

CURRICULUM APPROVAL

Definition of Curriculum

A curriculum is a written set of materials that provides an integrated framework to guide decisions adults make about experiences provided for children and includes the following:

- a theoretical, philosophical and/or research basis to guide the approach to nurturing and facilitating children's development
- goals and objectives for children's learning and development that the curriculum seeks to foster
- experiences that will be provided to support diverse learners and facilitate each child's progress toward the expressed goals and objectives (including features of the physical environment, scheduling, specific experiences, and adult-child interactions)
- process through which adults will plan and implement experiences to facilitate each child's progress toward the goals and objectives, including avenues for collaboration with families and members of the larger community to guide decisions made about children's experiences
- a means to assure that the environment, activities and interactions children experience are appropriate for individual children by collecting on-going information on individual children that is used to gauge how each child is making progress toward the curriculum's stated goals and objectives for children's development and learning, and to plan experiences that facilitate individual children's growth and development.

Criteria for Curriculum Approval

1) Evidence based:

The curriculum must articulate a theoretical and/or research-base for the approach and clearly demonstrate how the curriculum utilizes the theory and/or research as a basis for making decisions about experiences provided for children. The curriculum may also have empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of the curriculum collected with sound research methodology.

2) Planning process:

The curriculum must have a process to guide adults in making decisions about experiences provided for children. The curriculum describes the intent or developmental goals of given experiences and the environment. The curriculum includes an ongoing process for observing and documenting information related to individual children's level of development, current skills, and interests, and using that information to develop plans. Experiences provided for children should be derived from each child's needs, abilities and interests with appropriate teacher/caregiver input and facilitation. The curriculum should include plans for a variety of types of experiences and activities, including large group, small group, individual, child initiated, and teacher-initiated activities.

3) Areas of children's development and learning:

The curriculum must include a balance of experiences that address all areas of children's development and learning – physical, social and emotional, approaches

toward learning, language and communication, and cognitive development and general knowledge, integrating content areas such as early literacy, mathematics, social studies, science, creative arts, and technology as appropriate for the age of children in the group. Preschool curricula must provide opportunities for children to develop the knowledge, behaviors, and competencies defined in North Carolina's early learning standards.

4) Scheduling and routines:

The curriculum must include a schedule that is age appropriate, predictable but flexible, and responsive to the needs of individual children. The schedule must include an appropriate balance of teacher/caregiver initiated and child-initiated experiences, and large blocks of time for play and exploration with appropriate facilitation from the adult. Routines such as feeding and toileting should be age appropriate and included as an integral part of children's experiences.

5) Physical environment:

The curriculum must provide appropriate guidance for teachers and caregivers on the physical environment, including guidance on room/home space arrangement, furnishings, equipment, and other aspects of the physical environment that reflects an understanding of child development and supports children's learning and development.

6) Social environment:

The curriculum must provide appropriate guidance on how teachers/caregivers can facilitate children's social-emotional development, including guidance on adult-child interactions, promoting children's peer relationships, and managing children's behavior.

7) Materials and experiences:

The materials and experiences used in the curriculum must be appropriate for the age and developmental level of children targeted and should include both child-directed and teacher/ caregiver-directed activities. They should be engaging for children, play-based, and present concepts that are concrete and relevant to children's everyday experiences. The materials and experiences should be flexible enough to promote each child's development and learning in both indoor and outdoor settings, and provide a variety of experiences that support children in making choices, exploring and demonstrating independence. Materials and experiences must be free of bias, violent and otherwise unacceptable content.

8) Diversity:

The curriculum should support the development and learning of children from diverse backgrounds and explicitly address how adults can provide experiences that are culturally relevant and sensitive for children and families who reflect a variety of cultures, languages, socio-economic status, and structures.