



We are pleased to share the Montessori supplement to the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-revised (ECERS-R) with you. This template can support your work with your state QRIS and hopefully serve you well as you and your office of early education work together.

This document was developed as a collaborative effort between the director of the NC Star Rated License Assessment Project and Montessori-Now. Our common goal, over the four months in which we worked together, was to protect the integrity and validity of the ECERS-R tool while providing a guide for an accurate interpretation of the sub-scales and criteria as observed in a high-quality Montessori classroom environment. With this shared goal and based on our commitment to high quality programming for young children, we were able to share our perspectives through respectful conversation and a willingness to understand how the goals of each criteria are met in quality Montessori programs.

By looking at each criteria of each subscale, the question “what would this look like in a Montessori classroom?” could be discussed. We realized that some specific criteria, such as dress-up clothes, would not be met within the educational portion of the day in a Montessori early childhood classroom. A program could, though, receive credit for this item if children had access to dress-up clothes during other times of day (after care for instance). It was understood that the ECERS-R was developed as an instrument to rate quality in full day child care settings of 8-10 hours per day. If a child, then, had access to these materials in a full day Montessori setting, the criteria could be met.

In this work together, there were compromises and agreements reached through respectful listening and conversation but always with the maintenance of the validity of the instrument as the final determinant of inclusion in the supplement.

This work culminated in a workshop attended by the state’s 45 assessors. Meeting in a quality Montessori classroom gave them the opportunity to gain an overview of Montessori theories of child development, the teaching strategies used by credentialed teachers, and the curriculum areas and goals of each. They received “a lesson” as a child would in the use of a material and were then given the opportunity to freely explore the classroom. A question and answer period followed.

The NC RLAP state anchor and I realized how important it was that the assessors understood the collaborative nature of this effort and our shared goal of quality programming for young children. The assessors were to use this supplement when rating a Montessori classroom and both they, and the Montessori teacher, would have to work together for an accurate rating. The assessors acknowledged that it could be difficult, for example, to rate teacher-child interaction criteria because Montessori teachers use a quiet voice and speak to one child at a time. It was crucial, then, that the assessor feel comfortable moving closer to the teacher and child to be able to hear the interaction, and for the

Montessori teacher to understand that the assessor had to do this to rate the item. Communication of expectations, goals, and process for assessors and Montessori teachers was necessary to success.

The use of this supplement, and recognition of the Montessori credential at the highest level on the NC Career Lattice, has enabled quality Montessori programs to receive the highest star level. This has encouraged Montessori programs to participate in the NC Star Rated License program.

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