

Defining Infant-Toddler Curricula



Working Toward a Definition of Infant/Toddler Curricula: Intentionally Furthering the Development of Individual Children within Responsive Relationships



Summary

This brief is an effort to explore the meaning of the word “curriculum” when applied to working with infants and toddlers. The idea for the brief emerged from the early childhood community—specifically two groups of applied researchers funded by the Administration for Children and Families, INQUIRE and NITR. [See insert box on page 12 for more information on these groups]. These groups were getting questions from state policy makers and practitioners about the meaning of the term “empirically-based curricula for infants and toddlers,” a requirement for many accountability systems. Questions included

concerns about how to conceptualize curriculum in the context of working with infants and toddlers—especially how to incorporate this concept in a way that provides sufficient focus on individualization and the supportive and responsive relationships that are the hallmark of infant/toddler care and education. There was concern that use of a curriculum would by definition be developmentally inappropriate for infants and toddlers. There were also questions about how stakeholders should verify the use of a curriculum for this age group. This brief begins a discussion about the meaning of the term when applied to early education and care programs serving families with infants and toddlers, and focuses especially on how

the concept of a curriculum can be incorporated into and used in programs in a way that is developmentally appropriate for this age range.

Introduction

Those interested in the quality of early education and care are increasingly focused on identifying empirically based practices that prepare children to enter school with the skills necessary for academic success. While there have been many efforts to identify and define practices in the preschool age range (e.g., Burchinal, Zaslow, Tarullo, 2016), there have been fewer efforts in the infant and toddler arena. This is beginning to change.

While there are important continuities in development across the early childhood years, there is growing recognition among researchers, practitioners, and policy makers that the first three years are a distinct developmental period characterized by rapid brain development, reliance on relationships with adults, extreme responsiveness to environmental variation, and great opportunity for long-term impact on future outcomes across a range of developmental domains (Bernier 2012; Hoff, 2006; Martin, Ryan, Brooks-Gunn, 2013; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004; Rhoades 2011). Considering language development, for example, in the first three years children progress from attending to speech from others, to understanding it, to beginning to be participants in verbal exchanges, to being full participants in those exchanges with contributions involving multiple words. In terms of social interactions, children form attachments with caring adults that lay the foundation for their expectations about interactions and relationships with peers as well as adults in later years. Physical progress is also dramatic—children progress from needing to be held and cared for entirely, to autonomous movement and contributions to self-care (such as helping dress themselves and participating in clean-up routines). According to the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework for Ages Birth to Five (Office of Head Start, 2015): “Experiences in the first three years of life have a strong impact on brain development



and learning. They are the foundation for healthy development and strong child outcomes in the preschool years and beyond” (p. 5).

Growing recognition of the importance of the first years of life is evident in the recent federal investment in increasing the availability and accessibility of high-quality services for infants and toddlers. Efforts include expansion of Early Head Start, increased infant/toddler set-aside in the reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant, and the establishment of two new programs: the new Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Program and the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program. There is also progress in efforts to professionalize the early care and education workforce, define learning goals for infants and toddlers, and provide guidance on activities that will support children’s school readiness beginning in the earliest years. For example, the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (Office of Head Start, 2015) articulates specific learning goals in all of the major domains of development—approaches to learning, social and emotional development, language and literacy, cognition, and perceptual, motor, and physical development for infants and toddlers (Office of Head Start, 2015). This provides a clear description of how learning in each domain and its more specific “subdomains” should progress across the first three years, and articulates indicators of positive development by 36 months. Further, most states have defined early

learning guidelines (ELG) specifically for infants and toddlers—45 states reported having these in 2013, up from 31 in 2010—and 28 states have specific certifications for infant/toddler care providers (Mayoral, 2013).

As services for infants and toddlers have grown, so too have the efforts to define and measure quality of services for infants and toddlers, as well as desired outcomes for children and families. Over the last several years we have seen the frontier of school readiness move from the preschool to the infant/toddler period, as is evident in the new state and federal frameworks to define school readiness outcomes for infants and toddlers. In order to be developmentally appropriate for infants and toddlers, this work involved a reconceptualization of the term school readiness to include a focus on rapid developmental changes, interrelatedness of domains, and the importance of relationships. Many involved in the efforts to bring infants and toddlers into the conversations about school readiness believe that these new ways of conceptualizing child outcomes should inform approaches to the preschool years; preschool frameworks were often developed with an eye toward integration with elementary school guidelines, not toward younger children (Early Head Start National Resource Center, 2012; Horm 2016; Powers, 2012). While this brief highlights infants and toddlers, as we move toward greater understanding of the term “curriculum” for infants and toddlers, we also identify issues that should be considered for the preschool years as well.

As part of the movement to grow and improve services for infants and toddlers, more state, federal, and professional accountability systems are asking for infant/toddler programs to demonstrate the use of an empirically based curriculum. In fact, many standards of quality, including National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation, the legislation guiding the Head Start program and monitoring system (both of which include Early Head Start serving children 0–3 and Migrant Seasonal Head Start serving children 0–5), and as of publication of this brief requirements in eight states for the highest level of Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) ratings require the use of curricula for infants and toddlers (QRIS Online Compendium, 2014).

However, ambiguity exists about what this means for infants and toddlers. What does a curriculum for infants and toddlers look like? What elements are important? And how should we assess whether a curriculum is being used effectively? In fact, there is sometimes discomfort in using the term curriculum in relation to infants and toddlers. The term curriculum brings to mind children sitting at desks or participating in activities in which adults provide the same content to all children. Understandably, these images are hard to reconcile with what we know about infants and toddlers. As noted above, a similar situation has recently been faced when talking about school readiness for infants and toddlers (Horm et. al., 2016). Clearly, infants and toddlers are far from school entry, and the behaviors and skills that are precursors of success in school are very different from what is seen in children as they enter formal schooling at age 5. However, there are benefits from aligning frameworks for thinking about children’s earliest development with longer-term outcomes, as long as it is done in a way that is sensitive to what developmental science shows regarding a child’s first three years. In some cases, this means redefining terms to be appropriate for infants and toddlers (Horm et. al., 2016; 2012).

In this brief, we aim to provide background and guidance to policy makers and practitioners in the context of this new emphasis on curricula for programs serving infants and toddlers. We first look to existing definitions of curricula for infants and toddlers to identify key elements that should be considered (see Tables 1, 2, and 3 in the appendix). We then examine how one might verify the use of a curriculum (see Table 4 in the appendix). This is not a review of existing published curricula. We intend this information to be useful to those providing group care and education services in home-based and center-based settings, including to Early Head Start and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs, although some of the strategies for verifying curricula use may differ across setting types. We have reviewed definitions and approaches from many sources and provide relevant and representative (but not exhaustive) information in tables in the appendix. Please note that in this document we

use the term “educator” to refer to adults responsible for children in group care; as we use it, this term is synonymous with teacher or caregiver.

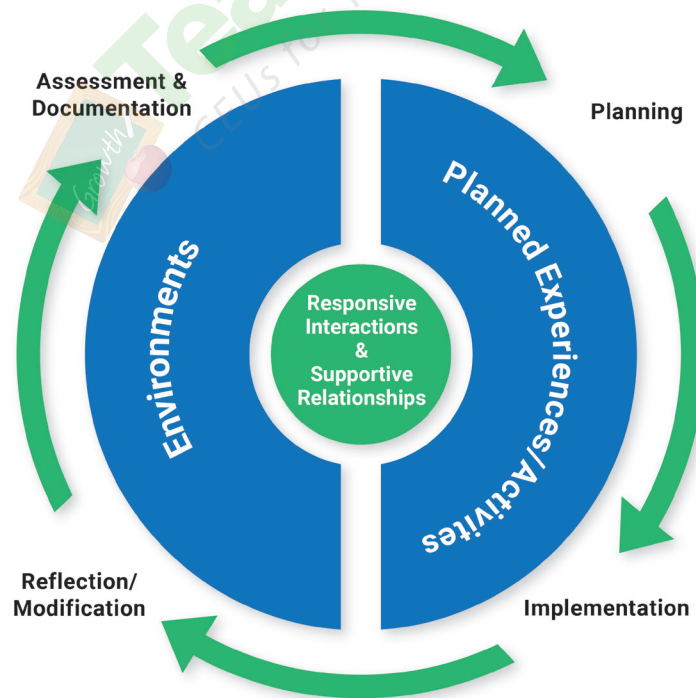
Definitions of Infant/Toddler Curriculum: The What, the How, and the Why

We have reviewed key existing definitions of curricula for infants and toddlers (see Tables 1 and 2 in the appendix table) and conducted a content analysis to identify common themes in the definitions.

The existing definitions of infant/toddler curricula blend content and teaching style or pedagogy. In definitions of curricula for older children, elements of the teaching process are likely separate from the content being provided. We refer to the curricular content and methods for presenting them as the **what** of infant/toddler curricula, including planned experiences and activities and structured environments. Pedagogy, the lived experience in the teaching process within the context of relationships, is referred to as the **how** of the infant/toddler curriculum, including responsive interactions and the process of individualizing. When discussing the infant/toddler period, it is impossible to remove the responsive interactions and relationships, the **how**, from the **what**.

Figure 1 depicts how the elements of curricula work together.

Figure 1: Curriculum process: The *what* (in blue) and the *how* (in green) of infant/toddler curricula



What:

- ▶ **Planned experiences/activities** aimed at supporting and extending infant/toddler learning. These activities must be based on the child's interests, abilities, and internal sleep/wake/feeding schedule.
- ▶ **Environments** that are designed intentionally to support development. This includes having developmentally appropriate materials aimed at supporting and extending development across all domains, including motor, social-emotional, cognitive, and language development, and approaches toward learning; planning of space to be both safe and conducive to active engagement and exploration, and geared to the interests and abilities of all the infants and toddlers in the group, either in a center or a home setting.

How:

- ▶ **Responsive interactions and supportive relationships** are at the core of the curriculum and bring intentionality and life to the *what* of infant/toddler curriculum. Planned experiences occur in the context of ongoing and supportive relationships with both infants/toddlers and their families. This includes practices based on continuity of caregiving and primary caregiving as well as inclusion of family input.

Process of individualizing includes:

- the assessment of individual children's progress through ongoing observation by those caring for and educating the infant/toddler using an early learning framework that articulates developmental progressions (such as the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework or state ELGs), and observation of the infant/toddler's own interests and motivation for learning;
- planning for activities to extend learning based on the infant/toddler's interests and goals for his or her development in relation to the framework for development that is used (such as ELG);
- implementing activities;
- reflecting on infant/toddler response and then using reflection to make modifications to interactions, activities, and the environment in response; and
- documenting and repeating the cycle.

The Why:

Curricula emerge from a conceptual theory about how adults and the environment support child outcomes. Thus, curricula are based on sometimes explicit and often implicit values and beliefs about how children develop. These values and beliefs are often referred to as "theories of change." When choosing a curricular approach, a first step is to clarify a program or educator's own theory of change and find a curriculum that matches (e.g., NAEYC accreditation standards; 2015). That is the *why* of the curriculum that influences choices and implementation of the curriculum.

Having a curriculum then helps the educator to develop supports for each child's development within the context of supportive relationships. A curriculum provides a guide for identifying goals that reflect and respond to the infant's interests and that will help the child progress in development. A curriculum also provides resources for appropriate activities that will facilitate the child's learning. These resources are not a set of scripted activities implemented in a uniform manner. Rather, they are a set of resources to help chart a course for the child's development, and they guide the selection and regular implementation of activities appropriate for that course. The *why* of curricula for infants and toddlers, then, involves both selecting the particular curriculum in a way



that matches the educator's or program's underlying understanding of very young children's development, and then serves as a resource to ensure that goals are set and reviewed, and that activities are selected and implemented with regularity so as to help the child reach the articulated goals.

While we view the **what, how and why** as most central to defining the term curriculum for infants and toddlers, we briefly extend the discussion to underscore the importance of the words **who** and **where** as well. **Who** a curriculum is implemented by is particularly important in the infant/toddler period (though it continues to be central later in early development as well). Learning in the earliest years occurs most optimally in the context of secure and sustained relationships with caring adults. Curricula in the earliest years also need to incorporate awareness of **who** the curriculum is for by building in elements that reflect the cultures of the infants and toddlers and their families. While affirming, respecting, and reflecting children's cultures is important at all ages, these are particularly important at the time of a child's first experience spanning different cultural contexts, which is likely to occur in non-parental care during infancy and toddlerhood for many children. The **where** is particularly important in this age range. This component considers the potential of a curricular approach to be implemented in both home-based and center-based early care and education settings, given the participation of the youngest children across both of these types of settings.

Ramifications of Definition for Educators

The approach toward defining curriculum in terms of the **what** and the **how** has significant implications for the educator's role. A curriculum is a plan for activities and experiences that children and adults are going to have together that will support and extend the infant's or toddler's self-initiated learning. In this view (see especially Lally, 2000 and the other papers by Lally and colleagues noted in Appendix Table 1), the infant/toddler has innate curiosity and drive for exploration. The role of the educator

is to discover the infant/toddler's own interests and intentionally structure activities and the environment to extend and support these within a supportive relationship, using an understanding of development and a framework like the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework or state ELGs to guide goal-setting. This involves a different sense of teaching than what is typically thought of for older children, where activities are more likely to be adult-led.

While the concept of a curriculum for infants and toddlers that we have presented involves intentional planning of activities based on the child's interests and on goals for his or her development, we note that there are some proponents of a "hands-off approach" in which the infant or toddler simply pursues his or her interests within a rich environment and supportive relationships (e.g., Resources for Infant Educators, 2007). Given that gaps in school readiness skills like early language development emerge well before school entry, it is our sense that intentionally setting goals to further an infant's or toddler's learning is important, *providing* that the goals take into account and build on observations of the child's own interests and motivation.



The successful implementation of a curriculum rests on the educator's deep knowledge of infant/toddler assessment and development. Knowledge of trajectories of development as well as underlying processes and mechanisms for supporting development are necessary. The need to individualize for infants and toddlers requires the educator to have observation and assessment skills to monitor the individual child's interests and abilities and thoughtfully plan activities and environments that meet the child where he or she is, while supporting continued growth and learning along a developmental continuum such as those outlined in the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework and state ELGs.

In this age group it is imperative to establish strong relationships not only between the early educator and infant/toddler, but also between the early educator and parents. This is best done based on regular communication about daily routines and needs and about longer-term goals for child development. Consistency in routines and goals across settings is especially important for this age group. If parents provide input into and agree with the goals that are articulated for their child, and if they understand how the environments and activities in the early care and education setting support those goals, they can extend this work in the home. Continuity between home and early care and education setting builds upon and facilitates the relationship between parents and educators, can help parents feel comfortable leaving children in the setting, and, ultimately, can be beneficial for child outcomes.

While we stress the importance of individualization and the foundational role of the sustained and secure relationship of the child with the educator, as children progress from birth through age three, it is also an important goal that the "child shows interest in, interacts with, and develops personal relationships with other children" (Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, p. 24). As interest and capacity for peer interaction emerges and grows, educators will also begin balancing individual goal-setting with the introduction of goals for the group of young children. For example, in the domain of language and communication, early in

the period from birth to age three a primary focus is on sharing joint attention with an adult (for example, with an adult naming the objects a child is showing interest in). But when a child is closer to age three, the educator might engage all of the children in a group in singing a song or reciting a rhyme together (Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, p. 36).

Measuring the Implementation of Curricula for Infants and Toddlers

The distinction between the **what** and the **how** of infant/toddler curricula is extremely helpful to keep in mind when considering how best to confirm that a curriculum is actually being implemented. It is far easier to simply request confirmation of the **what**: that a particular curriculum, perhaps meeting specified criteria, has been selected and that the materials called for by that curriculum are available for use. It takes further steps to confirm that the **how** of an infant/toddler curriculum is actually occurring. An ongoing process of identifying goals in light of the interests and development of the child must be clear, and they should relate to a framework such as state ELGs. Additionally, recurrent assessments of the progress of the child in light of the identified individualized goals should take place. It is also more demanding to confirm that the implementation of an infant/toddler curriculum is occurring within the context of supportive and sustained relationships with educators and the child's families—another key aspect of the **how**.

The concern that implementation of curricula is primarily being confirmed through documentation of the **what** extends beyond the focus on the infant/toddler period. For example, while it is exciting that more QRISs have recently added a focus on curricula to their quality indicators, there is concern that "most QRIS indicators and their associated verification processes are related to the *tool* itself, not the process of implementing high-quality curriculum and assessment practices" (Daily, Hegseth & Michael, 2015). According to Daily and colleagues, QRIS indicators related to the use of a curriculum most often include

naming the curriculum and providing documentation that it comes from a list of curricula that have been approved in some way (with criteria for approval sometimes including alignment of the curriculum with state ELGs or being research-based). These researchers note that only occasionally does QRIS require documentation of ongoing child assessment and a planning process that takes child assessments into account.

Current Examples of Verification Processes

Fortunately, excellent examples of approaches exist to confirm that the **how** is also occurring in implementing an infant/toddler curriculum. These are summarized in appendix table 4.

Head Start

For example, the Head Start Monitoring Protocol (Administration for Children and Families, 2016), which encompasses Early Head Start as well as Head Start, calls not just for documenting that an appropriate curriculum has been selected, but that it is being implemented through a process that involves ongoing assessment of children, specification of learning goals, and progress tracking toward measurable objectives. In addition to targeted questions aimed at confirming with staff that a curriculum is being used in combination with an assessment and planning process, the monitoring protocol calls for direct observation that an appropriate curriculum is being implemented through such a process.

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

Another important example of an approach that focuses on both the **what** and the **how** of infant/toddler curriculum implementation is the set of criteria for assessing programs for NAEYC accreditation (2015). The review for accreditation in programs that include infant/toddler settings calls for written documentation as well

as observation of both the **how** and the **what**. As noted earlier, these criteria also include reference to the **why**. For example:

- ▶ Regarding the **how**, the reviewers look for a process involving individual child assessments that are used in planning for the child's learning experiences in order to meet the curriculum goals. Both written evidence—lesson plans, for example—and direct observation are used to confirm that the curriculum guides the development of a daily schedule that is both predictable, flexible, and responsive to the individual needs of children.
- ▶ Regarding the **what** and **why**, reviewers confirm that the program has a written statement of philosophy and has selected a curriculum framework that is consistent with the philosophy. Furthermore, this curriculum framework is the basis for planning children's experiences. Direct observation and review of classroom portfolios confirm that materials and equipment are used to implement the curriculum in a way that reflects the diversity of the children and families, and that it is safe while also encouraging exploration, experimentation, and discovery.



In this way, NAEYC accreditation review focuses on the presence of a curriculum that meets specific criteria and the presence of equipment and materials that are both safe and appropriate for the curriculum (key aspects of the *what*), and on the implementation of a planning process that uses child assessments to plan for specific curriculum goals (key aspects of the *how*).

Quality Rating and Improvement Systems

Other interesting efforts are underway to assure a focus on both *how* and *what* when assessing curriculum implementation. For example, as part of its QRIS, New Mexico has developed a process for the ongoing documentation of the cycle of child assessment and goal setting for individual children within the context of state ELG. This process is used in work with infants and toddlers as well as with older preschool-age children. A study (described by Daily and colleagues, 2015) is evaluating how this documentation takes place and the extent to which it is supporting young children's development. However, this study focuses specifically on older preschool-age children. While the overall New Mexico approach takes important steps to assure a focus on not just the *what* but also the *how* in the implementation of curricula within QRIS, it would be valuable to extend the research on this approach to curriculum implementation in the infant/toddler age range.

Relationship Context

While we have important precedents to build on and exciting recent work focusing on documenting the *how* as well as the *what* of curriculum implementation, one facet that needs further articulation and emphasis is a focus on implementation within the context of supportive and sustained relationships with educators and the child's family. We have noted the particular importance of such relationships in providing the foundation for infant and toddler learning and development. In order to confirm that curriculum implementation is occurring within the context of such relationships for infants and toddlers, we feel that both written documentation of a staffing plan that focuses on caregiving continuity and direct observation



of responsiveness in interactions would be needed. Here too there is recent work that could be built upon, with the extension of observational measures such as the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) to the infant/toddler age range (Hamre 2014; LaParo, Hamre, Pianta, 2012), and the development of a new measure, the Quality of Caregiver-Child Interactions for Infants and Toddlers (Q-CCIIT Atkins-Burnett et. al., 2015), that focuses heavily on the interactions that support children's development.

To summarize, while we have important precedents for how to confirm implementation of curricula for infants and toddlers encompassing both the *what* and the *how* aspects, there is a tendency to see much more widespread documentation of the *what* than the *how*—particularly through the naming of a selected curriculum that meets specified criteria. The following steps forward are needed:

- ▶ ascertain the actual use of appropriate materials;
- ▶ determine the use of a recurrent cycle of assessment, documentation, and planning in light of infant/toddler interests and development; and
- ▶ use of planned activities in the context of supportive and sustained relationships.

The strongest exemplars for confirming the implementation of curricula encompass a combination of interview or document review with direct observation. This combined approach seems vital to go beyond the naming of a selected curriculum in confirming implementation.

Implications

This brief emerged out of questions from the infant/toddler field about the new requirements by states and other funders for the use of infant/toddler curricula. This is a first attempt to begin a discussion about the meaning of the term curriculum when applied to early education and care programs serving families with infants and toddlers. We provide a conceptual framework for the definition of the term *curriculum* and ways to approach the verification of curriculum use. Below we discuss implications for policy makers who require and verify the use of infant/toddler curricula. We also identify areas where additional knowledge needs to be developed through research. There are important implications of this conceptualization of curriculum for professional development and for practice, which fall outside the scope of this brief. We will look toward colleagues in the infant/toddler field who initiated this discussion to follow-up on these important next steps—especially with a separate discussion of professional development related to the appropriate use of curricula for infants and toddlers.

Implications For Policy

Our review highlights what states and other stakeholder entities should emphasize when using or verifying the use of curricula for infants and toddlers. Such curricula:

- ▶ Must address both the **what** and the **how** of working with infants and toddlers: planning for an individual child's learning through goal setting and activities, but doing so in the context of secure relationships with adults and stimulating but safe environments.
- ▶ Should be based on following the interests and abilities of the child: they are not a prescribed, invariant, or scripted series of adult-initiated and -directed activities or lesson plans. Infant/toddler curricula involve the planning of environments and experiences that are responsive to the abilities and interests of the individual child.
- ▶ Are relationship-based: learning happens within the context of trusting relationships/secure attachments and responsive interactions. The focus on relationships extends beyond the classroom to include parents and families.
- ▶ Include the process of assessment/documentation, planning, and implementation.

Each of these four key components of infant/toddler curricula continue to be important into the later preschool years. But as we have noted, with increasing age, young children become increasingly interested in interacting with peers and increasingly aware of and able to adhere to external expectations for group behavior and learning. Thus, the focus on individual learning is increasingly balanced with goals for peer interaction and for positive functioning within a group. While assessing the individual child's motivation and interests, charting the individual child's progress and setting individualized goals for learning within the context of sustained relationships of children with both educators and parents all continue to be of great importance as children approach school entry, their relative importance in the earliest years is greater. Similarly, while observation of each child's progress continues to be central later in the preschool



period for goal setting, the emphasis placed on ongoing observation relative to other forms of assessment (such as standardized assessment) can shift as the range of assessment tools appropriate for older children expands. The key features of curricula for infants and toddlers are not unique to this developmental period, but their relative importance is.

Implications for Research

In order to inform policy makers, research is needed to study the effectiveness of the curricula that are currently most widely used. The curricula currently being used in infant/toddler settings are evidence-derived, that is, based on what is known from research about the development of young children. However, the curricula are generally not *evidence-based*: their effectiveness in improving child outcomes has not been evaluated.

Just as important, research is needed to understand the supports and teacher competencies needed to successfully implement a curriculum. We have noted above the need to extend new research approaches for verifying curriculum implementation to the infant/toddler period. However, research is needed not just about whether a curriculum is being implemented, but to identify the most important features of infant/toddler curricula and the aspects of implementation that are most critical to supporting development. Finally, studies are needed to examine which combination of features, drawing upon both the **what** and the **how** (safe and engaging environments; individualized planning for activities to extend learning; implementation of planned activities in the context of secure and responsive relationships) are most beneficial to infant/toddler development.



Appendix

Table 1: What Definitions and Descriptions Are Provided Focusing Specifically on Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers?

SOURCE	DEFINITION OR DISCUSSION OF KEY ELEMENTS
Definitions and descriptions of infant/toddler curricula provided in published resources for programs	
<p>Head Start Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center. Early Head Start, Curriculum. Retrieved from https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs/resources/ECLKC_Bookstore/PDFs/TA6%5B1%5D.pdf</p>	<p>“Infants and toddlers learn through play, exploration, and interaction with objects and people in the context of meaningful relationships with trusted adults....The parents and the EHS staff collaborative to develop learning goals, identify the experiences they want children to have in the program, and do what is necessary to create these learning opportunities. The ongoing developmental assessment of children provides the information that is used to individualize the curriculum by identifying a child’s unique skills, interests, resources, needs, and progress.”</p>
<p>Friedman, S., & Soltero, M. (July 2006). Following a child’s lead: Emergent curriculum for infants and toddlers. <i>Beyond the Journal—Young Children on the Web</i>. Retrieved from http://www.naeyc.org/files/yc/file/200607/Friedman706BTJ.pdf</p> <p>Lally, J.R., & P. Mangione. 2006. The Uniqueness of Infancy Demands a Responsive Approach to Care. <i>Young Children</i> 61 (4): 14–20.</p>	<p>Paper builds on work of Lally and Mangione (2006) indicating that “...responsive teachers allow each child’s interests and motivations to emerge as a focus of the curriculum. This responsiveness is particularly important with children under the age of two because they are developing their sense of self as they learn about the world, holistically and at their own pace.”</p> <p>Article focuses on examples from teachers. Two of a larger set of examples from teachers are briefly summarized here:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child pushing friends down and knocking materials off shelf. Met with parents and learned child liked to see things fall. Created a structure for dropping and rolling things down. Child did this repeatedly over 2 days; then stopped knocking materials and pushing friends. 2. Interest of children in snails outside led to creation of boxes for bugs, snails and worms, reading book about snails, parent visit to talk about salamander, creation of aquarium.
<p>Lally, J. R. (2000). Infants have their own curriculum: A responsive approach to curriculum planning for infants and toddlers. <i>Head Start Bulletin</i>, 67, 6-18. Retrieved from https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/pd/docs/finalcurriculum.pdf</p>	<p>A problem in infant/toddler programming is extreme beliefs about curricula: either a view that specific attention to learning is inappropriate (infants need safety and TLC alone), or that in order to develop cognitively infants must be stimulated intellectually by adult-developed and directed activities that are carefully planned ahead of time and programmed into the day. Both of these are based on lack of understanding of infant/toddler development.</p> <p>“In high-quality infant-toddler programs, the interests of the child and the belief that each child has a curriculum are what drive practice. It is understood that very young children need to play a significant role in selecting their learning experiences, materials, and content. Curriculum plans, therefore, do not focus on games, tasks, or activities, but on how to best create a social, emotional, and intellectual climate that supports child-initiated and child-pursued learning and the building and sustaining of positive relationships among adults and children...”</p> <p>“Appropriately developed plans are strategies to broaden the caregiver’s understanding of, and deepen their relationship with, each child and family. Good planning should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ reflect activities that orient the caregiver to the role of facilitator of learning rather than the role of “director” of learning; ▶ assist the caregiver in reading the cues of each child; and prepare the teacher or home visitor to communicate effectively with other adults in the child’s life. ▶ Another essential component of planning is attention to a responsive learning environment and specific attention to how environments should be changed. The planning of learning environments is more important to infant-toddler development than specific lessons or specific activities. The environment must be seen as part of the curriculum, creating interest and encouraging and supporting exploration. Research has shown that much of how infants and toddlers learn best comes not from specific adult-directed lessons but from teachers knowing how to maximize opportunities for each child to use natural learning inclinations.” <p>“A general point of caution: Do not select a curriculum or planning format that is simply a prescribed sequence of adult-initiated and -directed activities that leaves the child out of the process of selecting what is focused on and pursued. Both the child and the caregiver should play a role in the selection process, with the child initiating the activity at times and the caregiver at other times.”</p>

SOURCE

DEFINITION OR DISCUSSION OF KEY ELEMENTS

<p>Lally, J.R. (2009). The science and psychology of infant toddler care. <i>Zero to Three</i>, 30(2), 47–53. Retrieved from http://silversprings.njuhsd.com/documents/young%20parents/infant%20toddler%20care/lally_30-21.pdf</p>	<p>“The most critical curriculum components are no longer seen as lessons and lesson plans but rather the planning of settings and experiences that allow learning to take place. With this approach, the planning of learning environments and the specific program policies that help create a climate for learning—small groups, continuity of care, and the like—are more important than the planning of specific lessons or specific activities. Reflective curriculum planning focuses on finding strategies to help caregivers search for, support, and keep alive children’s internal motivation to learn, and their spontaneous explorations of people and things. Reflective practice begins with the study of the specific children in care. Records of each child’s interests and skills are kept so as to give guidance to planning. Adaptation and change are seen as a critical part of the planning process. Once an interaction with a child or small group of children begins, a teacher stays ready to adapt plans and actions to meet the momentary needs and interests of each child. Good plans always include a number of alternative strategies and approaches. Planning is also done to explore ways to help teachers (a) better get ‘in tune’ with each infant they care for, (b) learn from the infant what he needs, thinks, and feels, and (c) find ways to deepen their relationships with the children.”</p> <p>“Most babies, except for those born with constitutional limitations, are genetically wired to seek out the skills and relationships that will help them survive and prosper in their early months and years. For teachers to assign their own learning agenda to the infants is inappropriate.”</p>
<p>Zero to Three. (2010). Infant/toddler curriculum and individualization. Retrieved from https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/74-infant-and-toddler-curriculum-and-individualization</p> <p>Frede, E., & Ackerman, D. J. (2007, March). Preschool curriculum decision-making: Dimensions to consider (Policy Brief Issue 12). Retrieved from National Institute for Early Education Research Web site November 15, 2007: http://nieer.org/resources/policybriefs/12.pdf</p>	<p>“According to Frede and Ackerman (2007): ‘At its simplest, curriculum is defined as what to teach and how to teach it’... For most educators this concept is self-evident, especially in discussions of school-aged or even preschool children. When the teacher-caregiver is working with infants or toddlers, however, the idea of curriculum becomes more difficult to conceptualize.”</p> <p>“The concept of curriculum begins to gain clarity if it is reframed as what infants and toddlers experience, and what and how they learn from those experiences. This simple shift in language, from teach to experience...also implies a different role for the adult who implements curriculum for the very youngest children. The adult’s role is not to teach, but to observe and reflect on what infants/toddlers are experiencing and how they learn—and then to support the process through interactions, their relationship with the child, and provision of experiences in an environment that contributes to the child’s success.”</p> <p>A section on “Evaluating Curriculum” notes these considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Does the curriculum-- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Focus on the relationship between child and caregiver? ■ Promote the establishment of a primary caregiving relationship? ■ Address development across domains, acknowledging their integration in infant/toddler development? ■ Address the stages of infancy (e.g., young, mobile, toddler)? ■ Promote individualization, including consideration of culture, development, and needs, including children with special needs? ■ Promote sense of safety, security, and belonging? ■ Focus on process over content? ■ Emphasize engagement with the environment over planned activities? ■ Include family in planning? ■ Derive from theory and research? ■ Complement appropriate I/T guidelines?

SOURCE

DEFINITION OR DISCUSSION OF KEY ELEMENTS

<p>Ramey, C. T., Sparling, J. J., & Ramey, S. L. (2012). <i>Abecedarian: The ideas, the approach, and the findings</i>. Los Altos: Sociometrics Corporation. Retrieved from http://fpg.unc.edu/node/5101</p>	<p>“...a comprehensive curriculum framework usually presents the theory and research behind early childhood education...It will usually assist teachers in knowing what to teach and when. It will help them generate their own high-quality learning experiences for young children. Most curricula give suggestions on setting up and managing classroom interest areas, the outdoors, and appropriate materials. For children under age 3, a comprehensive curriculum will describe how to integrate learning into the routines of the day...Finally, we think a curriculum has to include ways of measuring a child’s progress at frequent intervals, using standardized assessments and teacher observations... For teachers, the observational information the program collects about each child serves as solid basis to make choices about future instruction and program planning.”</p> <p>“In the Abecedarian Approach, each child experiences at least two LearningGames® or Partners for Learning episodes per day, and often many more. The games include many items that are familiar to parents and teachers. They are based on the concepts of Vygotsky and Piaget and can be thought of as short, discrete learning episodes involving adult-child interaction. There are three major types of games:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Games that are seamlessly integrated into the routines of caregiving. ▶ Games in which the adult joins in and enriches the child’s play activities. ▶ Games in which the adult initiates an interaction, inviting the child to join in as a partner. <p>These are basic principles of learning games:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Simple but deep ▶ Focused on adult-child interaction (mainly 1-on-1 interactions and some small group experiences) ▶ Made up of individual items (pages or cards) that both teachers and parents can use in a variety of settings ▶ Flexible—can be used in different types of programs (including day care, home visiting, centers, and school classrooms).”
<p>Gerber, M., & A. Johnson. 1998. <i>Your self-confident baby: How to encourage your child’s natural abilities from the very start</i>. New York: John Wiley.</p> <p>Gerber, M. (2007). <i>Resources for Infant Educators: The RIE Approach</i>. Published by RIE.</p> <p>Gerber, M. (2013), <i>The RIE Manual for Parents and Professionals</i>, expanded edition. Published by RIE</p> <p>Resources for Infant Educators®. Website. Retrieved from https://www.rie.org</p> <p><i>Note: RIE offers courses for parents and teachers. Magda Gerber was the founding director and provided the principles for the RIE philosophy.</i></p>	<p>“Non-intervention, or non-interruption of play helps children develop competence in problem-solving skills” (Gerber & Johnson, 1998, p. 17).</p> <p>“All healthy, normal infants do what they can do when they are ready. They should not be expected to do what they are not ready to do” (Gerber as quoted in Jones, 2005 Page 76).</p> <p>“An infant always learns. The less we interfere with the natural process of learning, the more we can observe how much children learn all the time” (RIE, 2007, page 1).</p> <p>“The Infant does not need direct teaching or help to achieve natural stages of gross motor and sensory motor development. Infants learn best when they are allowed to freely move and explore in an environment which is physically safe, cognitively challenging, and emotionally nurturing. (Gerber, 2013 page 24)</p>

SOURCE

Wolverton, E. D. (March 2000). The curriculum: A written plan for action. *Head Start® Bulletin*, 67, 4–5. Retrieved from <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/pd/docs/finalcurriculum.pdf>

DEFINITION OR DISCUSSION OF KEY ELEMENTS

“Curriculum in Early Head Start and Head Start is a written document that serves as a road map for implementing a quality child development and education program...There are two basic approaches programs use to determine the curriculum. Staff and parents may base a curriculum on an already-developed model and adapt or “tailor” it for the group of children being served. Or staff and parents may develop a local curriculum. Either way, the curriculum must be in keeping with all requirements of the Head Start Program Performance Standards and based on sound child development principles.

The Standards first require that when serving infants, toddlers, or preschoolers, including children with disabilities, the curriculum must include: (1) The goals for children’s development and learning—what do we want children to achieve this year?; (2) The experiences through which they will achieve these goals—what learning experiences will we offer them?; (3) The roles of staff and parents in helping children achieve these goals—what are our individual and shared responsibilities as a team to help children achieve the goals?; and (4) The materials needed to support the implementation of the curriculum—what furniture, equipment, and supplies are appropriate for the ages and stages of children’s development?

‘Goals’ describe what competencies we want children to develop. While each child is unique, there are some overarching goals for children in Head Start. One such overarching goal is to increase the child’s everyday effectiveness in dealing with both his or her present environment and later responsibilities in school and life. Examples of more specific goals are:

- ▶ Develop positive and nurturing relationships with adults and peers
- ▶ Develop a sense of trust and security
- ▶ Identify and solve problems
- ▶ Express thoughts and feelings
- ▶ Think critically
- ▶ Increase self-confidence
- ▶ Respect the feelings and rights of others
- ▶ Use creativity and imagination
- ▶ Work independently and with others
- ▶ Develop literacy, numeracy, reasoning, problem solving, and decision-making skills that form a foundation for school readiness

For every goal identified, developmentally appropriate experiences are selected from the program curriculum, planned, and intentionally presented to children. For example, one goal for children is to gain increasing competence in the area of numeracy. Children need active, hands-on experiences to develop age-appropriate mathematical understanding. Teachers take advantage of everyday materials, daily routines, and child interests to foster emergent mathematical thinking within the curriculum. Staff members create environments and select materials that support mathematical thinking, and they engage children in meaningful conversations about the work they are doing. Experiences that support learning include:

- ▶ Classification: Shells, juice cans, and Legos are great for sorting and classifying by size, color, shape, or use, and for making patterns or counting.
- ▶ Patterning: Stringing beads in a variety of colors, shapes, and sizes, or playing dominoes and matching the number of dots.
- ▶ One-to-one correspondence: Distributing napkins, plates, and cups—putting one in front of each chair at a table.
- ▶ Ordering and sequencing: The process of ordering relationships: more/less; bigger/smaller; big/bigger/biggest; small/smaller/smallest.
- ▶ Providing books to children, such as Anno’s Counting Book, and reading other stories about number concepts.”

SOURCE

DEFINITION OR DISCUSSION OF KEY ELEMENTS

Definitions and descriptions of infant and toddler curricula provided in state documents	
<p>California Department of Education. (2012). <i>California infant/toddler curriculum framework</i>. Sacramento: California Department of Education. Retrieved from http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/Cd/re/documents/itcurriculumframework.pdf</p>	<p>“The infant/toddler curriculum framework rests on the following principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The family is at the core of a young child’s learning and development. ▶ Infant/toddler learning and development is grounded in relationships. ▶ Emotions drive early learning and development. ▶ Responsiveness to children’s self-initiated exploration fosters learning. ▶ Individualized teaching and care benefits all children. ▶ Responsiveness to culture and language supports children’s learning. ▶ Intentional teaching and care enriches children’s learning experiences. ▶ Time for reflection and planning enhances teaching and care.” <p>“The following four aspects of infant/toddler development call for a special approach to planning and supporting their learning:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Infants follow their own learning agenda. 2. Infants learn holistically. 3. Infants experience major developmental transitions in their first three years. 4. Infants are in the process of developing their first sense of self.” <p>“Planning infant and toddler curriculum requires that teachers understand and respect how infants and toddlers learn... Infants and toddlers have an inborn drive to seek information and experience. When they play, they often initiate learning, actively building skills, concepts, and connections between ideas. The development of thoughts into new concepts and actions, feelings into a sense of identity, and words and phrases into representations of thoughts, ideas, and feelings often occurs simultaneously. As infants actively engage in such holistic learning, the teacher’s role is to provide possibilities for them to encounter, explore, and investigate.”</p> <p>“In planning curriculum for the birth-to-age-three period, teachers must be aware of what infants and toddlers do in play, both when they act on objects and when they interact with adults and peers. In essence, play is the ‘work’ of infants and toddlers. When teachers are mindful of the ways in which each infant experiences a moment of play, that child’s learning agenda reveals itself. In response, teachers are able to plan curriculum that aligns with the infant’s inborn learning agenda. In developing curriculum for infants and toddlers, teachers plan for three learning contexts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The play environment as curriculum. Curriculum plans include the selection of play materials that add interest and complexity to distinct areas where infants and toddlers freely play. A thoughtful selection of materials invites infants and toddlers to explore experiences that challenge their emerging skills, concepts, and ideas. 2. Interactions and conversations as curriculum. Curriculum plans address ways of being with infants and toddlers during interaction, including nonverbal interaction, conversations, cooperation, conflicts, and times when infants express strong feelings such as delight, sadness, anger, or frustration. 3. Caregiving routines as curriculum. Curriculum plans include care routines, particularly mealtimes, diaper changes, and naptimes. Intentional teaching invites infants and toddlers to participate in care routines that deepen their relationship experiences and open up possibilities for building emerging skills and concepts.”

SOURCE

Children's Medical Services, Florida Department of Health. Website. Retrieved from <http://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/childrens-health/childrens-medical-services/index.html>

DEFINITION OR DISCUSSION OF KEY ELEMENTS

"Curriculum for infants and toddlers transcends a school-based definition of curriculum to teach specific subjects to include everyday routines, activities, and places that infants/toddlers participate in, with adults, siblings, and other children. While some activities are planned based on best practices for infants and toddlers, the planning for activities remains 'a place to begin' and is flexible and responsive to each infant/toddler's personality, development, and family culture.

Curriculum development must start with: observation of the child behaviors, family routines, and child care center routines as applicable. Given this, planning should be done with information that considers the most child-initiated learning possible. Activities should be dynamic interactive experiences built on young children's interests, curiosity, and motives as well as the families' goals and concerns. Curriculum must address social and emotional, physical and motor, communication/ language, and cognitive areas of development. Play is the infant/toddler's inherent medium for learning and by supporting the child's play patterns, the child will develop, learn, and adapt in all of those developmental areas."



Table 2: What Definitions and Descriptions Are Provided for Curricula in Early Childhood in General and for the Relationship of Curriculum and Pedagogy?

SOURCE	DEFINITION OR DISCUSSION OF KEY ELEMENTS
General Definitions and Descriptions of Curricula and Pedagogy Provided in Published Resources for Programs	
Bredenkamp, S. (2011). <i>Effective practices in early childhood education</i> . New York: Pearson Education.	Curriculum is a “written plan that describes the goals for children’s learning and development, and the learning experiences, materials, and teaching strategies that are used to help children achieve these goals. The goals include knowledge, skills, and dispositions that we want children to achieve.”
Head Start Program Performance Standards § 1304.3 (5) https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs/docs/hspss-appendix.pdf	<p>“Curriculum means a written plan that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The goals for children’s development and learning; (ii) The experiences through which they will achieve these goals; (iii) What staff and parents do to help children achieve these goals; and (iv) The materials needed to support the implementation of the curriculum. <p>The curriculum is consistent with the Head Start Program Performance Standards and is based on sound child development principles about how children grow and learn. “</p>
Horn, D.M., Goble, C.B. & Branscomb (2012). Infant toddler curriculum. In N. File, J.J. Mueller & D.B. Wisneski (Eds.), <i>Curriculum in early childhood education: Re-examined, rediscovered, renewed</i> (pp. 105- 110). New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. Note: Creative Curriculum has evolved. The 2015 version now includes more emphasis on teaching, and includes activity cards and books.	Discussion of Creative Curriculum (Dombro, Colker & Dodge, 1999) by Horn and colleagues: “The teacher’s role is to create a warm inviting environment that ensures that children are safe, and to implement practices that promote children’s health and learning (including individualizing, planning, and evaluating and guiding behavior).”
Early Childhood Curriculum, Assessment and Program Evaluation. <i>NAEYC Position Statement</i> (November 2003). Available here.	<p>“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...Definitions and issues about the sources and purposes of curriculum have been debated for many years...Whatever the definition, good, well-implemented early childhood curriculum provides developmentally appropriate support and cognitive challenges and therefore is likely to lead to positive outcomes...”</p> <p>Indicators of effectiveness include: children are active and engaged; goals are clear and shared by all; curriculum is evidence-based; valued content is learned through investigation, play, and focused, intentional teaching; curriculum builds on prior learning and experiences; curriculum is comprehensive; professional standards validate the curriculum’s subject matter content; the curriculum is likely to benefit children.</p>
National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2009). <i>Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age 8</i> . Position statement. Retrieved from https://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/position%20statement%20Web.pdf	<p>“The curriculum consists of the knowledge, skills, abilities, and understandings children are to acquire and the plans for the learning experiences through which those gains will occur. Implementing a curriculum always yields outcomes of some kind—but which outcomes those are and how a program achieves them are critical. In developmentally appropriate practice, the curriculum helps young children achieve goals that are developmentally and educationally significant. The curriculum does this through learning experiences (including play, small group, large group, interest centers, and routines) that reflect what is known about young children in general and about these children in particular, as well as about the sequences in which children acquire specific concepts, skills, and abilities, building on prior experiences. Because children learn more in programs where there is a well planned and implemented curriculum, it is important for every school and early childhood program to have its curriculum in written form. Teachers use the curriculum and their knowledge of children’s interests in planning relevant, engaging learning experiences; and they keep the curriculum in mind in their interactions with children throughout the day. In this way they ensure that children’s learning experiences—in both adult-guided and child-guided contexts—are consistent with the program’s goals for children and connected within an organized framework. At the same time, developmentally appropriate practice means teachers have flexibility—and the expertise to exercise that flexibility effectively—in how they design and carry out curricular experiences in their classrooms.”</p>

SOURCE

DEFINITION OR DISCUSSION OF KEY ELEMENTS

<p>Rockel, J. (2009). A pedagogy of care: Moving beyond the margins of managing work and minding babies. <i>Australian Journal of Early Childhood</i>, 34(3), 1–8. Retrieved from https://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/handle/2292/8460</p> <p>[Note: provides an international perspective]</p>	<p>“When a curriculum is in place, it follows that pedagogy is essential for its interpretation and implementation. Pedagogy can be defined as providing a theoretical and philosophical basis to practice.”</p>
<p>The State of South Australia, Department of Education and Children’s Services. (2005). <i>We can make a difference: Learning and developing in childcare</i>. Hindmarsh, South Australia: DECS Publishing.</p>	<p>“Definitions of pedagogy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The function, work, and art of educators ▶ The science and art of putting together learning processes and teaching actions ▶ How you put into practice your values and beliefs about care and education within your setting/environment.”
<p>State resources that provide general definitions and descriptions of curriculum and pedagogy</p>	
<p>Pennsylvania document. Using curriculum and assessment to strengthen classroom practice. https://www.pakeys.org/docs/PKC%20Curriculum%20Doc.pdf</p>	<p>“Curriculum is a description of the content or information that is going to be taught and the methods that are going to be used to teach that content. This content information is based on scientifically-researched information and reflects age, culture, and linguistically appropriate skills and developmental stages of the children in your program. While books, guides, and the Learning Standards are powerful resources to help practitioners plan the content for children, curriculum decisions come from three sources: the children themselves, their families, and the teachers or adults with whom they interact.”</p> <p>“Other important components of curriculum include: Environment: Programs must be careful to design a classroom environment that is stimulating, yet warm and welcoming—a positive setting that will set the stage for successful learning experiences. Environments should use materials and equipment that are in good repair, are culturally, linguistically and age appropriate, and that reflect opportunities for active engagement (or hands-on learning). The Environmental Rating Scales (ERS) and national accreditation standards (such as NAEYC and National AfterSchool Association) offer good insight into the key elements for high quality classroom environments. Daily Schedule: Children’s everyday routines offer rich opportunities for learning. Routine activities such as hand washing and meals provide learning experiences that can promote a variety of skills. Other parts of a daily schedule should include opportunities for child-initiated exploration and engagement with materials and equipment that capitalize on children’s interests and needs. Schedules should offer children a well-balanced complement of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ active and quiet times, ▶ teacher and child-directed experiences ▶ indoor and outdoor activities ▶ individual, small group and large group experiences.” <p>“Appropriate curriculum promotes a balance between planned experiences that help children progress toward defined goals, the experiences that emerge from children’s interests, and unexpected events that are ‘incorporated into the program in ways that comply with standards and curriculum goals.’”</p>

Table 3: What Sources Differentiate Between Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers and Older Preschoolers?

SOURCE	DIFFERENTIATION
Published resources for programs that differentiate curricula by child age	
<p>National Association for the Education of Young Children and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education. (November 2003). Early childhood curriculum, assessment and program evaluation. Joint position statement. Retrieved from https://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/pscape.pdf</p>	<p>“...what should children learn through this curriculum? The answer is influenced by children’s ages and contexts. For example, for babies and toddlers, the curriculum’s heart is relationships and informal, language-rich sensory interactions. For second graders, relationships continue to be important as a foundation for building competencies such as reading fluency and comprehension. And for young children of all ages, the curriculum needs to build on and respond to their home languages and cultures.”</p> <p>“Is there such a thing as a curriculum for babies and toddlers? Indeed there is, but as the developmental chart about curriculum suggests, curriculum for babies and toddlers looks very different from curriculum for preschoolers or first grade children. High quality infant/toddler programs have clear goals, and they base their curriculum on knowledge of very early development. Thus, a curriculum for children in the first years of life is focused on relationships, communicative competencies, and exploration of the physical world, each of which is embedded in daily routines and experiences. High-quality infant/toddler curriculum intentionally develops language, focusing on and building on the home language; promotes security and social competence; and encourages understanding of essential concepts about the world. This lays the foundation for mathematics, science, social studies, literacy, and creative expression without emphasizing disconnected learning experiences or formal lessons...”</p> <p>The Position Statement is clear that these features of infant/ toddler curricula are based on the conceptualization provided by Lally. The statement quotes Lally as follows:</p> <p><i>“In high quality infant/toddler programs, the interest of the child and the belief that each child has a curriculum are what drives practice” (Lally, 2000, p. 6).</i></p> <p>The statement notes that “the adult role is to discover the infant’s curriculum and support its implementation. The role of the consultant is to assist program directors and teacher/caregivers in understanding this concept.”</p>



CEUs for Teachers

SOURCE

Zero to Three. (2010). Infant/toddler curriculum and individualization. Retrieved December 21, 2016, from <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/74-infant-and-toddler-curriculum-and-individualization>

Bredenkamp, S., & Rosegrant, T. (Eds.). (1995). *Reaching potentials: Transforming early childhood curriculum and assessment* (Vol. 2). Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

DIFFERENTIATION

"In consulting with infant/toddler programs, the consultant should be able to articulate distinctions between infant/toddler and preschool curricula...These distinctions are directly linked to qualitative differences between the learning and development that occur in infancy and toddlerhood and learning and development during the preschool years."

- ▶ *Learning tools at different ages.* "Infants come into the world wired to communicate, relate, and learn. Nurtured by sensitive and knowledgeable caregivers, these capacities emerge into effective learning tools throughout infancy and toddlerhood. Preschoolers build on these tools, adding the benefits of more years of experience, established relationships...a sense of self, language that others readily understand, a framework for memory and concepts, and an emerging set of problem solving skills."
- ▶ *Emerging ability to self-regulate.* "Beginning with co-regulation with adult caregivers, infants begin to learn to self soothe. They go on in toddlerhood to begin to regulate responses to others (e.g., a peer who has taken a toy)."
- ▶ *Extent to which learning and development are integrated across domains.* "For infants and toddlers, there is no substantive separation of motor, cognitive, communication, or social/emotional development."

"For these reasons and others...it is critical that the development of infants and toddlers in out-of-home care is supported with an individualized, responsive curriculum that meets the unique needs of each child."

"Two definitions of curriculum created for preschool programs can be used to reflect on the distinctions between preschool and infant/toddler curricula:

- ▶ The Head Start Performance Standards...define curriculum as 'a written plan that includes (1) the goal for children's development and learning; (2) the experiences through which they will achieve these goals; (3) what staff and families do to help children achieve these goals; and (4) the materials needed to support the implementation of curriculum.'
- ▶ In *Reaching Potentials: Transforming Early Childhood Curriculum and Assessment* (vol. 2), Bredenkamp and Rosegrant (1995) define an early childhood curriculum as 'an organized framework that delineates the content that children are to learn, the processes through which children achieve the identified curricular goals, what teachers do to help children achieve these goals, and the context in which teaching and learning occur.'

Although these definitions offer a solid framework for understanding curriculum for preschool-aged children, they do not provide as tight a fit for working with infants and toddlers."

Key differences (summarized in Table 1):

- ▶ Focus is on the process of learning through relationships and responsive caregiving, rather than on content.
- ▶ The content is defined by the infant's focus and interests (though can be informed by Early Learning Guidelines), rather than defined by state pre-k standards and preparation for kindergarten entry, typically including a focus on academic subjects.
- ▶ Rather than preset goals involving specific content and skills, goals generally involve a framework for planning individualized experiences that will support each child's development
- ▶ Family involvement is critical for the development of an effective and individualized plan that will involve consistency in routines across setting, whereas in the preschool years family involvement is less critical, typically taking the form of parent advisory council participation in selection of curriculum
- ▶ Relationships are the context for curriculum implementation and learning, with responsive caregiving and the use of caregiving routines providing a framework for implementation, whereas in the preschool years, developmentally appropriate activities and play in the context of a mix of small and large group; teacher- and child-selected activities.
- ▶ The caregiver facilitates learning by observing and reading cues, providing responsive caregiving, and by assuring a supportive environment, whereas in the preschool years, the teacher uses a combination of observations of the children's development and guidance from standards to plan scheduled activities and environments.
- ▶ Environment provided for infants is a safe, healthy, and secure space with consistent routines that provide a context for much of learning, whereas in preschool settings, the environment involves larger group size and more formal structure but one that promotes exploration and engagement with learning centers and activities.

SOURCE**DIFFERENTIATION**

State documents that differentiate curricula by child age

California Department of Education. (2012). *California infant/toddler curriculum framework*. Sacramento: California Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/Cd/re/documents/itcurriculumframework.pdf>

"The following four aspects of infant/toddler development call for a special approach to planning and supporting their learning:

1. Infants follow their own learning agenda.
2. Infants learn holistically.
3. Infants experience major developmental transitions in their first three years.
4. Infants are in the process of developing their first sense of self."

"Typically, developing infants are internally driven to communicate with others, to move, to explore and manipulate objects, and to solve problems. Thus, for adults to introduce their own learning agenda to infants is inappropriate. For infants, there is no strong need for adults to present specific topics for mastery or to provide the motivation to learn. Rather, infants focus on the topics of greatest importance without prompting from adults. What infants need from adults are interactions and experiences that closely match the birth-to-age-three learning agenda."



Table 4: What Information Is Used to Confirm Implementation of Infant/Toddler Curricula?

DOCUMENTATION FOR CONFIRMING IMPLEMENTATION	DESCRIPTION
<p>Source: Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2016). <i>FY 2016 Office of Head Start Monitoring Protocol</i>. Retrieved from https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/grants/monitoring/on-site-review-protocols.html</p>	
<p>Teaching Staff Survey*</p>	<p>The Head Start Monitoring Protocol includes Head Start Key Indicator #24 in the area of Comprehensive Services and School Readiness:</p> <p>The program selects and implements a curriculum that is evidence based and is linked to ongoing assessment, with developmental and learning goals and measurable objectives.</p> <p>The Early Childhood Development (ECD) Coordinator Interview includes the following targeted questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ List the curricula the program uses for each program option and age group. ▶ Ask the ECD Coordinator to indicate whether each selected curriculum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Supports the evidence base for its selection by considering the program option and ages of the children served, as well as by addressing staff development and training ■ Is linked to ongoing assessment ■ Includes developmental and learning goals appropriate for the ages of the children and program option ■ Includes measurable objectives ▶ Ask the ECD Coordinator to describe how he or she determines whether staff are implementing the curriculum as designed.
<p>Source: Daily, S., Hegseth, D., & Michael, L. R. (July 16, 2015). <i>Measuring curriculum & assessment implementation in QRIS</i>. Paper presented at the QRIS National meeting, National Harbor, MD. Retrieved from http://qrisnetwork.org/sites/all/files/conference-session/resources/Session231PPTasPDF.pdf</p>	
<p>Classroom Portfolio*</p> <p>Daily, Hegseth & Michael (2015) note the following regarding practices in most QRIS for confirming implementation of a curriculum: “Most QRIS indicators and their associated verification processes are related to the <i>tool</i> itself, not the <i>process</i> of implementing high- quality curriculum and <i>assessment</i> practices.” They note that curriculum indicators in QRIS most often include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ “Required use of a specific curriculum ▶ Use of a curriculum from an approved list ▶ Use of a curriculum that demonstrates alignment with the state ELGs ▶ Curriculum approved by a review committee ▶ Written narrative describing curriculum practices ▶ Submission of documentation (i.e. lesson plans) ▶ Onsite assessment and/or support from a coach” <p>New Mexico’s Pre-K and QRIS use an approach focusing on the processes of curriculum implementation (see further details in next column).</p>	<p>New Mexico developed the Authentic Observation Documentation and Curriculum Planning Process (AODCP) for its PreK program (has been adapted for infant/toddler care):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Uses NM Early Learning Guidelines (ELGs) as basis for observation of child’s development and setting specific goals for growth. ▶ ELGs are in the areas of (1) listening, language, reading, and writing; (2) science; (3) counting, shapes, sorting, and measuring; (4) coordination, hygiene, health, and well-being; (5) art, music, and movement; (6) independence, problem-solving, thinking, and perseverance; (7) appropriate behavior, social skills, and being a part of a group. ▶ Child assessment documentation involves NM PreK portfolio collection form; uses Essential Indicator Quick Look Recording Sheet; Family/Teacher Summary Report; NM Early Learning Outcomes. ▶ Cycle of assessment and lesson planning ▶ Supported by professional development, including consultation and training <p>The process involves recurring cycles based on the ELGs involving: observing and documenting, reflecting, planning, implementing, and then returning to the initial steps of observing and documenting.</p>

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	<p>▶ The AODCP has been adapted for NM's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (FOCUS TQRIS), including infant/toddler care. TQRIS in NM includes:</p> <p>I. Foundations of Quality (Full Participation of Each Child, Health Promotion and Developmental Screenings, Professional Qualifications, and Ratios and Group Size), and</p> <p>II. Quality Practices that Support Children's Growth, Development and Learning (Intentional Teaching: Authentic Observation Documentation and Curriculum Planning Process; and Intentional Leadership: Continuous Quality Improvement).</p> <p>The AODCP Verification Process as used in FOCUS TQRIS includes the following elements focusing on curriculum:</p> <p>Curriculum sources of evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Lesson plans for the previous 3 months reviewed for evidence of how program educators are using multiple sources, such as assessments, ongoing child observations, and family input using FOCUS Guides for Lesson Planning Procedures. ▶ Weekly Lesson Plan forms reviewed to ensure they are complete and made available for families. ▶ Documentation of reflections for the previous 3 months ▶ Evidence of on-going weekly planning time <p>Note that a validation study of the implementation of AODCP is being conducted in its PreK classrooms. This study is asking to what extent PreK teachers implement the process with fidelity and quality, how the training, tools, and coaching are implemented to support the AODCP process, and whether there is a relationship to children's developmental gains over the pre-k year when the process is implemented with fidelity. Data collection on curriculum implementation fidelity includes child assessments; classroom observations; teacher survey on curriculum implementation practices; comparison of teacher ratings of implementation with master ratings; and classroom document review and analysis.</p>
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<p>Source: Lally, J. R. (2000). Infants have their own curriculum: A responsive approach to curriculum planning for infants and toddlers. <i>Head Start® Bulletin</i>, 67, 6–18. Retrieved from https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/pd/docs/finalcurriculum.pdf</p>	
<p>Classroom Portfolio*</p>	<p>“Responsive curriculum planning focuses on finding strategies to help infant-toddler teachers search for, support, and keep alive children’s internal motivation to learn, and their spontaneous explorations of people and things of interest and importance to them. This should begin with study of the specific children in care. Detailed records of each child’s interests and skills are kept to give guidance to the adults for the roles they will take in each child’s learning.”</p>
<p>Source: Mayoral, M. V. (2013). <i>Supporting babies through QRIS: Inclusion of infant toddler quality standards. Washington, DC: Zero to Three.</i> Retrieved from https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/190-supporting-babies-through-qris-inclusion-of-infant-and-toddler-quality-standards</p>	
<p>Classroom Portfolio*</p> <p>This document gives examples of indicators used in state QRIS that address recommendations #1–7 (described in column to right) for QRIS standards involving curricula that are responsive to infants and toddlers.</p> <p>The examples involve programs submitting documents showing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Selection of a curriculum specific to infants and toddlers ▶ Selection of a curriculum that is aligned with ELG for infants and toddlers in state ▶ Selection from a set of research-based curricula focusing on specific domains of development ▶ Teacher training on the curriculum 	<p>This document includes recommendations for how state QRIS could include quality standards specific to infants and toddlers. It also provides examples from state QRIS that have launched statewide systems.</p> <p>The document provides the following recommendations specific to quality ratings focusing on curricula for infants and toddlers:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Daily plans and curriculum reflect and/or are aligned with the IT-ELGs 2. Research-based curricula or learning approaches implemented are specific to infants and toddlers (e.g., Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers, & Twos; PITC; Montessori Birth to Three) 3. Curriculum is individualized to the routines and rhythms of infants and toddlers receiving care (e.g., Infant/toddler Curriculum and Individualization) 4. Implementation of curriculum for infants and toddlers focuses on building social-emotional and foundational relational skills with caregivers and among children (e.g., Evidence-Based Social-Emotional Curricula and Intervention Packages for Children 0-5 and Their Families) 5. Curriculum is designed to promote the full range of child development, including social and emotional development, language development and communication, cognitive development, and physical and motor development. 6. Curriculum for infants and toddlers helps develop social and emotional skills in children and reflects how they are intertwined with cognitive and executive functioning (e.g., curriculum content areas defined by NAEYC accreditation criteria) 7. Curriculum addresses dual language acquisition for infants and toddlers who are English language learners (e.g., Early Head Start Tip Sheet No. 42, “Supporting Infant & Toddler Language Development”)

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<p>National Association for the Education of Young Children. (April 2015). NAEYC early childhood program standards and accreditation criteria & guidance for assessment. Standard 2—Curriculum. Retrieved from http://www.naeyc.org/files/academy/file/AllCriteriaDocument.pdf</p>	
<p>The NAEYC Accreditation Criteria and Guidance for Assessment document calls upon multiple sources of documentation to provide support for the appropriate implementation of curriculum, including in the infant/toddler age range. Below are examples from Standard 2: Curriculum, Section 2.A: Curriculum: Essential Characteristics. The examples are selected to illustrate the use of different forms of documentation for the implementation of a curriculum in the infant/toddler age range. Many more examples are available in the full document.</p>	
<p>Standard 2: Curriculum</p> <p>2.A.: Curriculum: Essential Characteristics</p> <p>2.A.01 (Pertains to Infants (I), Toddlers (T), Preschool (P), Kindergarten (K)): PP</p> <p>2.A.04 (ITPK): FS, TS, PP. Evidence should demonstrate how the program collects information about family values, beliefs, experiences, and/or language (e.g., through questions on enrollment forms, family interviews, home visits), AND evidence should provide examples of how such information has been incorporated into curriculum (e.g., multi-language materials, curriculum units on grandparents, cultural traditions, adoption, or other topics reflecting the experiences and values of the families in care).</p> <p>2.A.07 (ITPK) O, CP</p>	<p>Standard 2: Curriculum</p> <p>2.A.: Curriculum: Essential Characteristics</p> <p>2.A.01: The program has a written statement of philosophy and uses one or more written curricula or curriculum frameworks consistent with its philosophy that addresses central aspects of child development.</p> <p>2.A.04: The curriculum can be implemented in a manner that reflects responsiveness to family home values, beliefs, experiences, and language</p> <p>2.A.07: The curriculum guides the development of a daily schedule that is predictable yet flexible and responsive to individual needs of the children. The schedule provides time and support for transitions, includes both indoor and outdoor experiences, and is responsive to a child's need to rest or be active.</p>
<p>Source: National Association for the Education of Young Children and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education. (November 2003). <i>Early childhood curriculum, assessment and program evaluation</i>. Joint position statement. Retrieved from https://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/pscape.pdf</p>	
<p>[Note: The NAEYC Position Statement articulates what is needed for implementation rather than how to confirm implementation. The information is useful in suggesting the key components that could be confirmed.]</p>	<p>"What's needed to implement a curriculum effectively? Extended professional development, often with coaching or mentoring, is a key to effective curriculum implementation...Well-qualified teachers who understand and support the curriculum goals and the methods are more likely to implement curriculum effectively. So-called scripted or teacher-proof curricula tend to be narrow, conceptually weak, or intellectually shallow. Another key to success is assessment. Ongoing assessment of children's progress in relation to the curriculum goals gives staff a sense of how their approach may need to be altered for the whole group or for individual children."</p>

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Source: Zero to Three. (2010). Infant/toddler curriculum and individualization. Retrieved December 21, 2016, from <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/74-infant-and-toddler-curriculum-and-individualization>

Classroom Portfolio*

"Unlike preschool curricula, which may have more prescribed topics and content, the learning that occurs in the first 3 years of life is less content-specific and more fundamental to all learning processes. Because babies self-select their object of attention an arena of practice, the planning and implementation of experiences that will support a child's agenda must be carried out through a process of close observation, documentation, reflection, and individualized planning. Therefore, rather than a curriculum that is designed for an age group or a classroom, infant/toddler curricula are documented in individual plans (the 'written plan' referred in the Head Start Performance Standard)."

To develop an Individualized Child Development Plan requires these activities (more in an ongoing cyclical process than sequential):

- ▶ *Daily observation of individual child's development.* Consultant can facilitate by asking about skills child has mastered (in communication, cognitive, motor development, social skills, emotional development/self regulation); what skills or activities appear to lead to frustration or challenge; what interactions, objects, or activities engage attention; how react to objects and others. Placing observations on a developmental continuum, like I/T Early Learning Guidelines, can help identify what experiences and interactions can build toward next.
- ▶ *Documentation.* Notes from ongoing observation collected into a portfolio to become a record of child's developmental progress. Should contain representative examples of child's work and progress. All entries should be dated and filed chronologically. Can include also photos and work samples.
- ▶ *Reflection.* Need to decipher the actions and interactions to understand what they are working on and the processes they use to construct knowledge. Lays foundation for planning for child's experiences and key to communication with family.
- ▶ *Planning.* Observation, documentation, and reflection provide basis for curriculum planning so that it can be individually tailored. Planning is of experiences, activities, materials, and interactions that will support the child's development. Assure that interactions and experiences planned for the infant or toddler provide opportunities for growth and development across domains. Important to include conversations with family in planning.
- ▶ *Implementation.* Needs to take into account that development occurs in the context of relationships, that routines provide a framework for the day and for development, and that the environment should provide a secure emotional base for exploration.

Key elements of an Individualized Child Development Plan:

1. The experiences designed to support the child's next developmental steps
2. How the environment is designed to support the child's progress
3. Evidence that each child's curriculum (or plan) is individualized to that child's interests, needs, and current developmental status

This document provides a template for an "Observation and Curriculum Planning Form" that includes (in addition to child's name, date, and time), the domains of development involved, observation, reflection, articulation of goals and objectives, individualized plan for coming week, and changes to the environment that will be needed. Note that Individualized Child Development Plans can integrate Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) activities.

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Sources:

Sylva, K., Siraj-Blatchford, I., & Taggart, B. (2006). *Assessing quality in the early years: Early childhood environment rating scale-extension (ECERS-E): Four curricular subscales*. Revised Edition. Stoke-on Trent: Trentham Books.

Sylva, K., Siraj-Blatchford, I., Taggart, B., Sammons, P., Melhuish, E., Elliot, K., et al. (2006). Capturing quality in early childhood through environmental rating scales. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 21(1), 76–92. Retrieved from http://193.61.4.225/web-files/our-staff/academic/edward-melhuish/documents/Sylva_et_al-2006-Capturing%20quality____ECRQ.pdf

Sylva, K., Taggart, B., Siraj-Blatchford, I., Totsika, V., Ereky-Stevens, K., Gilden, R., et al. (March 2007). Curricular quality and day-to-day learning activities in pre-school. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 15(1), 49–65.

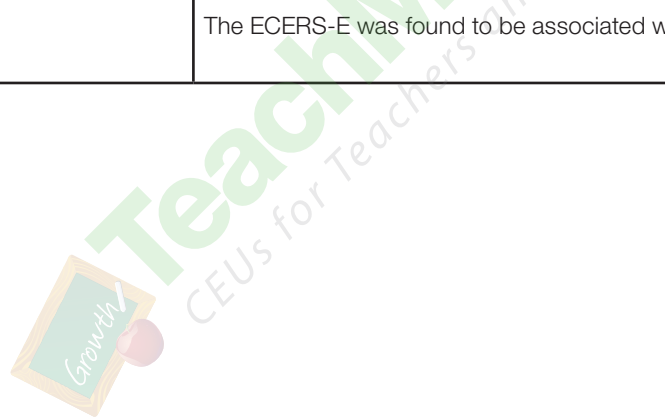
Observable*

[Note: These papers focus on a measure for preschool rather than infant/toddler classrooms. They are included because they describe another approach to documenting curriculum implementation. They also provide an international perspective.]

Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale Extension (ECERS-E) was specifically developed by the research team to accompany the ECERS-R and to provide an overall quality assessment of the curriculum and pedagogy that supports children’s early learning, including:

“...specific activities the teacher is engaged in when with the target child, for example: sustained shared thinking, direct teaching (e.g. questioning), or physical caring...[T]he definition of pedagogy used in this paper is the practice (or art/science/craft) of and creating a stimulating environment for play and exploration in which children will learn without adult guidance. This focuses on planned interactions and extending child-initiated activities in a purposefully designed learning context rather than merely reacting to spontaneous activities in an unthought-of or ad hoc manner.”

The ECERS-E was found to be associated with child outcomes at school entry.



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“This document was developed from the public domain document: Chazan-Cohen, R., Zaslow, M., Raikes, H. H., Elicker, J., Paulsell, D., Dean, A., & Kriener-Althen, K. (February 2017). Working toward a definition of infant/toddler curricula: Intentionally furthering the development of individual children within responsive relationships. Brief prepared for the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families; or the U.S., Department of Health and Human Services.”