

5 Tips for School Age Environment Rating Scale (SACERS) Tool and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)

March 2009

By Betsy O. Saatman/ PA Key ERS Assessor

The SACERS is a data collecting tool to assist in providing objective feedback about a school age environment. The scale was developed to evaluate the quality of a multitude of school age care environments. The scale does not propose one particular program philosophy, however is based on what is developmentally appropriate for children. Pennsylvania is using the SACERS tool because all children deserve a beneficial school age care environment that expands their experiences, extends their learning and provides warm caring support.

The following tips can assist while you are using the School Age Environment Rating Scale (SACERS) for Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI).



Tip #1: Focus on the whole environment, not one indicator of quality.

The SACERS can provide feedback on the strengths and areas of potential improvement for a specific classroom. In the social sciences, scaling is the process of measuring or ordering entities with respect to quantitative attributes or traits. The SACERS tool is not a test with right and wrong answers; rather it is a measuring tool using standards, which are referred to as indicators of quality. Standards are recognized “best practices”. Ask yourself, “What is best for the children and families in our program today, tomorrow and beyond?”

Remember: *“IT IS THE TOTAL SCORE THAT IS RELATED TO POSITIVE CHILD DEVELOPMENT, NOT ANY OF THE SINGLE REQUIREMENTS BY THEMSELVES”* (page xii ECERS-R).

Tip #2: Provide the best possible within your environment.

The scale is a trajectory of quality beginning at the minimum levels of quality and building up to the good/excellent levels of quality. For example when assessing Room arrangement, at the minimal level of quality it is expected that a separate space for homework be provided. As you move to the good level the expectations require the homework space to be sufficiently separated from other activities, it is quiet, not crowded and has suitable furniture. At the excellent level it is expected that children have access to areas where reference materials are stored. You may have a small space for your school age program. However, within the environment you can create a separate space for homework that has suitable furniture, access to reference materials and homework completion is done at a time that other children are required to participate in quiet activities.

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Tip #3: Be aware of the domino effect.

Some items and indicators of quality may have a domino effect. An example may be creating a space for privacy using an opaque tent. Although a “very” private space has been created for privacy, you now may have some supervision issues. When looking at indicators of quality you need to think about the possible repercussion on other items or indicators.



Tip #4: Understand why the item or indicator is considered valued in the School Age Environment.

Simply ask yourself for each item and indicator that you are trying to improve, “Why is this important?” When we understand the intent of the indicator it allows our thinking process to expand and helps us create ways of meeting the item/indicator. An example may be when providing time, space and materials for drama/theater. By doing so we are encouraging children to practice life skills and attempt to understand what happens in their world. If we understand and support the “Why” it becomes much easier to provide the time, space and materials. Follow up with asking yourself “How can I best meet this item or indicator within my environment?”

Tip #5: Every School age environment is unique and all items and indicators can be met with multiple strategies.

Although the scale measures indicators of quality with the same criteria, there are still multiple ways to meet indicators of quality. This allows for programs to be creative and flexible. The scale does not propose one particular program philosophy, however is based on what is developmentally appropriate for children. Reflect on the Drama/Theater center and create strategies by asking yourself:

- How much time should I provide for dramatic play? (Hint: consider the requirement stated in the PA Position Statement).
- When is the best time to provide dramatic play?
- Where is the best space to set up dramatic play so that it does not interfere with other activities? (Hint: consider the possible domino effect of quiet and noisy centers)
- Do I need more than one space for dramatic play?
- What are the children’s current interests?
- What life skills do the children need to acquire?
- What is my role during dramatic play time? (Hint: consider the trajectory of quality)
- This strategy can be used for many items within the scale.



It is hopeful that these 5 tips provide you with some more in-depth information on the SACERS tool and promote conversations among teachers within your environment to support CQI.

Look in the next issue for more SACERS tips to assist in your CQI..

Cryer, D., Harmes, T., Riley, C. (2003). *All About the ECERS-R*. Hong Kong: Pact House.

Harmes, T., Clifford, R.M., Cryer, D. (2005). *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale Revised Edition*. New York and London: Teachers College Press.

Harmes, T., Jacobs, E.V., White, D.R. (1996). *School -Age Care Environment Rating Scale*. New York and London: Teachers College Press.

WHO is PENN SACCA?



Our Mission:

PENN SACCA supports
School-Age Professionals.

Our Vision:

To create strong school-age
professional networks in half of PA's
counties by 2013.

VALUES

Communication

Learning

Excellence

Leadership

Engagement

SUBMIT AN ARTICLE

If you have ideas about articles for future editions of this newsletter, or if you are interested in submitting an article, please email Eileen Jones at eiljon@berksiu.org

Submit error free articles between 75 and 150 words in length. Articles should highlight afterschool successes.

Don't forget to send your tips "From the Frontline", successful ideas or tips.



Deadline for all

submissions:

September 11, 2009

2009/2010 Calendar of Events

October 22, 2009

Lights on Afterschool

www.afterschoolalliance.org

October 26-28, 2009

Early Childhood Education Summit
State College, PA

www.earlychildhoodsummit.org

November 13, 14, 2009

PENN SACCA's State Conference

Holiday Inn, Harrisburg East

www.pennsacca.net

November 18-21, 2009

NAEYC Annual Conference & Expo
Washington, D.C.

March 9- 11, 2010.

Promising Practices-Proven Strategies

Hilton Harrisburg Hotel

April 19-21, 2010

National AfterSchool Association's (NAA)
22nd Annual Convention,
Gaylor National Hotel and Convention Center,
Washington, DC.

THE RESOURCE CORNER



PENN SACCA hopes these resources help you in your quest to grow professionally, thereby helping children succeed.

PENN SACCA
www.pennsacca.net

National AfterSchool Association
www.naaweb.org

National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST)
www.niost.org

Promising Practices in Afterschool
www.afterschool.org

Afterschool Alliance <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org>

Pennsylvania Statewide After-school/Youth Development Network

http://www.pde.state.pa.us/pde_internet/redirector.asp?u=http://www.psaydn.org

Pennsylvania 21st Century Community Learning Centers
www.21stccclc.org

Connect for Kids <http://www.connectforkids.org/>

Co-Chairs' Corner

Many Thanks – to Robin Foltz for representing PENN SACCA at the National Afterschool Association's Annual Convention in New Orleans this spring!

Progress Toward Our Vision – We've taken steps toward our vision: **To create strong School-Age professional networks in half of Pennsylvania's counties by 2013.** PENN SACCA members were surveyed at our annual conference and via email to find out what school-age networks exist across the Commonwealth and to get ideas on how school-age networks can be helpful to our members. Board member Chuck Lytle has agreed to take the lead with our strategic plan as we continue our work on establishing school-age professional networks throughout the state.

State Afterschool Report – We're anxiously awaiting a report by the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee on afterschool in Pennsylvania. Watch for an email notice when the report is released.

With Deepest Gratitude – We'd like to take a moment to recognize and express our sincere appreciation to two board members who spend countless hours behind the scenes taking care of PENN SACCA's business: Sharon Schweniger, our secretary and Connie Morak, our treasurer. They've held these positions for many years and do a wonderful job for PENN SACCA. Thanks, Sharon and Connie!

Annual Conference – Plans are well underway for the Annual PENN SACCA Conference under the leadership of Thomasine Washington and Connie Morak, conference co-chairs. So, save the date:
November 13 and 14, 2009 at the Holiday Inn East in Harrisburg!

Carolyn Hawk and Joyce Lang, PENN SACCA Co-Chairs

Newspaper Toss Revisited –Getting to Know You

(An activity that directors can do with staff or staff with children.) Shared by Susan Becker, 16th & Haak School Age Center

Goal: Children will have fun while socializing and getting to know each other

Materials: One sheet of newspaper per child

One slip of paper on which child is to write something unique or special about themselves. (They can also write something they like to do.)

Process: Direct students to write one thing that is unique about themselves on the slip of paper. Instruct them to place the paper on the sheet of newspaper and to crumble the newspaper so that the slip is inside.

Have students gather in a circle and prompt them to throw their newspaper ball and then to continue to throw the "balls" that have been thrown in their direction. After awhile, stop the activity and have each child pick up one newspaper bundle. Have all students unwrap their bundle, keeping the slip of paper that was enclosed. If you have a volunteer, have that person read what is on the slip of paper. The person who wrote it identifies him/herself and proceed to read the slip of paper that he/she is holding. Continue until all slips are read and children are recognized for their uniqueness.

Six Secrets to Successful Play

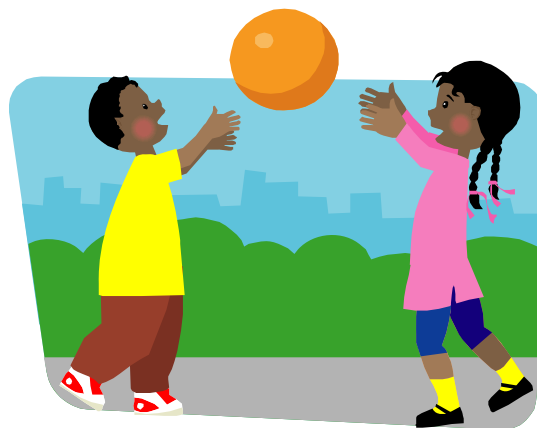
By: John Majewski (Muhlenburg School Age Center)

Children need to gain greater independence as they progress through elementary school and prepare for secondary school and young adulthood. Acquiring and developing social skills such as cooperation, teamwork, compromise, and conflict resolution are essential to effective interpersonal communication. However, young children require significant adult supervision and guidance in order to develop an appropriate level of independence. Games and sports are excellent vehicles to develop many social skills that will be necessary later in life. The following concepts have been mostly successful in our Muhlenberg School-Age child care center.

1. Allow everyone to play the game if they want to play. The older children need to be encouraged to help the younger players, realizing that they once were the young child who needed to be taught how to play. Many older children enjoy helping or being the role model for younger children.
2. Children are taught to be good teammates by learning how to encourage instead of criticize. Everyone will make mistakes, but nobody needs to be criticized, yelled at or laughed at. Circle time is a good time to discuss expectations for appropriate play, while using teachable moments when playing the game also reinforces the desired expectations.
3. Winning is overly important to children, but we believe that a great effort where everyone tries their best is more important. For example, winning because you cheated is less of a victory as compared to a team that did their best and played fair but lost. The lesson of trying your best can be a valuable asset later in life.
4. We have gotten away from keeping score during baseball and kickball games. We prefer to view the game as a means of getting exercise, working together, and developing our skills. We jokingly tell the children to watch ESPN to find out the score of our game.

5. Have you ever been the last player chosen? Modify the way you allow the children to pick teams by allowing each captain to pick 1 or 2 players, then let the teacher pick the remainder of the teams. You can also allow a weaker player to be the captain so they won't have to worry about being picked last. You can also divide up the weaker players first and let the captains only pick from the group of more skilled players.
6. Finally, modeling is an excellent way to get the point across. The teacher should be an active participant in the game and model the expected behaviors until the children demonstrate cooperation, teamwork, and sportsmanship.

In conclusion, children will develop the ability to play cooperatively and more independently when the teachers provide the necessary guidance, supervision, and teaching. It does take some effort and teaching in the beginning, but the results are satisfying when you see the children are able to play a competitive game without needing your interventions.



SAVE THE DATE

PENN SACCA 2009

Annual Statewide School-Age Conference

November 13 & 14

Harrisburg, PA



Mark your calendar today!

Science Experiments Don't Need to be a Hassle

By: Ryan Oberly (Muhlenberg School Age Center)

Science is a subject that leaves a bad taste on some people's tongues. Being a sixth grade science teacher I have witnessed a lot of different reactions to the subject I teach. This article demonstrates a simple, cheap, and easy science experiment that any teacher can do with students.

The Fireproof Balloon

Materials: 2 Birthday Balloons (small water balloons don't work), a lighter, and water or other liquids.

Steps:

Blow up a balloon with air. Take the lighter and put it against the balloon. – It Pops instantly.

Fill up another balloon with a little water and blow it up the rest of the way with air. Take the lighter and put it against the part of the balloon with the water in. – It does not pop. Depending on how long you hold the flame against the balloon it might even turn black.



PENN SACCA SALUTES FRONT-LINE STAFF

National AfterSchool Association's Pennsylvania's Accredited Programs, May 31, 2009		
Childspace Day Care Center Philadelphia	Joseph Ferderbar Kid's Club Feasterville	Montgomery Early Learning Centers Plymouth Meeting
DDSP School Age Services New Cumberland	Lois Learning Tree 422 South 52 nd Street Philadelphia	Montgomery Early Learning Centers Whitemarsh
Enrichment Workshop for Children—Valley Base Bensalem	Montgomery Early Learning Centers Belmont Hills	School-Age Services Carlisle Barracks Carlisle
Hiland Child Care Pittsburgh	Montgomery Early Learning Centers Bala Cynwyd	The After School Center Philadelphia
John Beck EBKC & ASK Lititz	Montgomery Early Learning Centers Jenkintown	Tobyhanna Army Depot School-Age Services Tobyhanna
		Warwick CDC Sugartown

Why Does This Happen? This happens because rubber is a very light material and easily absorbs the heat of the flame and pops. When the water is in the balloon the water is absorbing the heat and not the rubber of the balloon.

Adaptations: Try different temperatures of water or different liquids to see if it changes the amount of time it takes the balloon to pop.

I hope this experiment works for you in your classroom. Adding discussion questions, stories, or diagrams can enhance this experiment.

My final tip when trying this or other science experiments is to act like a magician. A lot of magic tricks are some type of science experiment. Don't let the kids know that water is in the balloon; make them try to figure it out!



Save the Date

On October 22 celebrate the 10th Annual Lights On Afterschool! Join the Afterschool Alliance and afterschool programs across the country in rallying for afterschool programs. Together, we will demonstrate how after school programs keep kids safe, help working families and inspire learning. Don't forget to register your event and check out the great resources and tool kits to help get you started.

<http://www.afterschoolalliance.org>

NOTE ADDITION TO DPW REGULATIONS:

The
Pennsylvania

CODE PREVIOUS · NEXT · CHAPTER · TITLE · BROWSE · SEARCH · HOME
TOC TOC

§ 3270.20a. Reporting injury, death or fire—statement of policy.

The facility operator shall make reports to a child's parent and to the Department in accordance with § 3270.20 (relating to reporting injury, death or fire) if one or more of the following occurs:

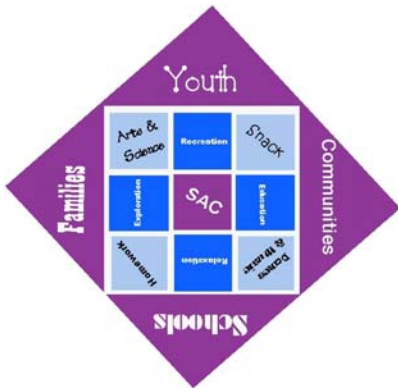
- (1) A child receiving care in the facility is lost or missing from the facility.
- (2) A child in the care of the facility is left behind on a facility excursion.
- (3) A child receiving care in the facility is left unattended in the facility when the facility is closed.

Source

The provisions of this § 3270.20a adopted February 20, 2009, effective April 22, 2009, 39 Pa.B. 1011.



Pennsylvania School-Age
Child Care Alliance
P. O. Box 14574
Pittsburgh, PA 15234



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