assessment, the evaluator will conduct a short (approximately 30 minute) discussion with the teacher to clarify any parts of the day that were not observed and to ask other questions as noted in the scale. Please ensure that accommodations are made for the teacher to be available during this time. 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 to 3.5 hour observation. Following the observation, the ECERS-R protocol includes a short (about 30 minute) discussion with the teacher to ask questions and give teachers the opportunity to share information about classroom practices.

20. How will an evaluator be chosen for my program?

All ECERS-R evaluators undergo rigorous training before conducting official assessments, and the DECE checks to ensure they are accurately using the ECERS-R tool through numerous co-observations during training and throughout the school year. ECERS-R 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 in the pre-K 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

21. What should I do if my program closes on account of inclement weather on the day of our scheduled ECERS-R 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.

22. What should I do if there is a substitute teacher in one of the classrooms on the day of assessment?

If there is a last minute teacher absence on the assessment day, alert your evaluator as soon as you are aware. 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.



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

23. 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, please make arrangements for yourself or one of your staff members to greet the evaluator on the scheduled assessment date and show him or her to your classrooms.

24. 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 children are sensitive to changes in their regular routine, extra adults in the classroom can impact ECERS-R scores.

ECERS-R Results

25. When will I receive my results?

ECERS-R 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.

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

You will receive an ECERS-R report, which consists of the overall average ECERS-R 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.

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

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-R assessment, or any other assessment of the pre-kindergarten program, shall be used only for purposes of assessing the quality of the pre-kindergarten 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-R assessments will not be used in any evaluation of any CSA member nor will the reports about ECESR-R assessments identify specific CSA members by name in anyway.

ECERS-R Resources

28. What ECERS-R 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-R tool:

- In the year of a program's ECERS-R assessment, the DECE will send a copy of *All About the ECERS-R* to programs that have not received one in previous years. The comprehensive book is a resource guide that "gives information on why each item is important, and what is needed to meet the requirements for all items and how to score."
- Additionally, changes to the indicators and the information in the book can be found in the [NYC DECE Additional Notes for the ECERS-R](#).
- A spiral-bound copy of the ECERS-R is available for program leaders upon request. To request a copy, email programassessment@schools.nyc.gov.
- In person training opportunity dates will be advertised in P-Weekly and the Bulletin. Training dates are also updated on the [Program Assessment](#) website page with Protraxx registration links.
- The DECE has also developed a webinar series to walk staff through the scale and some of the requirements. To view the webinars, please visit the [Program Assessment](#) page on the DOE's website.
- In person training opportunity dates will be advertised in P-Weekly and the Bulletin. Training dates are also updated on the [Program Assessment](#) website page with Protraxx registration links.



ECERS-R and Other Frameworks

29. How does ECERS-R relate to the Pre-K for All Program Quality Standards?

The Pre-K for All Program Quality Standards are the DECE's vision for high quality pre-K and encompass practices across three core areas: family engagement, teaching and learning, and leadership. The ECERS-R assesses the extent to which programs are meeting the standards related to physical resources for learning, health, safety, and well-being, engaging children in meaningful activity, and creating a positive classroom culture.

30. How does ECERS-R relate to the [Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core \(PKFCC\) Learning Standards](#)?

The Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core (PKFCC) 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-R measures the learning environments that are designed to support this student success. The PKFCC and ECERS-R are well-aligned because the instructional aspects of ECERS-R focus on language-reasoning skills and problem solving, which are both critical components of the PKFCC.

If you have any further questions, please contact

programassessment@schools.nyc.gov

We look forward to your partnership in building high quality programs for our youngest learners.