The NYC Pre-K for All Program Quality Standards define the NYCDOE's vision for high-quality Pre-K for All programs in NYC. They describe the key practices of family engagement, rigorous and developmentally appropriate instruction, professional collaborations, and leadership that support children in gaining the knowledge and skills outlined in the New York State Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core (PKFCC). Grounded in the NYCDOE's vision for school improvement across the pre-K to 12 continuum, the DOE Framework for Great Schools, the Pre-K for All Program Quality Standards establish a shared set of expectations for pre-K programs across all settings. High-quality and enriching learning environments are critical to supporting student development and learning across all five domains of the PKFCC, and are imbedded in the Pre-K for All Program Quality Standards.

The DECE uses the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale - Revised Edition[1] to measure the extent to which programs are successful at reaching Program Quality Standards related to the physical learning environment, health and safety, positive classroom culture, and engaging in meaningful activity. The ECERS-R tool is used widely in early childhood settings across the country, and there is a consistent relationship between ECERS-R scores and a wide range of child development outcomes. During the 2015-2016 school year, the DECE will conduct ECERS-R assessments in Pre-K for All programs that are offering Pre-K for the first time or have not had an ECERS-R assessment since the 2012-2013 school year.

The observations conducted and/or the reports prepared as part of the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ECERS-R), or any other assessment of the prekindergarten program, shall be used only for purposes of assessing the quality of the pre-kindergarten program generally and shall not be placed in any teacher's official file or used in any action or employment-related decision involving an individual DOE employee (including, but not limited to, any letter to file, rating or tenure determination), and shall not be introduced by the DOE in any disciplinary proceeding, grievance or arbitration, case or action. Furthermore, the DOE agrees that the results of the ECERS-R assessments will not be used in any evaluation of any CSA member nor will the reports about ECERS-R assessments identify specific CSA members by name in any way.

[1] http://www.ersi.info/

Background on the ECERS-R Tool

1. What is ECERS-R?

ECERS-R is an observational tool used to assess early childhood learning environments. The assessor observes the pre-K classroom and looks for specific indicators of quality across the following areas:

Space & Furnishings	Personal Care Routines	Language-Reasoning
8 Items	6 Items	4 Items
Examines indoor and outdoor space, furnishings, room arrangement, and other factors related to the physical space	Examines the content and practices around meals and snacks and nap/rest, hand washing among students and staff, and other health and safety practices	Examines the number and content of books and language materials available, accessibility to these materials, and the extent to which teachers encourage communication and use language to support concept development
Mostly Captured in Quality Standard: The Physical Learning Environment	**Mostly Captured in Quality Standard:** Health, Safety & Well-being	**Mostly Captured in Quality Standard:** Engaging Children in Meaningful Activity

Activities	Interaction	Program Structure
10 Items	5 Items	4 Items
Measures the range of materials that are available in the classroom, the amount of time that children can freely access these learning materials, and the use of computers/TV	Examines the extent to which teachers are appropriately supervising children, using appropriate disciplinary strategies, providing opportunities for children to talk, and maintaining a positive climate	Examines the daily schedule, the amount of time children are kept in whole groups, transitions, and provisions for students with disabilities
Mostly Captured in Quality Standard: Engaging Children in Meaningful Activity	**Mostly Captured in Quality Standard:** Creating A Positive Classroom Culture	**Mostly Captured in Quality Standard:** Engaging Children in Meaningful Activity

When providing support to programs around the ECERS-R results, the DECE emphasizes the Language-Reasoning, Activities, and Interaction subscales. Program leaders are also encouraged to focus on scores in those areas when choosing areas on which to focus professional development for staff.

2. Why ECERS-R?

The ECERS-R has been used in major studies of early childhood programs throughout the United States, across cultures, and throughout the world. As a result of the consistent relationship between ECERS-R scores and a wide range of child development outcomes, ECERS-R has been widely adopted by many state preschool and/or child care assessment programs. ECERS-R is a reliable and well tested instrument that is currently incorporated into the New York State's Quality Rating Improvement System, QUALITYstarsNY (http://www.qualitystarsny.org/).

While the tool itself does not measure student performance outcomes, these findings make ECERS-R an important piece of comprehensive quality rating systems. The ECERS-R tool, in conjunction with other data, allow DECE to assess the extent to which early childhood programs meet many of DECE's quality standards and prepare children for future academic success, build positive relationships, and develop a strong sense of self.

3. What is the substantial portion of the day ECERS-R requirement?

When calculating scores, the ECERS-R considers the amount of time that children have access to a variety of materials and the opportunity to choose the learning centers in which they work. The amount of time that is made available for children to do this impacts a variety of ECERS-R indicators that ultimately affect the overall ECERS-R score. This is because the ECERS-R is structured around the theory that children are able to engage deeply with materials and develop a wide range of problem solving, language, and other skills when they have sufficient time to play. The play-based learning that happens in learning centers provide opportunities for rich and meaningful learning across the PKFCC domains.

For these reasons, teachers should ensure that children have access to and can choose from a variety of learning center materials for a "substantial portion of the day," and support children's engagement in play during this time, making adjustments to the daily schedule as necessary.

The ECERS-R defines "substantial portion of the day" as 1/3 of the overall program time.

4. How is program time calculated for programs that offer care and education beyond the DOE's pre-K hours?

ECERS-R uses the length of the program to calculate "substantial portion of the day" and accessibility requirements.

Program time will refer to the amount of time that is funded by the DOE. For a full-day program, that is 6 hours and 20 minutes, and for half-day programs it is 2 hours and 30 minutes. EarlyLearn classrooms are full-day classrooms.

Since the start and end times of pre-K vary by setting, the site is responsible for informing the assessor when the DOE funded pre-K hours begin and end. The ECERS-R **assessors will only use the time that is funded by the DOE** to calculate whether or not children have sufficient access to play and learning materials, as well as engage is specific activities for a substantial portion of the day. Any care and education beyond these hours will not count toward ECERS-R requirements.

5. Does the ECERS-R place restrictions on the types of books allowed in early childhood classrooms?

While ECERS-R does not mandate what books teachers can and cannot have in their classrooms, early childhood classrooms that have books that describe or show violence will lose points on one item in one subscale on the ECERS-R. Because points are reduced on only one item in the assessment, it is still possible for classrooms with books that describe or show violence to get a high ECERS-R score.

ECERS-R and Other Frameworks

6. How does ECERS-R relate to the Pre-K for All Program Quality Standards?

The DECE released a comprehensive set of program quality standards called the NYC Pre-K for All Program Quality Standards in September 2015. The Program Quality Standards encompass practices across three core areas: family engagement, teaching and learning, and leadership. The ECERS-R assesses to the extent to which programs are meeting the standards related to physical resources for learning, health, safety, and well-being, engaging children in meaningful activity, and creating a positive classroom culture.

7. How does ECERS-R relate to the Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core (PKFCC) Learning Standards?

The Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core (PKFCC) focuses on expectations for what students should know and be able to do by the end of the year to be on the path toward college and career readiness. ECERS-R measures the learning environments that are designed to support this student success. The PKFCC and ECERS-R are well-aligned because the instructional aspects of ECERS-R focus on language-reasoning skills and problem solving, which are both critical components of the PKFCC.

8. How does ECERS-R relate to QUALITYstarsNY?

QUALITYstarsNY, New York State's Quality Rating and Improvement System, is a voluntary five-star rating system for all types of regulated early childhood programs that serve children from birth through age 5 in New York, and is operated by the New York Early Childhood Professional Development Institute (PDI). QUALITYstarsNY includes program assessment, and ECERS-R is one of the program assessment tools that is used.

Programs that participate in QUALITYstarsNY will not receive an ECERS-R assessment from the DECE in the same year that they have one through QUALITYstarsNY.

Assessment Notification and Planning

9. Who is notified about the assessment?

DOE CONTRACTED NYCEECs AND CHARTER SCHOOLS: Notification is sent to the instructional contact and main contact on file for the program are notified via email of the assessment from programassessment@schools.nyc.gov. Program leaders should reach out to their operations analyst if there is a change in contact that needs to be updated.

ACS CONTRACTED NYCEECS (EarlyLearn): Notification is sent to the instructional contact and main contact on file for the program are notified via email of the assessment from programassessment@schools.nyc.gov. Program leaders should reach out to their operations analyst if there is a change in contact that needs to be updated.

DISTRICT SCHOOLS: Notification is sent to the principal of the school and to the superintendent from programassessment@schools.nyc.gov. For districts that have an early childhood director, notification is sent to the early childhood director instead of the superintendent.

10. Who will schedule and conduct the assessment?

A trained Pre-K Program Assessor working for the DECE will conduct the ECERS-R assessment at each site. Program Assessors undergo a standardized training, and must score within a certain range of the authors of the tool over three consecutive practice observations in order to use the tool for the DOE.

Program assessors are required to bring their DOE photo identification to sites where they are conducting program assessments, and are able to show these when asked.

11. When will the ECERS-R assessment occur?

Assessments for this school year will be conducted between October 2015 and May 2016. Program leaders will be contacted by a DECE staff member or program assessor (first by email, then phone) with additional information about scheduling and the observation process. Please note that the program

assessor will work with program leaders to schedule the program's assessment day, which they will also confirm by email.

12. *DISTRICT SCHOOLS ONLY:* Will the scheduling take the Quality Review schedule into consideration?

The DECE will make every effort to avoid proposing assessment dates that overlap with your Quality Review. In addition to that, if you have any concerns with the timing as it relates to your Quality Review, please contact your assessor with that information.

13. What programs, if any, will be exempt from the ECERS-R assessments?

Only programs getting an ECERS-R assessment through QUALITYstarsNY, and those already slated for a CLASS assessment, are exempt from DECE ECERS-R assessments. For the 2015-2016 school year, programs that received an ECERS-R assessment in the 2014-2015 school year will not receive an ECERS-R assessment in the 2015-2016 school year.

14. What should my program do before the assessment occurs? How should we prepare?

Prior to the assessment, you are strongly encouraged to make this FAQ document and the *All About the ECERS-R* book available to your staff, and notify them of the date and time of the assessment. The assessment does not require any additional preparation as it is an observation of the existing classroom environments in your school/site.

15. What should my program do during the assessment?

Your staff is asked to continue with normal instruction. Teachers will be asked for some information at the beginning of the assessment (i.e., the birth date of the oldest & youngest child in the class, the highest number of children that can be in the class at one time, the number of children identified with a disability and the type of disability. Note that no names of children will be requested.).

Once the observation is underway, there will **not be any** interaction between the assessor and the classroom teachers and staff. The assessor may move around the classroom to observe environment and students in the classroom as long as it does not interfere with classroom activities. The assessor will move outdoors with the class if there is outdoor time built into the class schedule. Whether the assessor is in the classroom or outdoors with the class, he/she will continue to not disturb class activities.

At the end of the assessment, the assessor will conduct a short (approximately 30 minutes) discussion with the teacher to clarify any open issues. Please ensure that accommodations are made for the teacher to be available during this time. Program leaders who anticipate difficulty in providing accommodations for this should reach out to programassessment@schools.nyc.gov.

Assessment Day Details

16. Which classrooms at a pre-K program will be assessed?

The assessor will randomly select one classroom to assess once arriving on site. All reports will be based on the observation of one class for a period of at least 3 uninterrupted hours followed by a 30 minute interview with the teacher.

NYCEECs ALSO OPERATING PRE-K THROUGH EarlyLearn: If your site contracts directly with the DOE and also operates pre-K through the EarlyLearn program, all of the classrooms with pre-K students will be in the pool of classrooms from which the assessor will select.

17. How long will the assessment take?

The assessment consists of a 3 to 3.5 hour observation. Following the observation, the ECERS-R protocol includes a short (no more than 30 minute) discussion with the teacher to ask scripted questions that are written in the published tool to give teachers the opportunity to share information about the classroom practices. Please ensure that accommodations are made for the teacher to be available during this time. Program leaders who anticipate difficulty in providing accommodations for this should reach out to programassessment@schools.nyc.gov.

18. How are assessors for each program chosen? Who will schedule the assessment?

Assessors are assigned by geographic proximity and availability. Assessors will reach out to programs by email between September and April to schedule the assessment, giving several options within a one-week window from which to choose. Programs will have at least one week advance notice to schedule the visit.

19. What should I do if my program closes on account of inclement weather on the day of our scheduled ECERS-R assessment?

NYCEECs ONLY: It is the responsibility of each pre-K program to notify its assessor and the DECE of closure due to inclement weather or unexpected issues that result in program closure, as soon as that decision is made. Please email the program assessor **and** programassessment@schools.nyc.gov.

DISTRICT SCHOOLS ONLY: The assessor will not visit your school if a school closure is announced. He/she will reach out to reschedule your assessment when school resumes.

20. What should I do if there is a substitute teacher in one of the pre-K classrooms on the day of assessment?

Program leaders should tell the assessor when he/she arrives about the substitute teacher. Depending on the size of the program and the amount of days that the substitute teacher has been in the classroom, the assessment may be rescheduled.

ECERS-R Results

21. When will I receive my results?

ECERS-R reports are emailed to pre-K program leaders/principals on a rolling basis from programassessment@schools.nyc.gov. Yahoo and AOL users should add the emails address to their "whitelist" in order to prevent the reports from filtering into spam folders. Program leaders can expect to receive their reports by email within six weeks of the assessment.

DISTRICT SCHOOLS: Superintendents and Early Childhood Directors will also receive a copy of the report at this time.

22. What will the results look like once I receive them?
Results will come in the form of an ECERS-R report which consists of the overall average ECERS-R score, subscale scores, and detailed notes that include justifications of the scores given (items with scores less than 5).

Perfect scores are neither expected nor required. Higher average total scores (not perfect scores), are related to better child outcomes, and a classroom can create a high score in a variety of ways, with differing strengths and challenges. Overall, scores at the level of 3.4 or above have been shown to be associated with improved levels of child outcomes.

23. How will the results of the assessment be used?
Program leaders and principals are encouraged to consider ECERS-R results in conjunction with other information to help inform program supports.

The DECE uses ECERS-R data, in conjunction with other information, to understand program quality and inform its coaching efforts. For example, the reports help Instructional Coordinators target their support to sites, and is also considered when the DECE makes contract renewal decisions for NYCEECs. While we may, in the future, use this information to share information with the community about program quality, that information will not identify individual teacher names.

The observations conducted and/or the reports prepared as part of the ECERS-R assessment, or any other assessment of the pre-kindergarten program, shall be used only for purposes of assessing the quality of the pre-kindergarten program generally and shall not be placed in any teacher's official file or used in any action or employment-related decision involving an individual DOE employee (including, but not limited to, any letter to file, rating or tenure determination), and shall not be introduced by the DOE in any disciplinary proceeding, grievance or arbitration, case or action. Furthermore, the DOE agrees that the results of the ECERS-R assessments will not be used in any evaluation of any CSA member nor will the reports about ECESR-R assessments identify specific CSA members by name in any way.

24. What follow up will occur after the results are available?
Analysis of the city's ECERS-R results will be used to help DECE prioritize the supports that are currently provided to pre-K programs and determine what additional supports will be needed in the future. These supports are delivered through Instructional Coordinators, Social Workers, the professional learning opportunities we offer teachers and program leaders, and information we provide through our communications channels.

ECERS-R Resources

25. What ECERS-R resources does DECE offer to pre-K programs? What other resources are recommended to prepare for the assessment?
In the year of a program's ECERS-R assessment, the DECE will send each program a copy of the *All About the ECERS-R* book. The comprehensive book is a resource guide that "gives information on why each item is important, and what is needed to meet the requirements for all items and how to score." Updates to the indicators and the information in the book can be found at ERSi's website at http://www.ersi.info/

Additionally, please see the recorded webinar entitled *Introduction to the Environment Rating Scales: ECERS-R*, available on DECE's website, for more information about the scale.

A spiral-bound copy of the ECERS-R is available for those program leaders who wish to have a copy. Please request by emailing programassessment@schools.nyc.gov.

26. Where can I get more information?
For more information on ECERS-R, please visit ERSI's website.[2]

Please also visit the Division of Early Childhood Education's website for additional educator resources.[3]

If you have any further questions, please contact
programassessment@schools.nyc.gov

We look forward to your partnership in building high quality programs for our youngest learners.

[2] http://www.ersi.info/
[3] http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/EarlyChildhood/educators/UPK.htm