



**District of Columbia Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ITERS-R) Observation  
Frequently Asked Questions**

**OVERVIEW OF THE OBSERVATION METRIC**

**Q: What observation metric is being used?**

The ITERS-R will be used to conduct observations to assess program quality in infant and toddler classrooms in Child Development Centers (CDC). The ITERS-R is research-based in the areas of health, development and education as well as best practices in the early education field. The ITERS-R is one metric used in DC's redesigned Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS), [Capital Quality](#). ITERS-R is used to calculate the Capital Quality score for centers serving infants and toddlers (only) and centers serving children birth to five.

**Q: What does the metric capture?**

The ITERS-R measures the quality of early childhood programs through the collection and reporting of quantitative data that captures information on the classroom environment and experiences that children typically encounter in the classroom on an average day. The metric consists of 39 items arranged into seven categories called subscales.

	ITERS-R
No. of Items	39
No. of Subscales	7
Subscales <sup>1</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Space and Furnishings</li><li>• Personal Care Routines</li><li>• Listening and Talking</li><li>• Activities</li><li>• Interactions</li><li>• Program Structure</li><li>• Parent and Staff</li></ul>

**Q: What does each subscale measure?**

- **Space and Furnishings:** Amount and use of indoor space; gross motor space and equipment; furniture for routine care, play and learning, relaxation and comfort; and room arrangement of indoor space.
- **Personal Care Routines:** Organization and quality of greeting and departing routines, meal/snack, nap/rest routines, toileting/diapering processes and health and safety practices.
- **Listening and Talking:** Aspects of staff-child communication used to help children understand and use language, as well as use of books in the classroom.
- **Activities:** Use of materials that support fine motor, active physical play (e.g., blocks, dramatic play, sand and water play), art, music and movement, nature/science, technology,



evidence of promotion and acceptance of diversity.

- **Interaction:** The quality of the supervision and attention/guidance given to children by the staff during play and learning times.
- **Program Structure:** The extent to which the schedule (e.g., routines and adjusting them as needed) meets the needs of all children, including children with disabilities.
- **Parents and Staff:** Examines the provisions made for parents (e.g., communications about program policies, practices) and the professional and personal needs of the staff (e.g., how staff interact with each other, how staff are supervised and developed).

**Note:** The Parents and Staff subscale scores are not included in the overall Capital Quality score. Similarly, these scores will not be part of the program level report. It should be noted, however, that information from the interviews that are part of the Parents and Staff subscale may be incorporated into other aspects of the ITERS-R items and subscales.

**Q: Where can I learn more about the ITERS-R metric?**

You can learn more about the ITERS-R by visiting <https://ers.fpg.unc.edu/>

## **THE OBSERVATION**

**Q: Why are my classrooms/programs being observed?**

The District of Columbia's Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) conducts annual observations in all child development centers with infant and toddler classrooms to comply with the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant Reauthorization Act of 2014 (CCDBG Act). The annual observations allow OSSE to collect indicators of program quality, as required by the CCDBG Act. As such, the annual evaluations are required for all child development centers that have entered into and maintained the Provider Agreement for Subsidized Child Care Services with OSSE. For program year 2018-19, OSSE has contracted with School Readiness Consulting (SRC), an educational consulting company, to conduct evaluations of child development homes and expanded homes using the ITERS-R.

**Q: Is the observation required? Do I have a right to decline an observation?**

The annual ITERS-R observation is required for all child development centers that have entered into and maintained the Provider Agreement for Subsidized Child Care Services with OSSE and is optional for private non-subsidy providers. These observations comply with the reauthorized CCDBG Act. Additionally, the ITERS-R annual observations are used as part of DC's redesigned Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS), Capital Quality.

**Q: We have already been observed using the CLASS®. Why are we being observed again with ITERS-R?**

Child Development Centers with classrooms that serve children birth to five years will have two observations: the ITERS-R observation will be conducted in the fall for classrooms where a majority of the children are birth to 36 months of age and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) Pre-K observation will be conducted in the spring for classrooms where a majority of the children are three and four years old.

**Q: I am a subsidized Child Development Center but do not have any children eligible to receive subsidy enrolled in my program. Do I still have to participate in the ITERS-R observation?**

Yes. The annual evaluations are required for all child development centers that have entered into and maintained the Provider Agreement for Subsidized Child Care Services with OSSE, regardless of whether or not the center has an eligible child enrolled during the time of the observation.

**Q: How many children need to be present in order for the observation to begin?**

Most observations will begin at approximately 8:30 a.m. as long as at least one child is present. Additional attendance requirements will be based on the classroom roster and what is typical for the center. Specific details will be provided at the time the observation is scheduled.

**Q: What aspects of the program/classrooms are observed?**

The ITERS-R captures activities and interactions that occur during a “typical” day. Nearly all of the activities that take place during a typical day are observed for scoring. These include meals and snacks, language arts and/or academics, free choice, transition times and other routines such as diapering/toileting and nap. When necessary, observers may follow the children and staff outside to code an activity (e.g., for a walk or science discovery lesson).

Materials will also be reviewed and sometimes measured, including books, manipulatives (e.g., for infants: grasping toys, nesting cups, etc.; for toddlers: shape sorting games, large stringing beads, etc.), art and music supplies, diapering/toileting stations, feeding/meal areas, cleaning supplies, classroom signage and parent information, outside and indoor open play areas, playgrounds, supply areas and anything else required by ITERS-R.

**Q: What is considered a “typical” day?**

All observations should take place on a day that is considered “typical” or “regular” for the children. This means that any activities, events, guests or specials that are planned for the day of the observation are familiar to the children. If your scheduled observation date is not a typical day for the classroom, please notify School Readiness Consulting (SRC) by email at [ervaluations@schoolreadinessconsulting.com](mailto:ervaluations@schoolreadinessconsulting.com) as soon as possible. If you are aware of dates that will not be typical within your observation window, please share them with the outside evaluator, School Readiness Consulting (SRC) as “do not visit” dates.

**Q: My program goes to a public park for outdoor activity/play. Will this be evaluated as part of the observation?**

If a public park or playground is part of the program’s regular schedule, observers will consider the park/playground as a regular space that children use. Any items in the ITERS-R that apply to play areas will be evaluated using the public park/playground.

**Q: The lead teacher in one of my classrooms is on extended medical leave, will you still observe this classroom?**

If the lead teacher is on extended medical leave during the scheduled observation, and:

- Has plans to return to the classroom by Dec. 1, 2018: The observation will be rescheduled. Attempts will be made to return to the classroom after the lead teacher has been back in the classroom for at least two weeks.



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- Will not return by Dec. 1, 2018: Classrooms that have a long-term substitute who has been providing instruction in the classroom for at least two weeks will be observed. The school administrator should share the context for the observation during the long-term substitute's orientation to the classroom assignment so he/she is aware and part of the process.
- A long-term substitute has not been identified or has not been in the classroom for at least two weeks: OSSE will follow-up with individual programs regarding additional next steps.

**Q: What if I have a new center director? Will this affect the program scoring?**

For the classroom-level observation and lead teacher interview, a new center director will have no impact on the scoring and the observation will proceed as scheduled. For the Parents and Staff subscale where the program director is interviewed, SRC will work with the program to either identify an alternate to be interviewed or wait until the new center director has been in the position for at least two weeks before conducting the interview.

**Q: Can program leaders or administrators be present in the classroom during the observation?**

Observations are expected to capture the activities and interactions that occur during a "typical" day. If your program's typical day does not include having an administrator/program leader present in the classroom, then they should refrain from being present on the day of the observation.

**Q: Are substitutes or assistants working in Child Development Centers considered in scoring?**

The ITERS-R observations focus primarily on the environment and experiences that children encounter in centers on a typical day. All adults in the classroom on the day of the observation who are working and interacting with children will be observed and included in the scoring.

**Q: Are volunteers working with children in the classrooms considered in scoring?**

Any adults, including volunteers (e.g., foster grandparents) who work with the children daily (or almost daily) for a substantial part of the day will be considered in scoring. Adults who are in the classroom for short periods of the day, or who are not a part of the classroom's regular daily routine do not count in evaluating whether the requirements of the item are met.

**Q: Why are staff being interviewed?**

The ITERS-R metric is detailed and comprehensive. Observers interview staff after the observation to gather additional information that he/she was not able to obtain from the observation, yet is needed to complete scoring. Program directors will also participate in an interview to answer questions related to provisions for parents and staff.

**Q: How will the observation be conducted for Spanish and Amharic immersion programs?**

SRC has hired observers proficient in both Spanish and Amharic to conduct observations in programs or classrooms where Spanish or Amharic is the primary language. The observation processes are the same for English, Spanish and Amharic observations, and the program director and/or teacher interview can be conducted in Spanish or Amharic if requested.

**Q: How will the observation be conducted if a language other than English, Spanish or Amharic is spoken in the program?**

SRC has hired observers proficient in several languages. It may be possible for the observation and/or teacher interview to be conducted in other languages if requested. Please contact SRC for more information.

**Q: How are mixed-age classrooms observed?**

Only classrooms in which 51 percent or more of the children are under 36 months old (born after Sept. 10, 2015) will be observed. Upon their arrival, observers will confirm the age of each child on the enrollment roster (using the date of birth). If the observer arrives in a classroom and confirms that the majority (51 percent or more) of the children are older than 36 months, the observation will be cancelled and the classroom will participate in the CLASS® Pre-K observation in the spring.

**Q: When will I be notified of my observation date?**

Child Development Centers are notified by email of their observation window (the two-week period randomly scheduled using an automated generator) at least two weeks before the first business day of the observation window. The exact date of the observation is sent to the providers via email at least one week before the scheduled observation.

**Q: What should I expect on the day of the observation?**

- A. The observer will arrive in the morning for the scheduled observation, by approximately 8:30 a.m.
- B. The observer will check-in at the front desk and ask to be directed to the classroom where he/she is scheduled to observe. The observer will introduce him/herself to the teacher/provider and will ask for the dates of birth for all the children enrolled in the classroom that is scheduled to be observed. The ITERS-R metric requires that the data collector record birthdates of children in order to observe and score correctly.
- C. The observation usually takes between three and four hours, but not less than three hours. During the visit, the observer will observe a wide variety of interactions, activities and materials as indicated by the rating scale. For example, the observer will observe and review indoor and outdoor space, materials used by the children, room arrangements, health practices, staff/child interactions and so on. The observation will require the observer to examine many of the materials including measuring certain items and equipment.
- D. The observation will include a 30-40 minute provider interview. Whenever possible, the interview should be conducted in a private space; however, observers are trained to interview the teacher in the classroom if necessary. Program directors will also be interviewed at a time most convenient for the director, preferably on the day of the observation.

**Q: What can I do to prepare for my visit?**

Observers will need to gather information from the classroom teacher on the day of the observation, including the birthdates of the children currently enrolled in the classroom. Having this information prepared ahead of time will help ensure the observation begins on time. There is no additional preparation needed. All activities and interactions that happen on a “typical” day should proceed as normal.

## **TRAINING, CERTIFICATION AND RELIABILITY OF OBSERVERS**

### **Q: What are the prerequisites to be an observer?**

Observers hired by SRC must have a bachelor's degree and SRC prioritizes candidates who have experience in early childhood education. In addition, all observers have passed a background check, have a current negative tuberculosis screening and receive training on their role as mandated reporters for child abuse and neglect.

### **Q: What are observers' training requirements regarding ITERS-R?**

Observers receive a one-day training on ITERS-R administration and scoring from the Environment Rating Scales Institute (ERSI) at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute/University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Two additional days of training are provided by SRC for review and practice on ERS metrics and on project-specific protocols, such as procedures to follow when on-site at programs, professionalism in conducting observations and mandated reporting of potential child abuse and neglect.

### **Q: How do you ensure that observers are reliable?**

Before observing independently, observers participate in at least three certification visits with an ERSI-reliable SRC Master Coder. To attain certification to conduct observations for this project, observers must reach an average of an 85 percent agreement (within one point) to consensus scores with the Master Coder, across three visits. After being certified, observers receive additional reliability visits every 15th observation with an ERSI-reliable SRC Master Coder. The observer must achieve 85 percent agreement (within one point to consensus scores) with the Master Coder on this observation. In the event that an observer does not meet 85 percent agreement requirement during a reliability visit, the SRC Master Coder's ERS scores will be used for that classroom's ITERS-R score.

### **Q: Why might there be more than one observer during the observation?**

The classroom observation may sometimes be conducted by more than one observer. In these instances, two observers are observing the same activities to document how similarly they are scoring the ITERS-R. These visits are randomly selected and are scheduled throughout the observation window. In some instances, the second individual is monitoring the observer to ensure they are following the protocols correctly.

## **AFTER THE OBSERVATION**

### **Q: How are my scores being used?**

The scores of the observation will be used to: 1) calculate each facility's Capital Quality Rating; 2) identify areas of strength and places for improvement; and 3) inform OSSE's professional development offerings and technical assistance strategies.

### **Q: Will I be given the results of the observation?**

It is anticipated that programs and providers in the Pilot, Group Two and Group Three will receive score reports by the end of December 2018 and Group Four will receive scores by the end of January 2019.



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**Q: Is there a process to appeal scores?**

Centers have the right to appeal their scores if they believe that the stated process for observations detailed in the District of Columbia Infant/Toddler Quality Observation Data Collection and Quality Assurance Protocols was not followed. Please refer to the [District of Columbia Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised \(ITERS-R\) Quality Observation Data Collection and Quality Assurance Protocols](#) for more information.