

Creating Meaningful Curriculum in Family Child Care Programs Participant Guide

8 Hours

Last Updated June 2026

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Session 1 Overview

KCF Content Area:

KCF Area II.A: Creating Positive Learning Experiences

CDA Content Area:

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

Course Description:

Identify strategies that guide educators in planning and implementing meaningful curriculum in family child care programs. Design responsive learning environments and apply teaching methods that meet the needs of diverse learners in mixed-age programs. Develop effective systems that support authentic assessment and family involvement to plan curriculum that reflects children's interests, needs, strengths, cultural backgrounds, and individual goals. Implement meaningful experiences that promote children's curiosity and engagement, and create a lifelong love of learning.

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this session, engaged participants will:

- Identify the learning theories and educational philosophies that guide curriculum in family child care programs.
- Determine ways to integrate the environment into the curriculum to support children's interests, development, and learning goals.

Session Outline:

Section	Section Time	Key Concepts
A	20 minutes	Welcome/Introductions, Objectives
B	40 minutes	Identifying Learning Theories and Educational Philosophies
C	20 minutes	Designing High-Quality Family Child Care Environments
D	30 minutes	Integrating Curriculum into the Environment
E	10 minutes	Objectives Review/Closing
	Total Time: 2 hours	

Defining Curriculum in Family Child Care

Curriculum provides guidance on what and how to teach young children. The “what” of curriculum includes the content, knowledge, skills, and behaviors that children learn across all areas of their development. The “how” refers to the learning experiences, teaching methods, and interactions you use to support children’s learning and the environment in which you do it.

A fully implemented curriculum includes:

- Intentional environments, policies, schedules, and routines designed with children’s development, learning, and well-being in mind.
- Systems for observing, documenting, assessing, and planning to support children’s progress
- Family communication and involvement practices that promote partnerships between families and educators.
- Ongoing reflection, evaluation, and goal setting to improve teaching practices and respond to children’s developing needs.

Practical Application – Philosophy Statement

Think about the core beliefs, values, practices, and educational approach that make up your curriculum. How would you define your program's educational philosophy? Write a brief statement outlining your educational philosophy.

Reflecting on High Quality Learning Environments

Family child care settings should be “welcoming and comfortable, with enough materials and equipment to engage children’s interest in a variety of ways, supporting their activities across all the domains of development” (NAFCC, 2026).

- What makes your family child care environment welcoming, comfortable, and engaging?
- What intentional choices have you made to create a high-quality learning environment?
- What goals do you have for strengthening your environment?

Integrating Curriculum into the Environment

Each learning environment expresses its own story of what children need, enjoy, and are interested in and capable of doing. Think about your program. How does it inspire learning? What is it teaching the children? Write down three ways your environment inspires learning.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Planning for Children's Learning Goals

Think about the children in your program. What activities are they repeatedly engaging in? Are there behaviors you are continually redirecting to ensure their safety?

- Choose one example and write down what you believe the children are trying to learn through this activity or behavior.
- What ECIPs subcomponents do you see identified in this activity?
- What materials, activities, or learning experiences can you bring into the environment to support their learning goals?

Assignment

Write your thoughts answering the question, "What story does your environment tell?"

Session 2 Overview

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this session, engaged participants will:

- Implement effective systems for observing, documenting, assessing, and planning to support children's ongoing developmental progress.
- Describe benefits and strategies for involving families in the authentic assessment cycle.

Course Outline:

Section	Section Time	Key Concepts
A	10 minutes	Welcome/Objectives Fieldwork review
B	20 minutes	The Authentic Assessment Cycle Supports Learning
C	50 minutes	Developing Effective Systems for Authentic Assessment
D	30 minutes	Involving Families in Authentic Assessment
E	10 minutes	Objectives Review/Closing
	Total Time: 2 hours	

The Authentic Assessment Cycle Supports Learning

Authentic assessment is an ongoing process that involves noticing, wondering about, and documenting what you see children doing every day. It unfolds naturally as educators supervise, interact with, and observe children during their play. When educators intentionally engage in the authentic assessment cycle, they gather and respond to information through observation, documentation, and reflection to plan meaningful curriculum.

Adapting Curriculum to Meet Children's Needs

Think of a child in your program. How do you adapt the curriculum, including the environment, equipment, materials, and learning experiences, to meet the child's unique learning and developmental needs? Write your answers in the spaces provided.

- The child's individual needs, such as developmental level, learning styles, cultural and linguistic background, and accommodations or supports needed
- The child's interests, including favorite activities, subjects, preferences, people, materials, or toys

- The child's temperament, including level of dependence or independence, activity level, and how the child reacts or responds to situations, challenges, risks, and encouragement
- The child's strengths, including skills, knowledge, and communication, motor, cognitive, emotional, and developmental abilities

Supporting Authentic Assessment in Family Child Care: Components and Activities

Assessment Component	Cycle Activities	Supportive Actions
Observation and Documentation		
Assessment		
Planning		

Developing a Workable System: 3 Goals

What are you currently doing well in your program? What new ideas would you like to implement to develop a workable, authentic assessment system in your program? Write one goal for each component.

- Observation and documentation

- Assessment

- Planning

Involving Families in the Authentic Assessment Process

Identify two ways families can be involved in the authentic assessment cycle.

Observation	
Documentation	
Reflection	
Planning	

Reflection

What steps will you take to ensure that assessment data is shared with families in meaningful ways and ensure that they have opportunities to participate in the goal-setting and decision-making process for their child? Create one goal that you will implement in your program.

Fieldwork Assignment

Conduct a mini assessment cycle by observing a child engaged in an activity during play. Document what the child is saying and doing. Reflect on what you learned from your observation.

Ask yourself:

- What is the child learning?
- What developmental domain is represented?
- What does this moment tell you about the child's needs, interests, or strengths?

Describe an activity to extend the child's learning.

Session 3 Overview

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this session, engaged participants will:

- Explain strategies for integrating supervision, safety, and responsive curriculum planning to support the learning and development of children in family child care programs.
- Plan mixed-age learning experiences using emergent curriculum practices to support children's individual interests, strengths, and developmental goals.

Course Outline:

Section	Section Time	Key Concepts
A	20 minutes	Welcome/Introductions Objectives Review
B	20 minutes	Integrating Supervision and Safety into Curriculum Planning
C	45 minutes	Planning for Mixed Age Groups Using Emergent Curriculum
D	25 minutes	Guiding Children's Learning Using Interest Areas
E	10 minutes	Objectives Review/Closing
	Total Time: 2 hours	

Planning Curriculum for Mixed Age Groups

Planning a meaningful curriculum within a mixed-age group focuses on planning with children's development in mind. Here are a few helpful tips for planning for mixed age groups:

- Use observation and assessment information to guide planning.
- Select materials, activities, and environment arrangements based on children's interests and emerging skills.
- Adapt learning activities to meet the developmental needs of all children in the program, including infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school-age children.
- Recognize daily routines as valuable learning opportunities and use these moments to observe, assess, and support children's development throughout the day.
- Refer to the ECIPs to identify the concepts, knowledge, and skills appropriate for children at different ages.

Curriculum Planning Activity

Plan one activity per age group in one interest area. Identify a learning domain, subcomponent, and indicator that the activity represents.

Age Category	Learning Activity	Learning Domain	Subcomponent	Indicator
Toddler	Pouring and dumping water from various containers	Scientific Thinking and Exploring	ST2. Investigate, Child actively demonstrates curiosity about self, others, and surroundings.	ST2.4. Begins using objects as tools
Infant				
Toddler				
Preschool				

Consider: How would you make these activities more complex to include school-age children?

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:		

Enriching Children's Learning with Interest Areas

How can you enhance your family child care environment to further children's development and learning? Write two goals for enriching your learning environments.

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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

Observe the children as they play, explore the environment. Make note of something that captures their interest. Using the KWL chart in your Participant Guide, ask the children, "What do you know about this topic?" and "What do you wonder or want to know?" After each question, document their answers. After reflecting on their answers and identify the "big ideas" within this topic. Then, use the information you've gathered to create an activity to extend their learning.

Session 4 Overview

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this session, engaged participants will:

- Demonstrate positive adult-child interactions that support the diverse needs of children in family child care programs.
- Promote positive relationships with families through effective communication, collaboration, and family involvement.

Course Outline:

Section	Section Time	Key Concepts
A	15 minutes	Welcome/Objectives; Fieldwork Review
B	30 minutes	Adult-Child Interactions Provide the Foundation of Learning
C	30 minutes	Supporting Diverse Learners
D	30 minutes	Supporting Curriculum Through Family Communication and Involvement
E	15 minutes	Course Summary
	Total Time: 2 hours	

Teaching Strategies that Support Each and Every Child

Think about your current practices. How do you currently offer children different ways to participate and show learning? What principle feels strongest in your practice? Which area could you strengthen?

Presenting information in a variety of ways to promote understanding	Offering choices for how children respond and demonstrate knowledge	Building on children's interests and supporting engagement
• Using puppets, pictures, or other props while reading a book or telling a story. • Using real objects, pictures, or vocabulary words to explore a particular theme or topic, such as photos of real farms or farm animals, along with audio of real animal sounds • Using gestures and sign language while speaking to	• Providing children with different ways to respond, such as using gestures like pointing, verbally responding, acting out, or drawing their response. • Inviting children to express themselves through art, drawing, or building, in addition to or instead of explaining	• Choices of activities or learning centers during indoor and outdoor play • Attention to the interests of multiple children to incorporate toys, materials, music, and books into the environment that interests them • Provide multiple ways to explore ideas and practice skills, such as individually,

reinforce language and comprehension • Supporting vocabulary development for dual language learners by modeling word meanings using familiar stories, gestures, objects, and images that children understand • Demonstrating skills along with providing verbal directions, such as showing handwashing technique while discussing the steps.	• Providing children with adaptive equipment to support their development and success (adaptive scissors, spoons, chairs, communication boards) • Providing a choice of output. For example, if children are learning about colors, one may sort objects by color, while another colors or paints.	in pairs, small groups, and large groups • Account for children's sensory needs, such as providing a child who is overwhelmed by noise with headphones or quieter spaces to learn • Connect interactions, learning, and the environment to children's home life, throughout songs, photos, cultural items, and other ways to represent the children's home life.
Ideas for additions or changes:		

Program evaluation

How do your program practices represent and support diverse learners?

- Do the environment, activities, and learning experiences inspire active or passive learning?
- Does each and every child have the opportunity to socially interact and collaborate with educators and peers?
- Are the content and materials culturally meaningful and representative of the children present?
- Does it relate to the children's interests and build upon their prior knowledge?

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 \(ECIPs\)](#)
- [NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment](#)
- [American Psychological Association Inclusive Language Guide](#)
- [National Association for Family Child Care Quality Standards](#)
- [Help Me Grow](#)
- [CDC Developmental Milestones](#)
- [Universal Design for Learning: A Checklist for Early Childhood Environments](#)

Training Evaluation

In a few days, 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.