



SPARK Early Childhood And Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS)

SPACE AND FURNISHINGS:

<p>1. Sufficient indoor space and furnishings for children and adults. Space is in good repair, clean and well-maintained. Individual space is made available for storage of children’s individual belongings.</p>	<p>SPARK recommends following NASPE Guidelines concerning indoor space for movement.</p> <p>“With respect to indoor space. The entire room or area should be childproofed, and a space of at least 5’ x 7’ for each child should be designated for structured movement and activities.</p>
<p>3. Most furniture is child-sized, sturdy, and in good repair. Some storage used for extra toys and supplies.</p>	<p>SPARK recommended equipment list includes storage for extra manipulatives.</p>
<p>4. Soft furnishings and toys are accessible to children a substantial part of the day. Toys are clean and in good repair, and a protected cozy area is provided in the classroom for one or two children to play without intrusion by others.</p>	<p>SPARK recommended equipment list includes age appropriate manipulatives including soft manipulatives such as fluffballs, juggling scarves, and foam balls. Click Here for Samples (see page 1 - there are two items).</p>
<p>7. Arrangement of room makes it possible for staff to see all children at a glance.</p>	<p>Each SPARK lesson includes a recommended set-up where it is possible for staff to see all children at a glance.</p>
<p>8. Appropriate materials for age group served are provided (Ex. Mobiles or other colorful or hanging objects, photos of children, simple pictures, beginning reading and math for older preschoolers, seasonal displays, or popular culture items for school-age children).</p>	<p>SPARK recommended equipment list includes age appropriate manipulatives. Books and other activities cited in individual lessons are age appropriate.</p> <p>SPARK EC provides age appropriate visual aids including Locomotor skills, object control skills, animal movements, balances, pathways, creative stunts, letters, numbers, and shapes.</p>
<p>9. Items are displayed at child’s eye-level where children can easily see them and staff talks to children about displayed materials. Most of the display is work done by the children</p>	<p>SPARK lesson set up recommends manipulatives are placed outside the activity area. Teachers are prompted to discuss safety before allowing children to get individual manipulatives by sending them in small groups.</p>
<p>10. Sufficient outdoor space that is easily accessible for children in group. Gross motor space is generally safe (Ex. Impact material under climbers and swings, fenced outdoor area).</p>	<p>SPARK recommends following NASPE Guidelines concerning outdoor space for movement.</p> <p>“For the preschooler, a minimum of 75 square feet of accessible outdoor play space is required for each child.”</p>
<p>11. Outdoor space and equipment is age-appropriate for children in group. Ample materials and equipment for physical activity are available so children have access without long periods of waiting. Both stationary and portable equipment is used (Ex. Balls, hula hoops, volleyball, trikes).</p>	<p>SPARK recommended equipment list includes age appropriate manipulatives to include one of each manipulative for each child in the group to avoid periods of waiting in order to increase moderate to vigorous physical activity and object control skills. Click Here for Samples (see page 1 - there are two items).</p>



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PERSONAL CARE ROUTINES:

1. Children are greeted individually with pleasant arrivals and departures. Children are helped to become involved in activities, if needed. Separation issues are handled sensitively. Parents are greeted warmly.	SPARK Teaching Tips encourage teachers to be enthusiastic and participate with children. Lively, age appropriate music is an integral part of every lesson.
2. Daily written record of children’s routines is available for parents to see. (Ex. Infant daily sheets, toddler daily sheets, preschool activity announcement board, school-age news board).	SPARK units include a sample performance rubric.
4. Allergies are posted and food beverage substitutions are posted in the kitchen and classroom areas (Ex. Milk allergies, peanut allergies).	SPARK recommends being aware of latex allergies.
14. No major safety hazards indoors or outdoors (Ex. Small toys which are choking hazards, electrical outlets covered, spills on floors are cleaned up immediately to prevent falls, substances labeled “Keep Out of Reach of Children” are locked away, open stairwells are not accessible, fall zones are protected by adequate impact material, no easy access to busy roads or streets).	Unit Introductions along with WHAT You Need pages include Safety tips.
15. Staff anticipates and takes action to prevent safety problems and staff explains reasons for safety rules to all children in care. Frequent inspections of grounds, facilities and equipment for potential hazards and safety hazards are eliminated.	SPARK lessons, especially unit introduction and manipulative introductions explain reasons for safety. Children are reminded within lessons to be aware of safety. (i.e., “Try not to pop your bubble,” “Keep your ribbon inside your bubble.”)

LANGUAGE AND REASONING:

1. At least 12 books appropriate for infant/toddlers are accessible daily. Preschool children have at least 20 children’s books accessible daily. This includes a variety and wide selection of topics for children (Ex. fantasy, factual information, people, animals, science, books that reflect cultures and different abilities).	SPARK lessons include Literacy Integrations to include books. All of the books listed within the SPARK EC program coordinate with lessons and relate to one or more of the following themes – Colors, Language Arts, Mathematics, Movement Skills and Knowledge, Nutrition, Personal Development, Science, Self Image, and Social Development. (See list of books included on SPARKfamily.org)
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Continue on for more Language and Reasoning



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LANGUAGE AND REASONING *(continued)*:

<p>2. Staff read books daily with individuals or small groups of children. Book times are warm and interactive.</p>	<p>Teachers may read from a book before a lesson, incorporate a book segment into a lesson, or read the book with the children immediately following a lesson as part of a cool-down. In an effort to keep physical activity at its highest, SPARK suggests integrating literature without sacrificing movement time. Lessons include Literacy Integrations to include books for staff to read to individuals or groups. Interactive books are included. (i.e. <u>Clap Your Hands</u> by Lorinda Bryan Cauley, <u>Barnyard Dance</u> by Sandra Boynton)</p>
<p>3. Language *materials and **activities are appropriate for children in group.</p>	<p>SPARK lessons include age appropriate materials and activities.</p>
<p>4. Staff talks with children frequently throughout the day during routines and play. Content of talk is generally encouraging and positive rather than discouraging and negative. Verbal communication is personalized.</p> <p>5. *Materials that encourage children to communicate are accessible in a variety of interest centers (Ex. Figures and animals in block areas, puppets and flannel boards pieces in a book area, toys for dramatic play indoors and outdoors).</p>	<p>SPARK recommends positive specific feedback throughout lessons. Verbal communication is personalized. (“Child’s name, you kept your arms and legs inside your bubble. Good listening!”)</p>
<p>6. Staff adds words to the actions they take in responding to children throughout the day. Staff adds information to expand on ideas presented by children (Ex. Teacher says, “Look at this truck, it is a red dump truck, see it has a place to carry things, “I’m changing your diaper and now you are all dry, doesn’t that feel better?”).Staff responds in a timely and positive manner to children’s attempts to communicate.</p>	<p>SPARK lessons include adding words to actions.</p> <p>Example: Can you move like a frog? Squat with your hands on the floor outside your knees? Jump forward so your hands and feet leave the floor at the same time? Finish in a frog squat?</p>
<p>7. Staff talks about logical relationships while children play with materials that stimulate reasoning. Children encouraged to talk through or explain their reasoning when solving a problem (Ex. Sorting objects into different groups, in what way are two pictures the same or different, sequence cards, lotto games, size and shape games).</p>	<p>SPARK lessons include logical relationships that stimulate reasoning. Children are encouraged to talk through or explain their reasoning when solving a problem. For example, after a ribbon lesson where children make shapes with their ribbons, the teacher is prompted to ask, “Who will name one shape we made today? Can you make that shape with your hands?”</p>
<p>8. Concepts are introduced appropriately for ages and abilities of children in group, using words and concrete experiences (Ex. ABC matching games instead of rote teaching the ABC’s, color matching games instead of drilling children on knowing colors of objects).</p>	<p>SPARK lessons appropriately introduce concepts for ages and abilities of children using words and concrete experiences. For example after teaching a locomotor skill to the children, the teacher is prompted to have the children use the newly learned skill to move and blue spot markers while lively music plays</p>



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ACTIVITIES:

<p>1. Many developmentally appropriate fine motor materials of each type accessible for a substantial portion of the day according to age group served (Ex. Pegs and pegboards, building toys, sewing cards). Sets are stored separately, well-organized, and similar toys stored together.</p>	<p>SPARK lessons include integrations that incorporate painting, using chalk, drawing using shaving cream, and using crayons. Manipulatives included in SPARK lessons that help develop fine motor include but are not limited to fluffballs, ribbons, and scarves.</p>
<p>2. Many and varied art materials, which are safe and non-toxic, are accessible for a substantial portion of the day according to age group served. Individual expression and use of art materials is encouraged for all ages. Staff facilitates appropriate use of materials.</p>	<p>SPARK lessons include integrations that incorporate painting, using chalk, drawing using shaving cream, and using crayons.</p>
<p>3. Many and varied music materials including instruments and dance props are accessible for much of the day according to age group served. Various types of music are used including classical, and popular children’s music, music characteristic of different cultures, and some songs in different languages.</p>	<p>Every SPARK lesson includes 2 musical activities called Musical ASAPs. The SPARK EC Program includes a music COD with 42 age appropriated children songs characteristic of different cultures. (one song also includes Spanish lyrics.) Many of the Musical ASAP lessons include manipulatives that are used as props or reinforce object control skills learned in lessons.</p>
<p>6. Many and varied age-appropriate dramatic play materials accessible for a substantial portion of the day according to the age group served. Props for at least 2 themes accessible daily including child sized play furniture (Ex. Housekeeping and work). Dramatic play area clearly defined with organized storage.</p>	<p>Dramatic Play is included in Lessons. For example, children play games (i.e. Baby Rabbits), pretend to be things. (caterpillars), or act out books/songs (<u>Going on a Bear Hunt</u>)</p>
<p>7. Developmentally appropriate games, materials, or activities from 2 nature/science categories accessible daily. Children are encouraged to bring in natural things to share with other or add to collections. Daily events used as a basis for learning about nature/science.</p> <p>8. Age-appropriate math/number materials of various types accessible for a substantial portion of the day according to the age group served (Ex. Materials for counting, shapes, measure, learning shape and size).</p>	<p>SPARK integrations include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Collections of leaves b. Using Grow a Frog/Butterfly kits c. Suggested books about science d. Activities that are science related <p>SPARK lessons and academic integrations include counting, shapes, comparing sizes/distances/weights.</p>

Continue on for more Activities



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ACTIVITIES *(continued)*:

9. All materials used are developmentally appropriate, non-violent, and culturally sensitive. TV use is limited to 30 minutes for infants/toddlers and 1 hour for preschool. Computer use is limited to 10minutes for infants/ toddlers and 20 minutes for preschool. Most of materials encourage active involvement by children and adults. All materials are limited to those considered “good for children” (Ex. Sesame Street, educational video and computer games, but not most cartoons).

SPARK recommends limiting “Screen Time” to ensure that programs meet the following NASPE guidelines:

- Guideline 1:** Preschoolers should accumulate at least 60 minutes of structured physical activity each day.
- Guideline 2:** Preschoolers should engage in at least 60 minutes -- and up to several hours -- of unstructured physical activity each day, and should not be sedentary for more than 60 minutes at a time, except when sleeping.
- Guideline 3:** Preschoolers should be encouraged to develop competence in fundamental motor skills that will serve as the building blocks for future motor skillfulness and physical activity.

10. Many books, props, pictures, and materials accessible showing people of different races, cultures, ages, abilities, and gender in non-stereotyping roles (Ex. Dolls of different races, ethnic clothing, males and females shown doing many types of work, cooking and eating utensils from various cultural groups)

The SPARK EC program contents include books, pictures, materials showing people of different races, cultures, ages, abilities, and gender in non-stereotyping roles. (ex. Visual aid cards show children of different genders, races, cultures, and abilities.)
A variety of suggested books are available in Spanish. (ex. Wiggle or A Tu Ritmo by Doreen Cronin.

INTERACTIONS:

1. Staff/child interactions are pleasant and helpful. Staff shows awareness of the whole group even while working with 1 child or a small group. Staff reacts quickly to solve problems in a comforting and supportive way and act to prevent dangerous situations before they occur.

The SPARK EC program content includes Teaching Strategies that guide staff through various problem solving scenarios and techniques while also teaching children various social skills.

2. Careful supervision of all children adjusted appropriately for all ages. Staff gives children help and encouragement when needed.

SPARK recommends a teacher or parent aid help supervise. SPARK encourages positive, specific praise and encouragement to provide an emotionally safe environment for all children.

Continue on for more Interactions



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INTERACTIONS *(continued)*:

3. Staff consistently does not use physical punishment or severe discipline. Expectations are generally realistic and based on age and ability of children. Staff use non-punitive discipline methods effectively and program is set up to avoid conflict and promote appropriate interaction.

The SPARK EC program includes teaching tip for building a positive learning environment to include strategies which include but are not limited to proximity control, positive interactions, and instructing at an appropriate pace.

4. Staff responds to children in a warm, supportive manner through the use of appropriate verbal and physical contact that is respectful and sympathetic to children who are upset, hurt, or angry.

SPARK suggests strategies to include, but that are not limited to the following examples:

- Provide activities in a safe and nurturing environment by allowing the child too simply observe the activity.
- Be certain children have progressed through developmentally appropriate activities.
- Digress to simpler tasks if the level of skill development is too difficult.
- Send *Family Fun Activities* home to engage children in more practice time in a different setting.

5. Staff facilitate positive peer interactions among all children. This includes stopping negative and hurtful interactions and modeling good social skills (Ex. Being kind to others, listen, empathized, cooperate, use gentle touching, warm and affectionate).

The SPARK EC Physical Activity program includes teaching and emphasizing the following social skills:

- Kindness
- Helpfulness
- Sharing
- Cooperation
- Taking turns

PROGRAM STRUCTURE:

1. Daily schedule is written and posted in rooms and provides a balance of structure and flexibility with a variety of play activities a substantial portion of the day. No long periods of waiting during transitions between daily events. Indoor/outdoor play periods occur daily (weather permitting) for all age groups.

SPARK recommends using the SPARK EC Physical Activity Program daily. Because each child has their own manipulative there is no waiting in line for a turn. Lessons are structured for quick transitions between activities within each lesson. SPARK lessons can be conducted indoors or outdoors and contain variations for limited space options.

Continue on for more Program Structure



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PROGRAM STRUCTURE *(continued)*:

<p>2. Free play occurs daily indoors and outdoors, weather permitting, with supervision that protects children’s health and safety. Staff is actively involved in facilitating children’s play. Ample and varied toys, games, and equipment are accessible for children to use in free play.</p>	<p>Although the SPARK EC Program is designed for structured physical activity time, object control lessons include Exploration time for children to engage in safe, free time to explore with their manipulative before engaging in a teacher directed segment.</p>
<p>3. Whole-group gatherings limited to short periods suited to age and individual needs of children. Some routines done in small groups or individually. Children are never forced to participate in group play.</p>	<p>SPARK lessons are structured to allow within each individual and group movement. Each unit includes a Station/Center activity lesson where children move through stations with a partner.</p> <p>SPARK recommends against forcing children to participate but rather suggests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be patient. They will join in when they feel comfortable and are ready. • Provide activities in a safe and nurturing environment by allowing the child too simply observe the activity. • If a child is not ready to move and play, give the child a manipulative and see if any exploration begins.
<p>4. Provisions for children with disabilities include: minor modifications made to meet the needs of children with disabilities; parents are involved in sharing information with staff, setting goals, and giving feedback about how program is working; staff follow through with activities and interactions recommended by other professionals; children with disabilities are included in on-going activities with the other children in the classroom.</p>	<p>SPARK lessons include adaptations for children with disabilities. SPARK’s recommended equipment list includes optional equipment to fit the needs of children with disabilities.</p>
<p>1. Parents are made aware of philosophy and approach practiced in the program and is urged to observe in child’s group prior to enrollment.</p>	<p>The SPARK EC Program includes a sample Family Introductory Letter (English and Spanish) that introduces the SPARK EC program. The SPARK curriculum encourages to inviting parents to join in activities. They are also encouraged to spotlight SPARK at school functions such as Open Houses or Family nights.</p> <p>Parents can also visit SPARKPE.org for more information.</p>

Continue on for more Program Structure

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PROGRAM STRUCTURE *(continued)*:

2. Much sharing of child-related information between parents and staff with a variety of alternatives are used to encourage family involvement in the children's program.

Every lesson in the SPARK EC program includes a Family Fun activity that is also available on the SPARKfamily.org website that teachers can send home to promote physical activity at home.

9. In-service training, workshops, and conferences are provided for staff members. This includes opportunities to belong to professional organizations supporting young children. Professional resources and materials are provided on site for staff to access.

The SPARK Programs offers a variety of on site in-service trainings. SPARK also offers an annual Early Childhood Institute. SPARK regularly participates in local, state, and national Early Childhood conferences. SPARK offers access to its SPARKfamily website to those who purchase materials and/or participate in SPARK workshops. This website contains a vast array of instructional materials that accompany the manual plus videos and teaching tips.

10. Thorough orientation for new staff takes place and monthly staff meetings are held to include staff development activities.

Research shows that even the best programs fade away without appropriate follow-up. Sites that adopt SPARK EC receive lifetime support. It is recommended that these sites identifies a person to act as a SPARK STAR and helps with equipment, scheduling, staff support and acts as a SPARK liaison.

