

Creating Meaningful Curriculum in Early Childhood Classrooms Participant Guide

8 Hours

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Training Evaluation

In a few days following the final session, you will receive an email from Develop asking you to complete an online training evaluation from this event called a Training and Trainer Evaluation Tool (TTET). We would really appreciate your input about trainer performance, the content, and training environment so that we can make improvements along the way. We use your feedback when we revise courses and schedule training events.

Session 1 Overview

KCF Content Area:

KCF Content Area II.A: Creating Positive Learning Experiences

CDA Content Area:

CDA Subject Area II: Steps to advance children's physical and intellectual development

Course Description:

Design high-quality early childhood curriculum that honors children's needs, interests, strengths, and abilities within a culturally responsive environment. Explore intentional teaching strategies that promote language, literacy, communication, and higher-order thinking skills. Examine the importance of relationships in fostering children's learning and positive guidance practices that support social-emotional development and contribute to their success in learning and life.

Learning Objectives - Session 1

By the end of this course, engaged participants will:

- Design high-quality early childhood environments that promote healthy development and joyful learning.
- Create culturally responsive classrooms that reflect and affirm the characteristics and contexts of the children, families, and communities served.

Course Outline:

Section	Section Time	Key Concepts
A	15 minutes	Welcome/Introductions Objectives Review
B	35 minutes	Designing Supportive Learning Environments
C	30 minutes	Enriching Children's Learning with Interest Areas

Section	Section Time	Key Concepts
D	30 minutes	Creating Culturally Responsive Classrooms
E	10 minutes	Objectives Review/Closing
	Total Time: 2 hours	

Defining Curriculum

Curriculum provides guidance on what and how to teach. Curriculum provides guidance on what and how to teach. “It consists of developmentally appropriate and educationally significant goals and outcomes as well as all aspects of the environment, materials, play and learning experiences, and planned interactions that promote children’s learning and attainment of the specified goals and outcomes” (Freidman, Wright, & Masterson, 2022, p. 215).

Qualities of Supportive Environments

- Child-centered: “I can see myself here, and I belong here.”
- Organized and predictable: “I can trust that I know where things are and I know what to expect.”
- Calm and inviting: “I can be at ease here.”
- Safe and healthy: “You are safe and valued here.”
- Support independence: “This is a place I can learn and grow.”
- Build community: “I can build relationships here.”
- Supplied with purposeful and engaging materials: “This is a place that is interesting and challenging!”
- Encourage movement and mobility: “This is a place that I can move and use my body!”

Enriching Children’s Learning with Interest Areas

How do your interest areas support and build upon children’s skills as described in the ECIPs? How can you enhance your interest areas to further their development and learning? Write three goals for enriching your learning environments.

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Designing Environments that Reflect Diversity

Reflect on these key statements: Why does this statement matter? How does your classroom apply this principle?

- “Quality early childhood education supports the optimal development of every child regardless of income, ability, race, culture, or disability” (ECIPS, 2028, p. 9).
- High-quality curriculum “reflects children’s lived experiences like a mirror so that children can see themselves, their families, and their communities represented.” (NAEYC, 2022, p. 218).
- High-quality curriculum introduces windows on the world so that children learn about people, places, perspectives, and ideas they have not yet encountered (NAEYC, 2022).
- Research identifies key elements of culturally responsive classrooms, including multicultural literature, culturally responsive environments, family engagement, and community building practices (Bennett et.al., 2025).

Practical Application: Field Work Assignment

Reflect on the new ideas or refined perspectives that you’re taking away from our discussions. What are some things you plan to do based on what you practiced in this course? Write 1 or 2 goals you will immediately implement in your classroom.

- 1.
- 2.

Session 2 Overview

Learning Objectives – Session 2

By the end of this course, engaged participants will:

- Plan curriculum using meaningful content that aligns with learning standards and meets the needs and interests of individual children.
- Explore intentional teaching strategies that support and enhance children’s development and learning.

Course Outline:

Section	Section Time	Key Concepts
A	15 minutes	Welcome/Introductions Objectives Review
B	30 minutes	Planning Effective Schedules, Routines, and Transitions
C	40 minutes	Designing Curriculum Using Meaningful Content
D	25 minutes	Constructing Knowledge Using Intentional Teaching Strategies
E	10 minutes	Objectives Review/Closing
	Total Time: 2 hours	

Planning Effective Routines and Transitions

Create a lesson plan outlining an effective transition to support your classroom's daily routine.

Routine	Transition Activity	ECIPs Component Addressed	Adaptation for individual children
Example: Transitioning from outdoor play to indoor circle time.	The educator invites the children to walk like their favorite animal and line up in front of the door.	Components P1-5: Gross Motor	One child needs additional guidance to transition from outdoor play, so the educator gives a 2-minute notice to the group to let them know that it is time to go inside soon.

Creating Meaningful Curriculum

Using the Assessment Cycle to Plan:

- Gather information about children's learning and development through observation.
- Document what is observed or learned to capture information about what children know and can do.
- Reflect on this information to make decisions about the learning experiences and interactions that best support the child or group.
- Implement these decisions using intentional planning and teaching methods.

Using a KWL Chart to Plan

This chart guides educators in documenting and learning more about what children already know about a topic, what they want to know, and gathering and reflecting on what children have learned when the study ends.

K - What do you know?	W - What do you want to know?	L - What did you learn?
Big Ideas:		

Constructing Knowledge Using Intentional Teaching Strategies

Educators connect with children and extend their learning using several methods, including:

- Acknowledging children's communication and connecting through conversation
- Encouraging persistence and effort
- Providing specific feedback
- Modeling different ways to solve problems
- Providing demonstrations
- Adding a challenge to increase the level of complexity/scaffolding
- Reducing complexity to strengthen current skills
- Asking questions to prompt wonder and thinking
- Using intentional teaching and direct instruction
- Encouraging peer support

Final Reflection

- One thing that stood out to me the most:

- One practice or idea I intend to apply this week:

Practical Application: Field Work Assignment

In your work with young children, identify one example of how you used direct instruction to support children's learning and one example of how you guided a child in constructing knowledge. Plan to share your examples in session 3.

Session 3 Overview

Learning Objectives – Session 3

By the end of this course, engaged participants will:

- Identify intentional conversations and teachable moments that support children’s language, literacy, and communication development.
- Demonstrate strategies for promoting higher-order thinking through adult-child interactions.

Course Outline:

Section	Section Time	Key Concepts
A	15 minutes	Welcome/Objectives
B	35 minutes	Using Intentional Conversations to Extend Learning
C	40 minutes	Supporting Higher-Order Thinking Through Adult-Child Interactions
D	20 minutes	The Value of Quality Feedback
E	10 minutes	Objectives Review/Closing
	Total Time: 2 hours	

Intentional Conversation Scenarios

Scenario	Educator's statement	Intentional Conversation
The educator encourages children to pick up toys during clean-up time.	"Please put the blocks away"	
The children are washing their hands before eating lunch.	"It's time to wash your hands for lunch."	
The children are engaged in a process art activity with collage materials.	"Tell me what you made."	
A child arrives for the day and is eager to explore the new nature and discovery area.	"Go hand up your coat."	
A child is visibly upset and begins crying when asked to join the group for Story time.	"Use your words."	

Supporting Dual Language Learners

- What is your experience engaging dual language learners in your classroom?
- How do you support children as they learn multiple languages?
- What are some ways you can bring home languages and cultures into your classroom?

Extending Children's Learning Through Concept Development

For each activity listed, generate questions you might ask children to encourage them to deepen their thinking.

Activity	Analysis and Reasoning	Creating	Integration	Real-World Connection
Pouring water through funnels and into containers	What do you notice when you pour the water faster?	How could we change the color of the water? What materials could we use?	Have you used a funnel before? Tell me about it.	How do you use water at home?
Observing birds at the bird feeder				
Building with magnet blocks				
Playing in the snow				

Final Reflection

- One new insight I gained from this session's discussions and activities:
- One strategy I will intentionally incorporate into my curriculum:
- One question or concept I would like to explore further:

Practical Application: Field Work Assignment

Review your curriculum and choose an activity, interaction, or learning experience. Identify one opportunity to strengthen concept development by using one of the four strategies: analysis and reasoning, creating, integration, or meaningful real-world connections. Apply the strategy through an intentional interaction with a child in your classroom. Be prepared to share your experience, including your interaction, how the child responded, and what you learned.

Session 4 Overview

Learning Objectives – Session 4

By the end of this course, engaged participants will:

- Promote children’s learning by creating caring communities where children feel safe, valued, and supported.
- Describe positive guidance techniques that support children’s social and emotional development, strengthen relationships, and contribute to children’s overall success in learning and life.

Course Outline:

Section	Section Time	Key Concepts
A	20 minutes	Welcome/Objectives
B	30 minutes	Responsive Relationships Support Children’s Learning
C	20 minutes	Creating Caring Communities of Learners
D	35 minutes	Supporting Social and Emotional Development with Positive Behavior Guidance
E	15 minutes	Objectives Review/Closing
	Total Time: 2 hours	

Creating Caring Communities with Curriculum

Identify the friendship skills the child needs help developing.	Locate an ECIPs domain and indicator that relates to this skill.	Plan an activity, learning experience, or interaction to help the child strengthen this skill.

Finding the Meaning Behind the Behavior

Use this tool to reflect on children's behavior and identify ways to support children's emotional regulation.

Describe what happened, including who was involved, what occurred, and when and where the behavior occurred.	Consider what might have influenced the child's behavior. Is there an unmet need, a developing skill, or is the child responding to the environment or routine?	How could the educator respond in a calm, respectful way that meets the child's needs and supports their learning and development?
The educator notices that at 10:30 am each day, Deondre begins exhibiting behaviors such as crying, whining, and occasionally hitting peers.	Since Deondre arrives after morning snack time, the child care educator reaches out to the family to ask if Deondre may be hungry or tired. They inform the educator that Deondre often sleeps late in the morning and skips breakfast.	The educator makes plans to offer Deondre a snack when he arrives at child care to ensure his basic need for nutrition is met.

Course Reflection

Take several minutes to reflect on the journey we've taken toward implementing meaningful curriculum in family child care programs.

- What discussions or activities stood out to you the most throughout this course? Why were they impactful for you?
- What changes have you made, or do you plan to make, to your environment, practices, beliefs, or activities as a result of this course?
- What positive results do you anticipate from these changes?

Final Thoughts

Write an action statement to reinforce your professional goals. Complete this statement:

- One action I am committed to taking as a result of this course is:
- The reason why this goal is important to me is because:

Resources

- [Early Childhood Indicators of Progress \(ECIPs\)](#)
- [Finding Opportunities for Concept Development in Your Curriculum](#)
- [The Inquiry Cycle](#)
- [First pages – Diaper Changes](#)
- [Unite for Literacy](#)
- [Tip Sheet: Factors that Influence Behavior](#)
- [NAEYC Code of Ethics for Early Childhood Educators](#)
- [American Psychological Association Inclusive Language Guide](#)