

ECERS-3: Identifying Gaps and Equity Challenges

Final Recommendations for Authors of the ECERS-4

Noreen Yazejian, PhD, & Iheoma U. Iruka, PhD, Co-Principal Investigators

Funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

June 30, 2024



The ECERS-3: Identifying Gaps and Equity Challenges project was designed to interrogate the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Third Edition (ECERS-3) with an equity lens. The project included focus groups with Black and Hispanic/Latine users of the ECERS-3; secondary analyses of an existing ECERS-3 dataset; and classroom observations using the ECERS-3 and another observation tool, the Equity in Early Learning Assessment (EELA), which was designed to assess socio-cultural aspects of classrooms. The recommendations below are based on analyses of data from these three activities.

Project Finding Highlights:

- [Listening sessions](#) with Black and Latine Pre-K teachers, directors, and technical assistance providers showed that (a) race, ethnicity, and culture of children, teacher, and assessment matters (b) the economic resources coupled with the racial and ethnic composition of the school/program have implications on ratings (c) a need to attend to disability as a culture and (d) diversity needs to be more prominent throughout the tool.
- [Secondary data analyses](#) from a large-scale 2015-16 validation study of the ECERS-3 in three states (Georgia, Pennsylvania, and Washington) revealed that the basic factor structure of the ECERS-3 was similar in the sample of classrooms when compared across lead teacher race, classroom racial composition, and lead teacher-child match; however, some differences were found in factor loadings

and item thresholds based on classroom composition and teacher racial match, with the biggest differences seen for lead teacher race.

- Primary data collection with the ECERS-3 and EELA in three states (North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin) found that above and beyond teacher credentials: (a) having a Hispanic teacher in the classroom was associated with a lower ECERS-3 Average Score compared to having a white teacher (b) Black and Hispanic data collectors were more likely to assess the ECERS-3 Average Score higher than white data collectors and (c) when the teacher's race matched that of the majority of classroom students, the ECERS-3 Average Score was lower compared to the classrooms where the teacher's race did not match that of the majority students.

Recommendations:

- Content:
 - While acknowledging that the ECERS is a global scale designed to capture the “average” experience of children, ensure that items and indicators capture relevant and meaningful experiences for children who have been historically and currently marginalized, including racially and ethnically minoritized (REM) children, dual-language learners (including emergent bilingual and multilingual speakers), children with disabilities, and children living in poverty.
 - Ensure that there is not an assumption that there is only one “way” for quality to exist, such as one way to interact with children or one kind of material, and building on the sociocultural ways of teaching from a diverse workforce, especially the growing number of Hispanic/Latine educators.
 - Consider the extent to which environments serving large proportions of Black and Hispanic/Latine children and children in low-income are viewed through a culturally grounded and asset-based light, ensuring that items are not privileging higher income, white, and English-speaking environments.
 - Consider how content, including examples and scoring, may implicitly or explicitly create a perspective about preferred quality.
 - Consider how cultural humility and responsiveness can be addressed by the scale in ways that are observable.

- Given the restricted nature of some of the extant data, ensure the content meets the diverse needs of early childhood education environments, including Montessori, Reggio, and similar learning settings, given their expected growth.
- Consider the findings of new reports from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine focused on closing the opportunity gap and a new vision for high quality preschool curriculum; these two reports, for example, have implications for the role of global quality measures in improving the learning experiences of children and training and support for the workforce.
- Training/Data Capture/Other:
 - Ensure Environment Rating Scale trainers have the experience and expertise to attend to issues of implicit and explicit biases, racism, and positionality.
 - Build modules and other materials for the Environment Rating Scale training that address implicit and explicit biases, racism, and positionality – separately and integrated.
 - Consider how training may create hypervigilance in data coders/data collectors to find the “wrong” in interactions and environment (implicitly or explicitly).
 - Capture data on coder/data collector as well as teacher and classroom racial composition during observations.
 - Capture information and data on data collectors' and trainers' experiences in observing racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse classrooms, educators, and children with attention to bias, including coursework, practicums, and lived experiences.
 - Capture community-level data where and when possible, to further contextualize the scoring.

Visit the [project website](#) or [contact Noreen Yazejian](#) for more information.