**What’s New?**

Using the ERS scales and other tools to support Continuous Quality Improvement.

The ERS Team understands that your assessment window can be a stressful time and that last observation visit may end with a sigh of relief as the assessor walks out your door. When those Summary Reports arrive, we hope you will celebrate the work you’ve done, your program’s strengths, and the commitment you have made to high quality early childhood experiences.

We also hope that those reports won’t then be filed away and the ERS books stuck on a shelf until the “next window.” Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) happens when we take a step back from time to time to assess how things are working (or not working!) and to ask ourselves, “What’s new?” A high quality program is a constantly changing and evolving environment. If your staffing or enrollment has changed, a self-assessment can give that new classroom community helpful information for making quality decisions.

Even when the faces don’t change, your program changes as staff and children develop and build new skills. When all those adorable infants become busy toddlers, revisiting the ITERS-R standards can help staff make choices about changes to materials and room arrangement. To tap into unique interests and qualities you need to be taking regular measurements.

**ERS & CQI – What’s New?**

How often are you asking, “What’s new?” about your program. Read more about how you can use the ERS and other tools to support high quality. (Page 1)

**Assessors Hear the Funniest Things**

We work hard not to show it, but there are some moments when we’re laughing hysterically on the inside during ERS visits.

**Bleach & Water Solution Updates**

Check here for guidance on using the new formulations of bleach in your sanitizing and disinfecting routines.

**What A Great Idea**

Fun, clever, creative things we’ve seen and heard.

Look for new PA Position Statements coming this July!

www.pakeys.org

*Con't on page 2.*
SELF INDICATOR OR QUALITY JUST ACHIEVEMENTS are building blocks for your quality improvement plan. For example:

Your self-assessment of the Preschool room shows opportunities for improvement in ECERS-R Item 28. Beth in the older toddler room has shown a particular strength and interest in creating reflections of diversity in daily activities, so she might be part of the Action Plan team with the Preschool teachers.

THE MOD SPOD

Among the many terms used in the Environment Rating Scales, two of the most unique are, Much of the Day (MOD) and Substantial Portion of the Day (SPOD). Although both of those terms consider the amount of time children are able to access classroom materials and toys, they take very different perspectives.

MUCH OF THE DAY (MOD)

MOD is the time standard used in the ITERS-R. Because infants and toddlers have individual schedules, MOD is not calculated in hours or minutes. It is based on each child’s observed experience.

You can use these tools to help organize a work plan for a specific ERS item or indicator or any other priority in your quality improvement work. Focusing on just a few priorities makes continuous quality improvement feel less daunting and allows multiple staff members to take the lead in developing and implementing Action Steps.

The self-reflection tools also give you an opportunity to reflect on your program’s or classroom’s strengths. Sometimes those strengths can serve as building blocks for your quality improvement plan. For example:

To meet the expectation of much of the day, infants and toddlers are able to make choices in their activities whenever they are “awake and ready to play.” It’s easy to see that children who are eating or having a bottle would not be ready to play. Children who are having a diaper change or toileting are not ready to play.

What about the child in the photo below?

Even when infants and toddlers are awake, they may not be ready to play. They may need a snuggle, they may need some time to transition, they may want some distance from the group.

ITERS-R Items that include a MOD expectation can be impacted if children spend long periods of time, usually defined as 15 minutes or longer, in equipment (playpens, swings, infant seats, exer-saucers, etc.). Providing access to toys and materials for MOD happens when teachers are tuned into each child’s unique schedule, temperament, and needs.

SUBSTANTIAL PORTION OF THE DAY (SPOD)

SPOD is the time standard used in the ECERS-R and is calculated based on the length of your program day. To find SPOD for your program, count the total...
hours per day that the program is open and divide by 3.

THE MOD SPOD, con't. from page 2

Your program opens at 7:30am and closes at 5:00pm. Your program day = 9.5 hours. SPOD for your program is 3 hours and 10 minutes.

Even if not all children attend for 9.5 hours, SPOD is always calculated based on the full program day. A common challenge for programs is taking advantage of those beautiful days when the sunshine is calling.

Lots of ideas may come to mind for including Science/Nature outdoors, but what about other options for play?

Ball splat painting for younger groups and

Water (paint) balloon art for older children!

A lacing fence!

Outdoor math? You can count on it!

The ECERS-R Professional Development session includes a hands-on SPOD activity and the All About the ECERS book covers how to account for SPOD in a variety of program structures.

So what does SPOD or MOD look like in practice? What about curriculum goals and meeting early learning standards?

Think of effective early learning teachers as the host/hostess of the party. If you were hosting a party in your home, you would set up the environment so that your guests would engage with each other, be able to enjoy the materials (snacks, music, a comfortable place to sit, etc.), and you would be able to move through and mingle with small groups of guests.

In an early learning environment, you set up your environment with interesting and engaging materials that support your curriculum goals. As children naturally
Assessors Hear the Funniest Things!

Anecdotes contributed by the ERS Team

We continue our series of anecdotes heard around the state from your witty, observant little children:

- **From South Central PA:** A little guy was in line with the back of his coat pulled up over his head so you couldn’t see his face and he yells to his friends “Guys, you should be in here, it’s awesome!”

- **From Southeast PA:** A group of preschoolers was sitting together for a story before lunch. The teacher was reading a book about dinosaurs and asking the children if they knew the name of the dinosaur as she showed them a picture.

  They were a little stumped on one and she asked, “What do we call the dinosaur that flies?” A very proud voice called out, “a flaposaurus.”

- **From Southwest PA:** Timing is everything! As the assessor entered the preschool classroom, the children started screaming. Apparently they had been reading the story of The Three Little Pigs and she walked in right at the “huff and puff” part; they thought she was the big bad wolf!

- **From Northwest PA:** A family child care provider told the children that the assessor was watching them and would give them a score. One of the boys repeatedly asked the assessor if she was going to give them a score. Then he got out a white board and marker and wrote a big 100 on it. He held it up to the assessor and said, “Do you see this number? This is the score we want – 100 – OK?”

Sanitizing & Disinfecting

*Update for bleach & water solution.*

A quick glance at the cleaning product shelves in your local store is all you need to feel a bit overwhelmed by all the choices. Even traditional bleach is now produced in a variety of options.

A bleach and water solution has long been popular as an inexpensive, effective way to reduce germs and you are probably familiar with the standard recipes and the two-minute wait time. However, the standard approach won’t always apply with these new bleach products.

As of January, 2014, the Regional Program Quality Assessors will be looking at your sanitizing and disinfecting
If you find an EPA registration number on your bleach bottle, your next step will be to log on to the EPA’s website. The link / web address below will take you to a screen where you’ll be able to enter that EPA number and pull up specific detail for that product. (The page you land on is the EPA’s “Pesticide Product Label System,” don’t worry, you’re in the right spot.)

http://iaspub.epa.gov/apex/pesticides/f?p =PPLS:3

You’ll have the option to enter the product name for your search, but because many products have similar names, enter the EPA registration number in the third search box, and press “Search.”

Your “Search” will give you the specific measurements for a bleach water solution at both a sanitizing and disinfecting strength and the required wait time for each solution. Make an affix labels with this information onto your spray bottles. Keep in mind that if you don’t consistently purchase the exact same bleach product, you will need to repeat this process anytime you buy something different.

Make an appointment with yourself!

When did you last take a look at the ERS Authors’ Notes for Clarification or the PA Position Statements?

Why not put an appointment on your calendar to sit down somewhere comfortable and quiet and review these frequently updated documents.

Coming soon! Be sure to check the PA Keys website for a newly released PA Position Statement that gives guidance on the sanitization/disinfecting practice that will be assessed during your ERS observation.

Share! Sharing is caring! We share with our friends!

We say it all the time and learning to share toys and attention is an important social skill for young children. How well are we modeling that skill though? There are times when children’s safety trumps all, but are we consistently showing children that we also know how to share? It may be faster to just take things from children’s hands in the rush to clean up and transition to the next activity or to grab that mouthed toy from a toddler, but did you spend all morning telling them not to take things from their friends? You might be taking that marker from a child’s hand only to write down their description of their drawing, but did you ask them first? We know what little mimics young children can be, so let’s give them great behavior to duplicate!
While we’re visiting classrooms or talking with teachers at professional development events, we often see or hear some very creative ideas or helpful tips.

A teacher created color sorting activity using tubes from wrapping paper rolls, child friendly tweezers, and pom poms. What other sortable things or sorting categories can you come up with?

What a fun twist on the classic body tracing activity. The children in this preschool room were all traced onto the same piece of paper to create a colorful layered look.

A participant at ERS Professional Development shared that she had taught her young preschoolers to “do the Batman” when they sneezed so that they would sneeze into the crook of their arm and not their hands. She said it was super successful since the kids thought it was fun to “hold up their cape like Batman”.

No room for a sand table? This site used donated metal trays to create individual spaces for sensory play. These deep trays could also work for water play and have endless potential for setting up individualized activities, but there are probably many types of trays, boxes, or bins that would work just as well.

HAVE QUESTIONS? HAVE AN IDEA OR TIP TO SHARE? Submit your ERS related questions or your tips and ideas to the ERS News Team at: ersnews@berksiu.org