

Curriculum

Curriculum is an important part of an early care and education program. More than just lesson plans, curriculum is embedded in everything we do throughout our day with children. As defined on the Delaware Stars website, curriculum is “a written plan that guides the design of children’s goals for learning and development, the experiences children will have to achieve those goals, and the way in which adults, both staff and families, will support children’s learning to achieve success.” If you are feeling unsure about how to approach curriculum in your program, this article will help to point you in the right direction!



Benefits of Using Curriculum

Think about what you want for the children in your care. Have you identified skills for them that you would like them to work on? If so, you have the groundwork for setting goals for your children! A comprehensive curriculum will help you move forward with setting and working towards achieving children’s goals.

As stated previously, curriculum is part of everything we do with the children in our care. A quality curriculum will help you to structure your program including setting up your physical environment and planning for routine times and play times. Curriculum also helps educators to be more intentional in planning activities for children. A comprehensive curriculum helps to enrich the early learning experience for both the teacher and the child.

Components of High-Quality Curriculum

There are many early childhood curricula in print and choosing one to use in your program can seem like an overwhelming task. Fortunately, Delaware Stars and the Office of Early Learning have put together a list of curricula that is considered to be of high-quality. Listed below are some of the components of a high-quality curriculum.

- **Alignment with State Standards-** Each curriculum on the Delaware Stars approved list is aligned with the Delaware Early Learning Foundations (ELFs). This ensures that each curriculum contains developmentally appropriate information. According to the Delaware Stars website, a high-quality curriculum should include activities in various domains that are challenging yet not frustrating to the children.

"A comprehensive curriculum helps to enrich the early learning experience for both the teacher and the child."



Components of High-Quality Curriculum (con't)

- **Supports Children's Individualized Learning and Goals-** Curriculum should support a mixture of planned activities and activities or experiences that occur naturally throughout the day. Each child will have their own strengths and areas for growth. The various goals for the children in your care should be able to be supported by the curriculum. In addition, there should be a mixture of teacher-directed and child-directed activities. When working with infants and toddlers, it is especially important to consider flexibility when planning activities.
- **Culturally and Linguistically Responsive-** A high-quality curriculum should be adaptable for children with disabilities and dual-language learners. Children learn best when content is meaningful to them. There should be opportunities for children to share information about their families and culture.

Assessment

It is almost impossible to have a discussion about curriculum without also discussing child assessment. While using a curriculum, educators should be assessing children's progress towards their goals. The most effective way to assess a child is to gather data through observations prior to the assessment. These observations can occur naturally during play or routines or based off activities planned in the curriculum. There is a list of child assessments that have been approved by Delaware Stars and the Office of Early Learning on the Delaware Stars website.

Family Involvement

It is important to keep families informed about their child's curriculum and classroom activities. This can be done through various forms of communication with the parents/guardians in your program. Daily or weekly communication can help to keep families informed of activities. Some programs choose to use different apps or even a Facebook page to communicate this type of information to families. Another idea is to host a family event in the beginning of the school year to go over the curriculum for the year. This is a great idea for an educational event to meet the Delaware Stars standards on family events.

Supports for Implementing Curriculum

- **Delaware Stars website-** Under the Provider Resources tab there is a Curriculum and Assessment page. Here you will find the lists of approved curriculum and assessments.
- **Professional Development-** Many of the approved curricula have their own online training webinars through their websites. In addition, DIEECD has training offered on planning for infants and toddlers, math concepts, science, play, and the Delaware Early Learning Foundations.
- **Curriculum and Assessment Technical Assistance-** Delaware Stars offers specialty technical assistance in the domain of curriculum and assessment. Programs can contact their generalist TA or Jen Potts (Curriculum and Assessment Coordinator) at (267) 438-4042 or jpotts@udel.edu for more information.