

Let's Talk about...

NAC Standard: *Curriculum promotes these areas of a child's development...physical, cognitive, social, emotional, language, and aesthetic.*

By Lois Gamble

Curriculum must actively engage children in age-appropriate learning activities that lead to growth in these areas. Evidence that this standard is met includes the planning of appropriate learning experiences. The planning process can vary from the traditional planning around a theme (Monday-Friday fill-in-the-space lesson plan) to a more flexible plan that responds to children's interests and evolving ideas (webbing emergent curriculum).

However, all plans must have objectives. What knowledge will children have opportunity to acquire? What skills will they have opportunity to develop? What concepts will be introduced? What are the possible outcomes? What is the purpose for including this activity (to encourage development of fine motor/pre-math/writing/social skills)? Written objectives demonstrate the teacher's understanding of what can be accomplished by participation in the activity and informs parents of the knowledge and skills that occur through the 'play' activities.

Just as plans must have objectives, they must be evaluated for effectiveness. Were stated objectives met? If not, why? And what can be done differently next time? An activity that was successful in achieving objectives with one child or group of children may not be effective with another child/group. Perhaps an activity was "too difficult" and "will be attempted later in the year"; "children played in a particular center for only a brief period of time" therefore, "additional materials will be added to stimulate interest in extended play"; or "Art activity was messy. Next time, I will place newspaper under the easel and mix thicker paint." The ability to provide an honest evaluation of previous planning and to identify improvements is an indication that the teacher is attuned to the needs and abilities of the children in her care.

Appropriate planning for children results not only in successful experiences for children but in the teacher's satisfaction with her job.

For further exploration of curriculum and planning see:

Introduction to Early Childhood Education, Eva L. Essa, Thomson Delmar Learning, 2003 and Developmentally Appropriate Practice Curriculum and Development in early Education, Carol Gestwicki, Delmar Publishers, 1999.