High Quality Curricula Help Young Children Learn

Effective curricula attend to the special ways that young children grow and learn in the classroom. When children move from concrete to abstract and symbolic thinking and begin to regulate their emotions, collaborate with their peers, and understand other people’s perspectives, skills in all aspects of their development improve. Young children engage in complex, integrated experiences that nurture emotional, social, physical, and intellectual capabilities that are deeply intertwined like a child’s thinking abilities are intertwined. Shifts in attention, memory, and self-regulation. It can shape the educational experience that teachers plan and execute when caring for young students.

High Quality Curriculum in Action
A first grade teacher’s practice exhibits the features of effective curricula by focusing on teaching addition and subtraction in 1st grade. Based on her lesson plans, the teacher introduces the concept into her 1st grade setting and then has her children work independently to add and subtract numbers. The children are divided into small groups to share and explain their work. The teacher reinforces the math concepts during child-initiated activities and school-wide events. The first lesson on this area is a solid introduction to developing children’s mathematical understanding and reasoning. The teacher has the appropriate opportunity to assess understanding of addition and subtraction in 1st grade. The block area, a favorite area for many of her students, includes blocks that she has grouped in piles of 10 to 20. She can use the blocks in different ways to approach the learning. As the children build their structures, the teacher moves to the block area to help develop children’s mathematical understanding and addition and subtraction problems. During this unit, children have the opportunity to play with the math concept knowledge, as well as social and emotional skills as they work with their peers. By providing a variety of learning opportunities, the teacher gains a deep understanding of the foundational skills found in the New York State Learning Standards, and teachers are also supporting social and emotional gains for their students. Children use the blocks in different ways as they advance through the grades. Like developmentally, appropriate learning standards, standards support interdisciplinary knowledge.

Strategies For Teachers

- Understand the sequencing of learning content and to appropriately scaffold the learning as the children progress.
- Select curriculum with children’s interests, prior learning, family experiences, and other factors.
- Integrate ideas from multiple domains into the curriculum, including content knowledge and make connections.
- Use curriculum frameworks to plan lessons that will help children master a comprehensive set of knowledge skills.

Strategies For Leaders

- Select curriculum that promotes hands-on learning opportunities through a balance of whole group, small group, and individual work.
- Ensure curricula address all aspects of young children’s development across subject areas.
- Verify that curricular content supports the natural variations in children’s development and provide guidance on differential planning, differentiated intervention.
- Align curricula from prekindergarten through third grade to children’s learning.
- Ensure curricular-driven strategies are aligned with evidence-based instructional practices, learning standards, and assessments.
- Provide teachers with adequate planning time and curriculum resources sufficient time to work together to develop lesson plans, align curricular frameworks, and support one another’s practice.

To learn more and view the other briefs in this series that address curriculum, the classroom environment, media strategically and capably, and other factors, please visit the New York Early Childhood website at www.nyecac.org or contact us at nyecac@stonybrook.edu.

High Quality Curricula

- Essential Frameworks and High-Quality Curricula

- Build strong content knowledge
- Includes developmentally-appropriate learning goals that can be individually tailored to students’ existing needs and new curriculum.
- Requires varying demands of task, purpose, and context
- Includes an intense focus on language development and attention to children’s emerging talents.
- Includes a comprehensive set of knowledge and skills.

- Evidence-based curricula with proven results
- Share common characteristics: “a concentration on teaching principles and procedures; a deliberate and intense focus on language development; a multifaceted meaningful interactions among children and between children and their teachers.”
- Includes a framework for the activities and materials in the classroom that are developmentally appropriate.
- Addresses major learning goals in all developmental domains.
- Curricula are in print for teachers and educators to use throughout early childhood settings and classrooms. The curriculum provides time for sustained engagement. New York State’s prekindergarten

- Children learn through play in learning centers. In dramatic play, for instance, a teacher reinforces the math concepts during child-initiated activities and school-wide events. The children are divided into small groups to share and explain their work. The teacher reinforces the math concepts during child-initiated activities and school-wide events.

- The teacher moves to the block area to help develop children’s mathematical understanding and addition and subtraction problems. During this unit, children have the opportunity to play with the math concept knowledge, as well as social and emotional skills as they work with their peers. By providing a variety of learning opportunities, the teacher gains a deep understanding of the foundational skills found in the New York State Learning Standards, and teachers are also supporting social and emotional gains for their students. Children use the blocks in different ways as they advance through the grades. Like developmentally, appropriate learning standards, standards support interdisciplinary knowledge.

- The New York State Learning Standards provide content and examples of how the standards can be taught in early childhood settings. The curriculum supports instruction in the arts, health, and physical education.

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Choosing a Preschool Curriculum
Head Start National Center onQuality Teaching and Learning (NCQTL)
www.eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/docs/preschool-curriculum.pdf

Developmentally Appropriate Practice
National Association for the Education of Young Children
www.naeyc.org/DAP

Montgomery County Public Schools. Curriculum 2.0
www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/curriculum/2.0/

New York State Education Department

Resources

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Sources


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