

Unpacking Items, Indicators, and Scoring: Considerations for the Time of COVID-19

The DERS is driven by research-based principles of human development: Development is integrated, cumulative, and driven by exploration and self-construction within the learning environment.

We start with the assumption that learning takes place in dynamic interactions between child, adult, and environment. These principles frame our definition of classroom quality, which is measured by the 60 discrete items comprising the DERS.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, educators around the world have taken drastic and unprecedented steps to continue serving children in classrooms while safeguarding the health and safety of children, school staff, and families. As of this writing, many schools and regulatory agencies are still articulating their plans to make in-person learning safe, and many more are opting to start the school year with remote learning. Conditions and plans are always evolving and will vary from location to location. However, some of the changes we expect to impact in-person learning in the 20-21 school year include:

- Reduced class sizes
- Restricted access to didactic materials (for cleaning between uses)
- Physical distancing within the classroom
- Assigned seating
- Restrictions on food preparation
- Restrictions on children's movements within the classroom

These modifications will impact how classrooms perform on the DERS. If children are required to stay six feet apart at all times, for example, we do not expect to see many children offering help to, or receiving help from, their peers. This document is a guide to help observers and practitioners alike manage expectations for performance on the DERS in this exceptional time of global crisis. Below you will find some items with adjusted look-fors, as well as guidance on what items not to adjust.

We encourage you to score items accurately, as you were trained, recognizing that scores for some items may be lower than would be expected. Despite the changes to the prepared environment due to safety considerations, the DERS continues to provide an accurate reflection of the characteristics of your developmentally supportive environment. In this moment, our goal of optimal human development comes second to ensuring the health and safety of our school communities. We encourage you to continue to use the DERS to look at what you can do and adapt to continue to support development in these unusual circumstances.

Next, we delve more deeply into items and indicators by providing further discussion and notes to aid scoring. Scoring notes are left blank for items that we believe will not be impacted by modifications to classroom practice.

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Early Childhood Items, Indicators, and Scoring Notes

CHILD BEHAVIORS		
ITEM	INDICATORS	SCORING NOTES
Caring for Classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spontaneously pushing in chairs, tidying shelves, sweeping, watering plants, etc. • Dusting, cleaning up spills, washing dishes. • Children rather than adults care for the physical environment. 	With fewer children in the classroom, observers should expect to see fewer children engaged in care of the environment. Conversely, children may engage in more cleaning activities.
Completes an Activity Cycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selecting an activity, engaging with the activity, and returning it ready for use by another child. • If children move away from their work, it is only briefly, and they quickly return. 	Children may not be allowed to physically move away from their work or return their own work to the shelves, but may request work verbally.
Conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk is child initiated and prevalent throughout the classroom. • Two or more volleys of conversation between children or between children and adults. 	With fewer children in the classroom, and physical distancing, the level of conversation in classrooms may be decreased.
Disrupting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavior that is dangerous, demeaning or destructive. • Shouting. • Pushing or physical violence. • Throwing furniture or materials. 	Disrupting may occur more frequently as children respond to chronic toxic stress.
Engaging with Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focusing intently on one piece of work or activity for an extended period of time. • Engaging sequentially with purpose (rather than “flitting” from one activity to another). • Electing to repeat activities. 	
Handling Materials with Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrying, manipulating, and putting away materials carefully and intentionally. • Carrying items one at a time using both hands. • Incidental spills or accidents may still occur, in spite of children's care. 	Children may not be permitted to move around the room. Observers can still assess how children handle materials when seated.
Initiating Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choosing work without adult direction. • Independently locating a place to work. • Transitioning without adult direction. 	Choices of work, work location, and/or materials may be limited. Children may not be permitted to physically move between shelves and a workspace. Transitions may be facilitated by an adult. Children might choose work by verbally requesting it from an adult.

Interrupting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal interruptions—breaking into others' conversation. • Non-verbal interruptions, such as interfering with other children's work. 	Number of interruptions may be substantially fewer in classrooms with fewer children.
Joy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smiling, laughing, or singing. • Clearly comfortable in the environment. • Expressing satisfaction with work. • Peaceful. 	
Misusing Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play-fighting with objects. • Twirling globes, tossing or throwing objects. • Extended fantasy play with educational materials. 	
Navigating Room with Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking around peers' work. • Moving through the room without bumping into tables or shelves. 	Children may be restricted from moving around the room.
Observing without Disturbing Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watching a peer work without touching or interrupting. 	Peer observations may not be feasible in classrooms where physical distancing is mandated.
Offering/ Accepting Help from Peers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noticing a peer in need and offering assistance with words or gestures. • Asking, "do you need help?" or saying, "here, I'll help you." • Accepting assistance when offered. • Spontaneously assisting with cleanup. 	Instances of peers helping others may be fewer in classrooms with fewer children. Children may not be able to help each other in classrooms where physical distancing is mandated and materials cannot be shared.
Persisting in the Face of Challenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sighing or expressing difficulty while engaged in an activity. • Asking for help from a peer. • Attempting multiple ways of solving a problem. 	
Resolving Needs with Words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requesting help from peers or adults verbally. • Disagreements between peers are resolved without violence—though voices may be raised temporarily. • Children cooperate peacefully to solve problems or mediate disagreements. 	
Seeking Adult Approval or Permission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are required to check work completion with adults. • Asking permission to use resources, move around in the environment, or select work. • Completing a checklist of activities. 	
Shifting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When an activity, material, person, or location is unavailable, recovering and making another choice. • Recovering from distraction. • Shifting between individual and group work. 	Work and activity choices available to children may be limited.

Social Graces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal expressions such as “please,” “thank you,” “excuse me”. • Greetings, handshakes, offering refreshments. • Non-verbal courtesies, including expressions of inclusion of peers, kindness, yielding space to allow a peer to join a group or find a workplace, smiling or making eye contact with a peer. 	
Waiting Turn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When a material, activity, or person is unavailable, children wait their turn without interrupting or resorting to force. • Children are seen waiting for an adult’s attention, a seat at the snack table, a work space, activity, or use of a material. 	In classrooms with reduced class sizes, children may have fewer opportunities to wait their turn for materials or activities. Activities and materials that are usually limited may be available in duplicate, triplicate, etc. to reduce cleaning burden on teachers.
Work as Prop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sitting in front of work but not engaging with work or others for an extended period. • Manipulating work with only the appearance of engagement. 	Fewer children in the classroom may lead to fewer instances of work as prop observed; however, limited choice and movement may increase the proportion of children exhibiting this behavior.

Observers and raters should attend to ALL adults in the room.

ADULT BEHAVIORS		
ITEM	INDICATORS	SCORING NOTES
Calling Across the Room	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calling or shouting across the room rather than moving to the child. • Calling or shouting across the room to other adults. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In classrooms with physical distancing requirements, adults may speak to children from some distance away.
Calm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving around the space slowly and intentionally. • Behavior is consistent and predictable. • Speech is soft in volume and calm in tone. 	
Clarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal instructions are expressed in simple, clear language. • Language is used intentionally, with attention to vocabulary, syntax, grammar, and cultural context. 	
Focus on Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent checking of student work completion—as distinct from observing to track activity. • A majority of time is spent circulating, looking over children' shoulders to monitor activity as distinct from general observation. • Monitoring activity results in a lack of instruction and interference with children's engagement. 	
Friendliness with Error	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing children to experiment and experience failure. • Communicating respect for the process of trial and error and encouraging children to embrace potential learning from error. 	
Interrupting Concentrating Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approaching children who are obviously concentrating. • Interrupting children's work. 	
Loud, Didactic Talk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voice can be heard above student discussion. • Voice is mannered and focused on telling rather than discussion. • "On-stage" talk. • Commanding rather than inviting engagement. 	
Moving/ Bending to Speak to Child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults move to the child, bend or kneel, and make eye contact when speaking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In classrooms with physical distancing requirements, adults may not be permitted to approach children.
Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Withdrawing from classroom activity in order to observe children in a focused, purposeful manner. • Scanning the room. • Taking notes. 	

Offering Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verbally offering children choices of activities, including where to work, with whom to work, and how long to engage in activity. Reminding children of available options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adults may offer fewer options to children, especially around where and with whom to work.
Praising to Flatter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offering general praise, such as “good job,” as distinct from descriptive feedback External validation provided by adults that does not prompt child reflection 	
Precision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lessons with materials are presented with attention to detail in gesture. Modeling slow, careful hand movements for children while handling materials. 	
Prompting Children to Help One Another	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verbal prompts for children to help or consult with each other. Redirecting the children seeking assistance to peers when appropriate. Encouraging peer teaching. 	In classrooms with physical distancing requirements and prohibitions on shared materials, adults may not prompt children to help one another.
Protected Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holding instructional time sacred, protecting the mutual engagement between adult, child, and material. Not allowing other children to interrupt instruction. Not allowing themselves to be distracted from instruction. 	
Responding to Inappropriate Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redirecting rather than correcting. Children are redirected using in positive rather than negative language. Limits are clearly expressed in a kind but firm way. 	
Social Graces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modeling pragmatic social language as needed—“please”, “thank you”, “excuse me”. Modeling gestural elements of social graces when appropriate—pushing in chairs, picking up litter, handshakes, stepping aside to allow another person to pass. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Soft/ Conversational Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speaking softly in a manner that is conversational rather than didactic. Adult voices are rarely audible above the general hum of the classroom. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">

Warmth and Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent smiling. • Sharing in children's enthusiasm. • Connecting with children by making eye contact. • Conversation with children is not limited to academic topics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masking may make it difficult to observe smiles.
Warning/ Correcting Errors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intervening in children's activity, often correcting mistakes, either through verbal cues or physically moving objects (blocks, pencils). • Warnings for the child's safety constitute exceptions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Wonder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instruction is presented as an invitation to discover something exciting. • Adults communicate genuine curiosity about the content they or their children are engaged with, shifting focus from self to work. • Adults lead with open-ended questions in conversation with children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

ENVIRONMENTAL ATTRIBUTES		
ITEM	INDICATORS	SCORING NOTES
Clutter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over-stimulating wall decoration. • Inadequate storage leads to supplies, materials, and other items cluttering the environment. • Lack of attention to order. 	
Curated Decor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wall décor is carefully selected with emphasis on fine art rather than commercial posters or student work. • Décor reflects a variety of cultures and heritages. • Décor creates a warm, comfortable, and welcoming environment. 	Fabric surfaces may be limited or absent from the environment.
Directed Child Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children broken into age or grade-level groups. • Children assigned seats. • Whole group time, including circle or snack, exceeds 15 minutes per work period. 	Children may be assigned seats.
Easy Access to Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The classroom provides direct access to nature via a door opening to an outdoor space. • Children pass freely between indoor and outdoor spaces without adult mediation or permission. 	
Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children primarily prepare, serve, and clean up snacks and/or meals with minimal help from adults. • Individual food preparation activities are present where children are preparing, consuming, and cleaning up the activity independently. • Snack is provided for children to serve themselves and is taken in small, rather than whole, groups. 	Children may not be permitted to engage in food preparation activities. Snack and meals may be served by adults rather than children.
Language Rich (Oral)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The environment is equipped with an array of items to identify, name, and talk about. • Fine art images reflecting the cultures and ethnicities present in the classroom are available for children to peruse, discuss, and contemplate. 	

Language Rich (Written)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The environment contains a cozy reading area, with a chair and a selection of texts culturally representative of the classroom community. • High-interest print material (books, magazines and other physical texts) are available at all times, as distinct from leveled readers and other didactic texts. 	Fabric surfaces may be limited or absent from the environment.
Materials Ready for Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pencils are sharpened. • Consumables are stocked. • All areas of the classroom are orderly and prepared for children. 	Shared classroom supplies may be eliminated thus eliminating the need to have some items like pencils prepared for the use of children.
Mixed Age Grouping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are in mixed age groups of two-year age spans. • Children are in mixed age groups of three years. 	
Multisensory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials are available to learn through different senses. • Materials allow for hands-on exploration. 	Water activities and materials for exploring taste and smell may be limited or absent.
Natural Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials, furniture, and containers intended for children's use are made of wood, glass, fiber, metal. 	Fiber materials and fabric may be limited or absent.
Plants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The environment contains live plants. • Materials for plant care are available to children. • There is evidence that plants are integrated into science and/or language instruction and learning; children may experiment with, measure, describe, or classify plants. 	
Presence of Digital Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tablets, computers or a Smart Board are available for children. • Children are observed using digital technology for learning. • Digital technology is used as a substitute for didactic materials. 	Digital technology may be present to facilitate distance learning.
Real Tools and Real Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children have access to working, child-sized, real-life tools (e.g., hammers, rakes, shovels, brooms, knives). • Children participate in activities requiring the use of real tools (gardening, washing, ironing, sweeping, sewing, handcrafts, food preparation). 	
Uninterrupted Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children have access to the entire environment for at least two and a half hours per day. 	

Elementary Items, Indicators, and Scoring Notes

CHILD BEHAVIORS		
ITEM	INDICATORS	SCORING NOTES
Caring for Classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spontaneously pushing in chairs, tidying shelves, sweeping, watering plants, etc. • Dusting, cleaning up spills, washing dishes. • Children rather than adults care for the physical environment. 	With fewer children in the classroom, observers should expect to see fewer children engaged in care of the environment. Conversely, children may engage in more cleaning activities.
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working at the same workspace with other children • Consulting with other children on extended, complex work 	Children may not be allowed to be physically close enough to collaborate.
Comfort with Adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social interactions demonstrating mutual respect occur between children and adults. • Children demonstrate comfort and ease with adults - smiling, speaking conversationally, joking. • Conversations relating to non-work related topics are initiated by adults and children. 	Physical distancing and masking may make smiles difficult to see and conversations difficult to hear.
Conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk is child initiated and prevalent throughout the classroom. • Two or more volleys of conversation between children or between children and adults. 	With fewer children in the classroom, and physical distancing, the level of conversation in classrooms may be decreased.
Disrupting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavior that is dangerous, demeaning or destructive. • Shouting. • Pushing or physical violence. • Throwing furniture or materials. 	Disrupting may occur more frequently as children respond to chronic toxic stress.
Frustration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quickly seeking help from an adult when work is challenging • Ending activity when work becomes challenging – as distinct from taking a break and returning to work 	
Initiating Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choosing work without adult direction. • Independently locating a place to work. • Transitioning without adult direction. 	Choices of work, work location, and/or materials may be limited. Children may not be permitted to physically move between shelves and a workspace. Transitions may be facilitated by an adult. Children might choose work by verbally requesting it from an adult.
Interrupting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal interruptions—breaking into others' conversation. • Non-verbal interruptions, such as interfering with other children's work. 	Number of interruptions may be substantially fewer in classrooms with fewer children.

Joy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smiling, laughing, or singing. • Clearly comfortable in the environment. • Expressing satisfaction with work. • Peaceful. 	
Maximum Effort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended periods of intense focus and concentration. • Intense, extended focus on project based “big work” that inspires students' imagination and reasoning. This could include ongoing research, planning presentations, or engaging with the community outside of the classroom. 	
Navigating Room with Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking around peers' work. • Moving through the room without bumping into tables or shelves. 	Children may be restricted from moving around the room.
Offering/ Accepting Help from Peers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noticing a peer in need and offering assistance with words or gestures. • Asking, “do you need help?” or saying, “here, I'll help you.” • Accepting assistance when offered. • Spontaneously assisting with cleanup. 	Instances of peers helping others may be fewer in classrooms with fewer children. Children may not be able to help each other in classrooms where physical distancing is mandated and materials cannot be shared.
Persisting in the Face of Challenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sighing or expressing difficulty while engaged in an activity. • Asking for help from a peer. • Attempting multiple ways of solving a problem. 	
Planning and Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work journals or daily logs, where children record their daily work choices, are visible in the classroom and at children's work spaces. • Children record work in a work journal or daily log when selecting or completing a work. • Children confer with peers or adults about work plans. 	Children may not be able to confer with peers in classrooms where physical distancing is mandated.
Resolving Needs with Words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requesting help from peers or adults verbally. • Disagreements between peers are resolved without violence—though voices may be raised temporarily. • Children cooperate peacefully to solve problems or mediate disagreements. 	
Seeking Adult Approval or Permission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are required to check work completion with adults. • Asking permission to use resources, move around in the environment, or select work. • Completing a checklist of activities. 	

Shifting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When an activity, material, person, or location is unavailable, recovering and making another choice. • Recovering from distraction. • Shifting between individual and group work. 	Work and activity choices available to children may be limited.
Social Graces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal expressions such as “please,” “thank you,” “excuse me”. • Greetings, handshakes, offering refreshments. • Non-verbal courtesies, including expressions of inclusion of peers, kindness, yielding space to allow a peer to join a group or find a workplace, smiling or making eye contact with a peer. 	.
Waiting Turn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When a material, activity, or person is unavailable, children wait their turn without interrupting or resorting to force. • Children are seen waiting for an adult’s attention, a seat at the snack table, a work space, activity, or use of a material. 	In classrooms with reduced class sizes, children may have fewer opportunities to wait their turn for materials or activities. Activities and materials that are usually limited may be available in duplicate, triplicate, etc. to reduce cleaning burden on teachers.
Work as Prop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sitting in front of work but not engaging with work or others for an extended period. • Manipulating work with only the appearance of engagement. 	Fewer children in the classroom may lead to fewer instances of work as prop observed; however, limited choice and movement may increase the proportion of children exhibiting this behavior.

Observers and raters should attend to ALL adults in the room.

ADULT BEHAVIORS		
ITEM	INDICATORS	SCORING NOTES
Calling Across the Room	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calling or shouting across the room rather than moving to the child. • Calling or shouting across the room to other adults. 	In classrooms with physical distancing requirements, adults may speak to children from some distance away.
Care of the Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults model care by doing things like picking up litter, pushing in chairs, straightening materials, etc. • Adults build time into every day for communal care and chores - a chore chart or daily schedule may be observed. • Adults model care by keeping their personal items/space in order. 	Enhanced cleaning requirements may lead adults to engage in above average levels of care of the environment.
Clarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal instructions are expressed in simple, clear language. • Language is used intentionally, with attention to vocabulary, syntax, grammar, and cultural context. 	
Confident Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults demonstrate command of the material by not reading directly from an album or guidebook, following a script, or correcting and re-phrasing. • Instruction can include both planned group lessons and unplanned individual or group presentations. 	
Content Confusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tentative command of material (reading from album or other text) • Reading directly from album or text, stammering, re-phrasing or haphazardly handling materials • Obvious mistakes in content presentation 	
Didactic Talk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voice is mannered and focused on telling rather than discussion. • “On-stage” talk. • Commanding rather than inviting engagement. 	
Encouraging Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large projects requiring group work are both encouraged and observed. • Adults actively suggest children work together on projects and/or to solve problems. • Adults support collaboration by joining child directed conversations about their work, offering a viewpoint or asking a question. 	Adults may discourage collaboration if physical distancing is required.

Encouraging Exploration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instruction is offered as the beginning of learning • Adults ask many open-ended questions • Adults encourage children to answer those questions through exploration, research, and inquiry 	
Focus on Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent checking of student work completion—as distinct from observing to track activity. • A majority of time is spent circulating, looking over children' shoulders to monitor activity as distinct from general observation. • Monitoring activity results in a lack of instruction and interference with children's engagement. 	
Friendliness with Error	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing children to experiment and experience failure. • Communicating respect for the process of trial and error and encouraging children to embrace potential learning from error. 	
Interrupting Concentrating Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approaching children who are obviously concentrating. • Interrupting children's work. 	
Moving/ Bending to Speak to Child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults move to the child, bend or kneel, and make eye contact when speaking. 	In classrooms with physical distancing requirements, adults may not be permitted to approach children.
Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Withdrawing from classroom activity in order to observe children in a focused, purposeful manner. • Scanning the room. • Taking notes. 	
Praising to Flatter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering general praise, such as "good job," as distinct from descriptive feedback • External validation provided by adults that does not prompt child reflection 	
Precision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lessons with materials are presented with attention to detail in gesture. • Modeling slow, careful hand movements for children while handling materials. 	
Social Graces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modeling pragmatic social language as needed—"please", "thank you", "excuse me". • Modeling gestural elements of social graces when appropriate—pushing in chairs, picking up litter, handshakes, stepping aside to allow another person to pass. 	

Soft/ Conversational Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaking softly in a manner that is conversational rather than didactic. • Adult voices are rarely audible above the general hum of the classroom. 	
Warmth and Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent smiling. • Sharing in children's enthusiasm. • Connecting with children by making eye contact. • Conversation with children is not limited to academic topics. 	Masking may make it difficult to observe smiles.
Warning/ Correcting Errors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intervening in children's activity, often correcting mistakes, either through verbal cues or physically moving objects (blocks, pencils). • Warnings for the child's safety constitute exceptions. 	
Wonder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instruction is presented as an invitation to discover something exciting. • Adults communicate genuine curiosity about the content they or their children are engaged with, shifting focus from self to work. • Adults lead with open-ended questions in conversation with children. 	

ENVIRONMENTAL ATTRIBUTES		
ITEM	INDICATORS	SCORING NOTES
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children have access to the entire environment and all materials in it. 	Children's movements throughout the environment may be limited or curtailed. Access to materials may be limited due to cleaning requirements.
Animals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The environment contains live animals (mammals, reptiles, amphibians). Materials for animal care are available to children. There is evidence that animals are integrated into science and/or language instruction and learning; children may observe, classify, or socialize animals. 	
Big Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Room arrangement supports collaborative work, with a range of spaces for groups of children to gather There are ample materials to support student-generated research projects, including reference books, writing tools, and judiciously used digital technology Children have ongoing access to art materials 	The environment may be altered to discourage collaboration if physical distancing is required. Children may be required to use individual rather than shared materials.
Child Sized	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials and furnishings are appropriately sized for use by very young children. This includes tables, chairs, didactic materials, kitchen tools, and implements for caring for the environment. 	
Cleanliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shelves and tables free of dust. All surfaces are clean. Garbage has been emptied. Whiteboard/chalkboard is clean. 	
Clutter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over-stimulating wall decoration. Inadequate storage leads to supplies, materials, and other items cluttering the environment. Lack of attention to order. 	
Curated Decor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wall décor is carefully selected with emphasis on fine art rather than commercial posters or student work. Décor reflects a variety of cultures and heritages. Décor creates a warm, comfortable, and welcoming environment. 	Fabric surfaces may be limited or absent from the environment.

Directed Child Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children broken into age or grade-level groups. • Children assigned seats. • Whole group time, including circle or snack, exceeds 15 minutes per work period. 	Children may be assigned seats.
Easy Access to Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The classroom provides direct access to nature via a door opening to an outdoor space. • Children pass freely between indoor and outdoor spaces without adult mediation or permission. 	
Excessive Reliance on Digital Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children receive instruction or assessment via computers • Whole group instruction is delivered with the aid of computers and/or SmartBoards 	Technology may be employed to support distance learning and/or physical distancing.
Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children primarily prepare, serve, and clean up snacks and/or meals with minimal help from adults. • Individual food preparation activities are present where children are preparing, consuming, and cleaning up the activity independently. • Snack is provided for children to serve themselves and is taken in small, rather than whole, groups. 	Children may not be permitted to engage in food preparation activities. Snack and meals may be served by adults rather than children.
Language Rich	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversation is ongoing and children move easily between social and academic topics • High-interest print material (books, magazines and other physical texts) are available at all times, as distinct from leveled readers and other didactic texts. • The environment contains a cozy reading area, with a chair and a selection of texts culturally representative of the classroom community. 	Fabric surfaces may be limited or absent from the environment.
Links to Wider Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials and décor reflect the children's ethnic/cultural backgrounds • There is evidence that children have access to the world beyond the classroom—through field study, “going outs,” and outreach to the wider community as connects to classroom research. 	Community outreach and engagement may take place virtually instead of physically.
Materials Ready for Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pencils are sharpened. • Consumables are stocked. • All areas of the classroom are orderly and prepared for children. 	Shared classroom supplies may be eliminated thus eliminating the need to have some items like pencils prepared for the use of children.

Mixed Age Grouping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are in mixed age groups of two-year age spans. • Children are in mixed age groups of three years. 	
Natural Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials, furniture, and containers intended for children's use are made of wood, glass, fiber, metal. 	Fiber materials and fabric may be limited or absent.
Plants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The environment contains live plants. • Materials for plant care are available to children. • There is evidence that plants are integrated into science and/or language instruction and learning; children may experiment with, measure, describe, or classify plants. 	
Prudent Use of Digital Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital technology is present as a support for research and communication but not delivery of instruction • Children use digital tools to develop and deliver presentations 	Technology may be employed to support distance learning and/or physical distancing.
Real Tools and Real Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children have access to working, child-sized, real-life tools (e.g., hammers, rakes, shovels, brooms, knives). • Children participate in activities requiring the use of real tools (gardening, washing, ironing, sweeping, sewing, handcrafts, food preparation). 	
Uninterrupted Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children have access to the entire environment for at least two and a half hours per day. 	