



Research News

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This past year, a number of studies were conducted by the Office of Early Childhood Education (OECE) of the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). Here is the second study and findings:

What Do Classroom Observations Tell Us?

Preschool classrooms are currently observed with two standardized assessments: The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) and The Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO). ECERS assesses global classroom quality and ELLCO assesses the literacy environment.

Findings:

- ▶ ECERS results show most CPS classrooms are between adequate and high quality (see Figure 1).
 - Most classrooms provide a positive, safe environment for children and adults.
 - However, almost two thirds of classrooms do NOT regularly provide activities like music, art, sand/water, or intellectual stimulation in nature and science (see Figure 2).
- ▶ ELLCO results show most CPS preschools have an “orderly and inviting area where books are located,” but few have “a comfortable area set aside just for book reading.” Likewise, classrooms tend not to have materials or “tools to help children learn how to write” (see Figures 4 & 5).
- ▶ Both ECERS and ELLCO scores show improvement across time, which indicates classroom quality is improving in CPS preschools.

Figure 1: ECERS 2008 Interaction Scale
78% Classrooms at least “Good” Quality

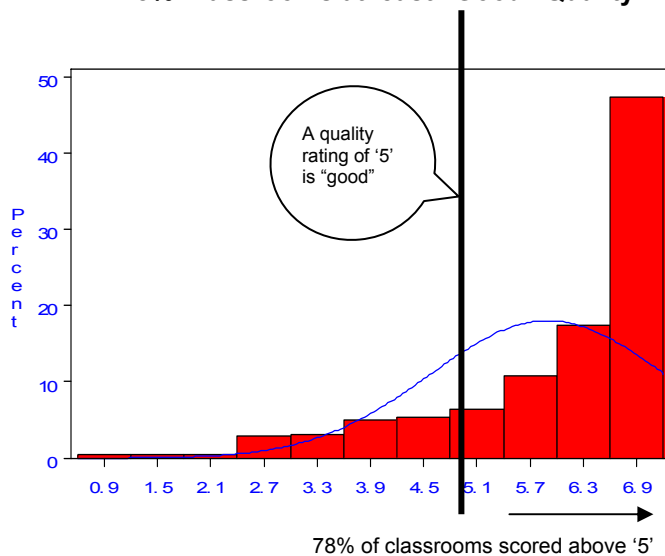
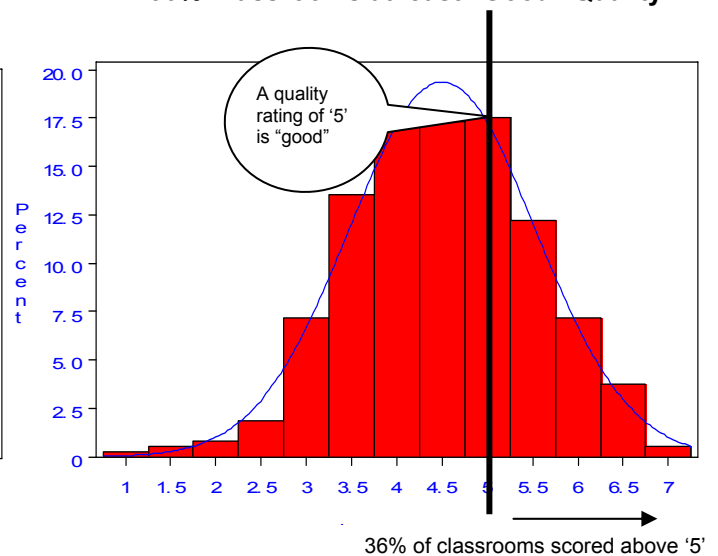


Figure 2: ECERS 2008 Activities Scale
36% Classrooms at least “Good” Quality



Examples of High Quality Interaction:

- ▶ Staff enjoy being with children.
- ▶ Staff talk with children about their play.
- ▶ Staff encourage development of mutual respect between children and adults, for example, waiting until children finish asking questions before answering.

Examples of Inadequate Interaction:

- ▶ Staff members ignore children, seem distant or cold.
- ▶ Interactions are unpleasant (voices sound strained or irritated).

Examples of High Quality Activities:

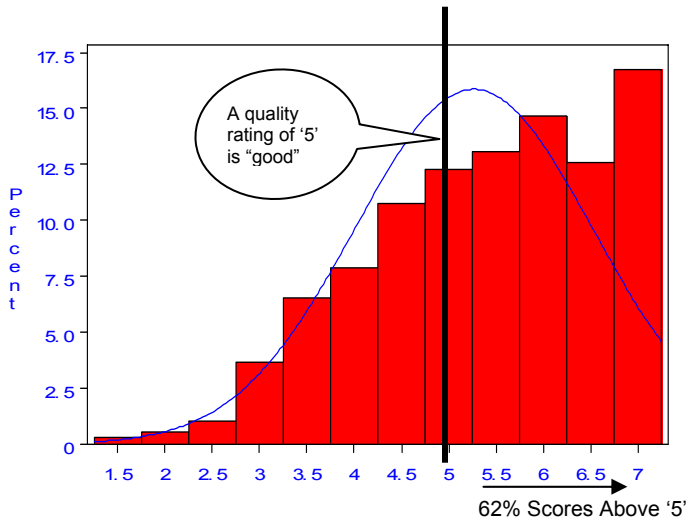
- ▶ Art materials are related to other classroom experiences.
- ▶ Children are offered the opportunity to draw after a field trip.
- ▶ Music is available as free choice and group activity daily.
- ▶ Dramatic play props represent diversity.

Examples of Inadequate Activities:

- ▶ Art, fine motor, blocks, sand/water table, dramatic play, nature/science, mathematics or music/movement experiences for children are rarely available.

(over)

Figure 3: ECERS 2008 Language & Reasoning
62% Classrooms at least "Good" Quality



Examples of High Quality Language & Reasoning:

- ▶ Books and language materials are rotated to maintain interest.
- ▶ Books are related to current classroom activities.
- ▶ Staff balance listening and talking, and leave time for children to respond. Staff verbalize for children with limited communication skills.

Examples of Inadequate Language & Reasoning:

- ▶ Staff rarely read books to children (no daily story time, little individual reading to children).
- ▶ Very few activities or materials are accessible to children that encourage communication. (For example, no talking about drawings or sharing ideas at circle time.)

Figure 4: ELLCO 2008 General Classroom Environment
(Materials, organization, and management)
73% Classrooms at least "Good" Quality

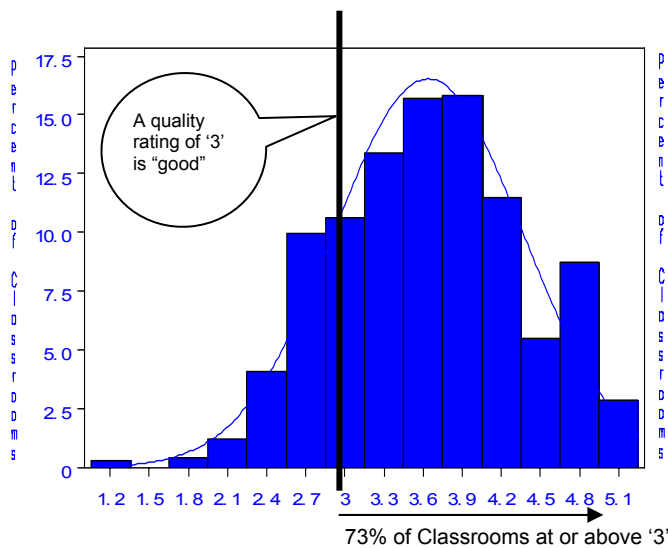
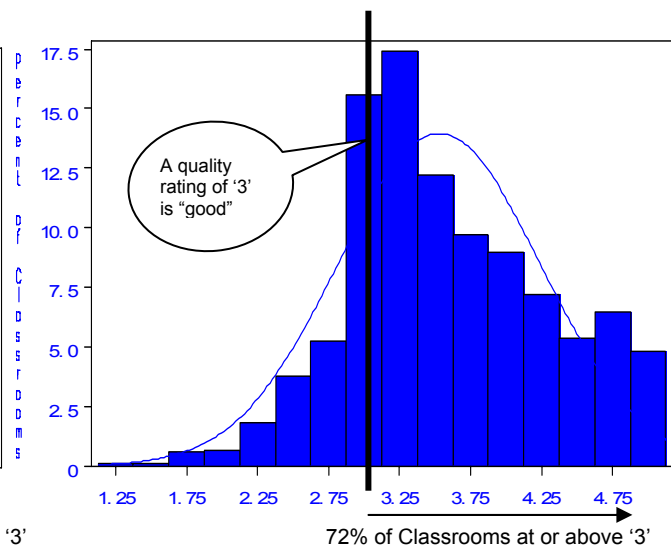


Figure 5: ELLCO 2008 Language, Literacy, Curriculum
(Conversation, vocabulary, book use, and writing)
72% Classrooms at least "Good" Quality



Important questions:

- ▶ Are classrooms offering children activities across all developmental areas?
- ▶ Are classrooms organized in a way to help children learn?
- ▶ Could classroom space be better utilized?

We want to know what YOU think! You may e-mail us at contactus@ecechicago.org or go to the Office of Early Childhood Education Web site under teacher resources: <http://www.ecechicago.org/teacher/> for additional resources.

