

# Working with Infants and Toddlers in Group Settings: **Conversations about Curriculum**

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# Objectives:

- Define/identify issues and criteria that relate to infant-toddler curriculum
- Identify connections between curriculum and Minnesota Early Indicators of Progress Birth to Three

# What's the BIG DEAL?

- School readiness
- “Achievement gap”
- Policy-makers responses to neuro-science
- Documentation of overall low quality in child care

Reaching Potentials: Transforming Early Childhood Curriculum and Assessment, Vol. 2, Sue Bredekamp and Teresa Resegrant, ed., NAEYC, 1995

Definitions

Feelings

**CURRICULUM**

Examples

# Curriculum is...

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9  
10

A “how to kit or book”

happens

Everything that



# Myths about Curriculum

- There is no need for a written curriculum because curriculum is everything that happens
- A curriculum is a collection of activities and lesson plans.
- A formal curriculum can't possibly meet the needs of different programs and individuals
- If you're following developmentally appropriate practice, you don't need a curriculum

Creative Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers training manual,  
Teaching Strategies

# What We Know:

1. Curriculum models vary widely.
2. A single curriculum may not address all of the developmental domains.
3. Even if a curriculum fits a program's philosophy and provides the needed amount and type of content, it might not be appropriate for the children enrolled.
4. Not all curriculum models have been empirically evaluated.

*Curriculum Decision-Making: Dimensions to Consider*, Frede and Ackerman, NIEER

# Curriculum

- what to teach and how to teach it  
or
- “Curriculum is more than a collection of enjoyable activities. *Curriculum* is a complex idea containing multiple components, such as goals, content, pedagogy, or instructional practices. Curriculum is influenced by many factors, including society’s values, content standards, accountability systems, research findings, community expectations, culture and language, and individual children’s characteristics.”

(NAEYC and NAECS/SDE)

# Intentional Curriculum

- --content driven, research-based, emphasizes active engagement with children, includes attention to social & regulatory skills, and is responsive to cultural diversity and children just learning English.
- --directive without using drill and kill strategies; it is fun for young children and promotes positive peer and teacher interactions.
- --developmentally appropriate.

*Effective Preschool Curricula and Teaching Strategies* Authors: Lisa G. Klein and [Jane Knitzer](#)  
Publication Date: September 2006

# A responsive curriculum recognizes that..

- Infants learn holistically. Curriculum must be broad enough to respond to all developmental domains.
- Infants are active, self-motivated learners.
- Curriculum that keeps motivation & curiosity alive facilitates infant learning.

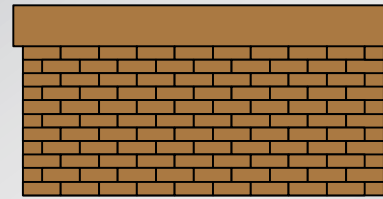
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# Two ways of looking at planning

Plans “set in stone”

or

Plans that flow in a continuous course  
sometimes veering  
off in unexpected direction



Balance— intentional  
opportunities, child’s interests

# Intentional planning

- Connections (themes?)
- Intentional vocabulary
- Experiences
- Props and activities that support the theme

WHY? A structure that promotes  
**intentional** interactions

# Minnesota Parent Aware definition

Curriculum is a set of written materials that describe a particular approach to providing learning experiences for children, including all of the following:

- The theoretical, philosophical and/or research basis of the approach to nurturing and educating young children
- The goals and objectives for children's learning and development, including the skills and knowledge the curriculum seeks to foster

# MN Parent Aware definition, cont'd

- The experiences that children will have to facilitate their progress toward the goals and objectives (including specification of features of the physical environment, scheduling, specific learning activities, and adult-child interactions)
- The process through which adults will plan and carry out learning experiences to facilitate children's progress toward the goals and objectives

# STOP and reflect...

Thinking about babies...

- What are opportunities?
- What are concerns?

# Implementation of Curriculum—not

Knowledge of child development

Teacher education and  
experience

Program support

# Curriculum and standards

- Standards: what do children need to know and be able to do?
- Provides a beacon for content expectations
- Must include the “how”

# HOT terms in infant-toddler

- Classification
- Security
- Separation
- Temperament
- Object permanence
- Separation
- Phonological awareness

- **development**
- Contingent
- Secure base behavior
- Social referencing
- Cause and effect
- Self-regulation
- Identity
- Grasp

# Curriculum must reflect infant-toddler developmental needs

Philosophy: It's all about relationships!

- Security
- Exploration
- Identity

Spotlight  on Social-emotional

# By age 3 ...developmental indicators

- Social-emotional
- Physical-motor
- Language
- Cognitive

# Breaking the curriculum definition apart for infants and toddlers

- Philosophy
- Includes goals and objectives
- Experiences (environment, scheduling, learning activities, adult-child interactions)
- Process for planning and implementing

# Infants rely on contingent relationships with caregivers to...

- Learn
- Organize behavior
- Regulate emotions

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# Things to remember...

- Sense of self starts to develop from the beginning
- Views of self and other are developed in relationships
- Accumulated experiences develop into a lens of expectation.

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# Example of social-emotional component: Self regulation

- 1. Emotional and physiological regulation
- 2. Other oriented regulation
- 3. Impulse control
- 4. Attention maintenance

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# Child experiences: Using the MN Indicators of Progress, Birth to Three

- OK, so I know the developmental area: social-emotional
- I know the goal: self-regulation
- What are the indicators?
- How do I plan experiences, activities?
- How do I individualize?

# Plan/individualize: Welcoming a child into child care

- Joe, a friendly, outgoing young teacher, walks up to Daniel, a new child in the toddler classroom. He kneels, puts his hands on Daniel's shoulders, and says in a loud voice, "Hey, big guy, glad to meet you! We're going to have lots of fun! Say good-bye to Daddy." Joe is mystified when Daniel bursts into tears and presses himself against his father's legs.

1. What is happening with the child? What are possible reasons or things to consider?
2. What is happening in the caregiver? Name at least two choices of how to handle this situation

# Another example..developing self-awareness includes

- Expressing emotions (older infants)
- Recognizes and labels emotions (toddlers)

“Emotional literacy”—social, cognitive, language

Describe an intentional, responsive plan

# Checklist for decision-makers

(caveat: from preschool-focused article)

1. How does the curriculum define the roles of teacher and child in the learning process?
2. What domains of learning are addressed? Are they integrated or treated separately? Will the curriculum lead to achievement of state early learning standards?
3. Does the curriculum provide guidance for differentiating teaching for students with special behavior, linguistic, or learning needs?
4. Do the curriculum's developers provide an assessment system that is consistent with the teaching philosophy and learning content?

# More questions..

5. What research evidence exists to support the value or effectiveness of the curriculum?
6. Is the curriculum appropriate for all teachers, regardless of their qualifications? What kind of professional development is provided?
7. Are specific materials required to implement the curriculum?
8. Does the curriculum model provide guidance for such services as parent involvement and ...transition...?

*Curriculum Decision-Making: Dimensions to Consider*, Frede and Ackerman, NIEER

# Pause and Reflect

- Changes in knowledge, feelings?
- Aha! ?
- Back home...