THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
Quality Teaching and Learning

This guide offers suggestions for presenting **Curriculum Modifications: Adult Support**. This in-service suite includes a PowerPoint presentation and supporting materials. Please use and adapt these materials as needed for specific audiences.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- PowerPoint presentation (20 slides)

- Projector and audio equipment

- Learning Activity:

  » *What Would You Do?*

- Tips for Teachers

- Flip chart or similar large paper, and markers for writing participant ideas

BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

- The purpose of this presentation is to provide participants with a deeper understanding of one type of curriculum modification: *adult support.*

- This is one in a series of in-service suites on curriculum modifications. If participants need a basic introduction to curriculum modifications before focusing on the eight general types, please reference the *Curriculum Modifications: An Introduction* in-service suite. For a brief review, reference the *Tips for Teachers* handout from that suite.

- Participants are encouraged to consider how using adult support can increase the participation of specific children in their class.

- The learning activity offers participants opportunities to learn strategies involving adult support based on the specific needs, strengths, and interests of individual children.

- Many of the examples provided in this in-service suite can support a variety of children, based on a variety of needs. Consider adapting the scenarios and supplementing with your own to fit your particular audience.

NOTE

The *Helpful Resources* and *Tools for Supervisors* handouts are overarching tools that apply to all of the in-service suites in the *Curriculum Modifications* series. They can be found in the *Curriculum Modifications: An Introduction* in-service suite.

NCQTL

SLIDE 1:
CURRICULUM MODIFICATIONS: ADULT SUPPORT

Introductions:

- Begin the training by giving participants background information on yourself.

- Provide an opportunity for participants to introduce themselves (where they are working, their current roles, etc.)

- Conduct an icebreaker related to using *adult support* to promote participation.

Example:

Ask participants to share, with a neighbor or the group, a time when:

- A mentor or other adult helped them learn a new concept or skill. (Examples might relate to work, school, parenting, self-care, or relationships.)

- Someone was intent on helping them, but they were confident that they could figure it out on their own.
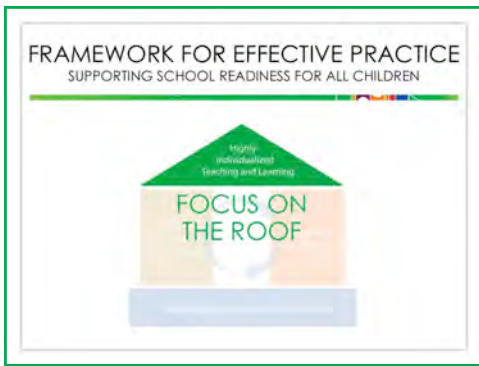
OR

Ask participants to think of something they could learn more easily with modeling, support, and feedback from a trusted and competent *person*—versus written or auditory instructions alone.

Possible answers:

- A complex card game

- A dance routine

- Swinging a tennis racket

- Doing a cartwheel

- Playing an instrument

SLIDE 2:
NCQTL'S FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE EVERYDAY PRACTICE

Introduce NCQTL.

The four components of the House Framework support school readiness for all children.

After the foundation of the house is secure and all the indicators of a high-quality early childhood program are in place, there may still be children who are struggling to participate or to maximize their potential.

These children may include:

- A child who isn't making progress and needs extra support in a particular area of learning.
- A child with an Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- A child who is a dual language learner (DLL).
- A child who seems to be excelling in some areas of learning and in need of more challenge.

All these children can be supported or challenged, based on their unique needs, by using the teaching strategies introduced in the roof.
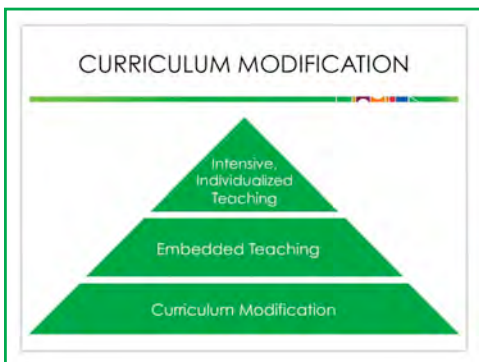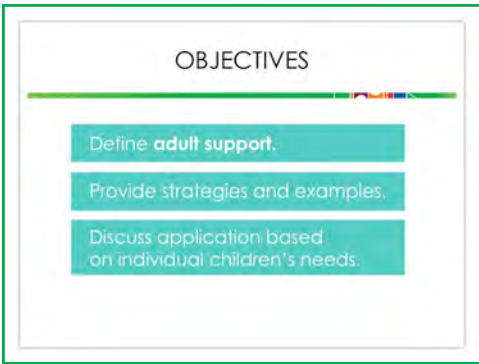

SLIDE 3:
CURRICULUM MODIFICATION

The roof portion of the Framework for Effective Practice is separated into three tiers of highly individualized teaching: *Curriculum Modification, Embedded Teaching,* and *Intensive Individualized Teaching.* In the roof, the levels of support intensify from the bottom tier to the top.

Curriculum Modification is the bottom tier of the roof. This tier is about making *small* changes or additions to classroom activities that have a *big* impact on a child's engagement and learning.

This in-service suite focuses on how, with some careful planning, adult support can be used to promote children's participation and learning.

SLIDE 4:
OBJECTIVES

Objectives for the presentation:

- Define adult support.
- Provide strategies and examples.
- Discuss application based on individual children's needs.

The last objective refers to the learning activities, which encourage participants to think about how adult support can be more effectively utilized in the classroom to promote the participation of individual children.

SLIDE 5:
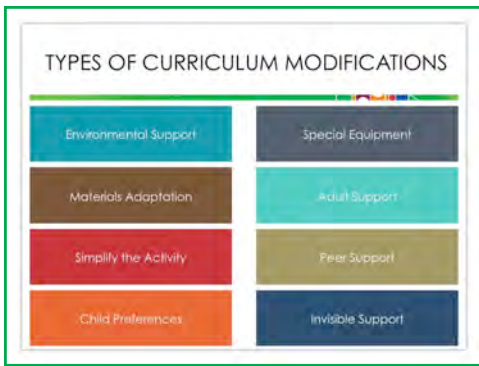## WHAT IS CURRICULUM MODIFICATION?

Definition: A curriculum modification is a change to the classroom activity or materials in order to facilitate or maximize a child's participation in planned activities, interactions, and routines. Curriculum modifications do not significantly alter the content, scope, or sequence of a curriculum.

A curriculum modification:

- Increases a child's ability to participate.
- Requires just a little extra thought or planning.
- Is easy to implement.
- Has a fairly immediate impact if it's going to work.
- Does not need additional resources, in most cases.

A curriculum modification is a small change that can make a powerful impact on a child's participation, sense of belonging, and opportunity to learn.

Focus on the strategy that is the best fit for the child.

SLIDE 6:
TYPES OF CURRICULUM MODIFICATIONS

Classroom activities and routines can be modified and adapted in a variety of ways. The eight general types of curriculum modifications are:

Environmental support

Materials adaptation

Simplify the activity

Child preferences

Special equipment

Adult support

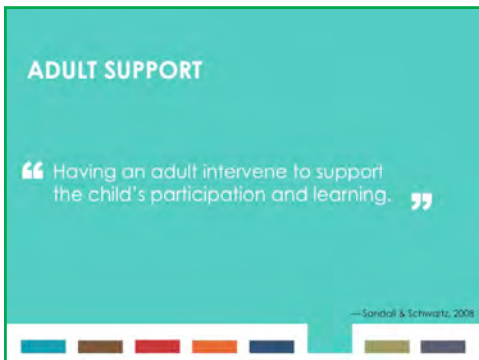Peer support

Invisible support

The focus of this in-service suite is on adult support.

NOTE 🗔

Some examples of the modifications in this presentation can fit into other categories *in addition* to adult support (i.e. child preference, activity simplification, environmental arrangement). Encourage participants to focus on children's individual needs and interests rather than the type of modification that is being discussed.
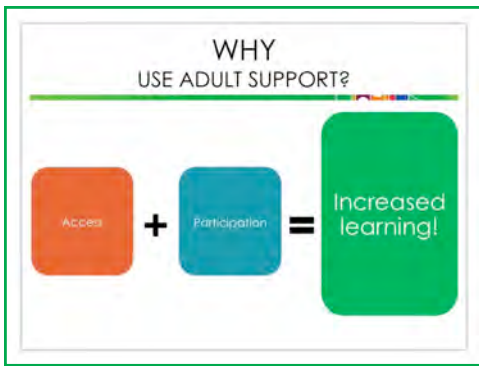

SLIDE 7:
ADULT SUPPORT

Definition: "Having an adult intervene to support the child's participation and learning."

Reference for definition:

Sandall, S., & Schwartz, I. (2008). *Building blocks for teaching preschoolers with special needs.* Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

SLIDE 8:
WHY USE ADULT SUPPORT?

Teachers work hard to develop lessons that get each *individual* child *actively involved* in learning. Even with the most thoughtful lesson plans and well-structured classrooms, some children still struggle to participate or to maximize their potential. Simple modifications to the curriculum, such as the use of adult support, can help these children progress.

More specifically, teachers who modify activities and materials based on individual needs and strengths ensure that children are *not bound by a single way of participating*. Successful learning can then take place in a variety of ways.

Access + Participation = Increased Learning

- Modifications provide **access** to planned activities, interactions, and routines.
- Increased access leads to a higher level of **participation**.
- Participating in a meaningful way provides a greater opportunity for **learning**.

SLIDE 9:
ADULT SUPPORT STRATEGIES

Adult support can be a particularly effective way to support a struggling child when the adult has built a relationship of trust and care with that child.

Once rapport is established, adult support:

- Brings a sense of security and connection to the child's learning experience.
- Can be carefully timed to encourage participation and prevent problem behaviors.
- Requires no additional resources beyond a teacher's patience and skill.

To increase a child's participation, an adult can:

- Join in the child's play.
- Use praise and encouragement.
- Provide a model.

JOIN IN THE CHILD'S PLAY

SLIDE 10:
JOIN IN THE CHILD'S PLAY

Sometimes, all that's needed to help a child be more successful in an activity is the presence of a trusted adult. By joining in the child's play, the adult has a front row seat to the child's successes and struggles. The adult can provide timely encouragement and supportive comments. It also provides opportunities to facilitate higher levels of play and to prevent discouragement or frustration.

By being there, showing interest, and offering comments, the adult can:

- Draw attention to the child's successes.
- Convey that the child is important to the adult.
- Slow down the pace of the activity.
- De-escalate conflict.
- Provide gentle reminders using touch and words.
- Offer praise and encouragement.
- Model new skills.

There are times when a skilled adult is able to offer just the right amount of support in the moment. However, this strategy works best when it's planned to fit the child's needs and when it is *executed with intention*. This ensures that an adult is present at critical times and the child has the opportunity to engage successfully in the activity.

NOTE 🖵

The adult must first be present and aware of the child's needs before it's possible to provide additional, more specific, support strategies.

Photo 1

Issue: A child is repetitive in her dramatic play and spends most of her time trying on the same costumes.

Modification: The teacher invites the child to join her peers at the table for a pretend feast. His presence and encouragement give her the confidence to expand her play.

Photo 2

Issue: A child is usually hesitant to touch and explore different materials with his hands. His parents are concerned that this is limiting his play experiences.

Modification: The teacher joins him at the paint station. By being there, offering smiles, and commenting on his willingness to try new things, she gives him the confidence to expand his sensory experience.

EMPHASIZE ✻

Build on children's strengths.

SLIDE 11:
USE PRAISE AND ENCOURAGEMENT

When an adult has intentionally joined in a child's learning experience, praise and encouragement are positive ways to increase the child's level of persistence and participation in an activity.

Praise

An adult can help a child continue in a challenging activity or a routine by simply drawing attention to what the child is already doing well. With persistence comes increased self-confidence and expanded learning opportunities.

Encouragement

An adult can encourage new skills or a higher level of participation by making comments and new suggestions that build on the child's current strengths. The adult can also encourage a child to persist by taking turns with the child in multi-step tasks or projects.

DISCUSSION 💬

Ask participants to share different ways an adult can give praise or encouragement.

Possible answers:

- Provide eye contact and a smile.
- Give a thumbs up, high five, or other affirming gesture.
- Call the child by name.
- Profile the child in an announcement or song.
- Praise the child's strengths.
- Narrate what is being done well, so the child can learn from his or her participation.

Praise and encouragement can be used to:

- Prevent or diffuse a child's frustration.
- Encourage a child to persist or increase their effort.
- Build a child's self-confidence.
- Give a child the sense of security needed to take risks and try new skills.

NOTE

A child receives and trusts praise and encouragement more openly from an adult who has established rapport. For more tips on building relationships, reference these in-service suites: *Building Relationships: Creating a Caring Classroom; Building Relationships: Being Aware of Children's needs;* and *Building Relationships: Fostering Connections.*

Photo 1

Issue: A child often seems discouraged when she tries to write her name.

Modification: A preferred teacher is present to point out the letters the child had written clearly, and to encourage her to try writing her name one more time. The child persists and the teacher shares in her success.

Photo 2

Issue: A child is working to increase leg strength by moving up and down stairs with support.

Modification: The teacher knows that this activity is challenging for the child. She offers praise and encouragement to build his confidence and keep him moving.

PROVIDE A MODEL

SLIDE 12:
PROVIDE A MODEL

To support a child's participation and learning, an adult can also model how to expand on an existing skill or perform a new skill. In some cases that may be all the child needs. In other cases, the child might need some physical support at first (like making motions to songs during circle time, cutting with scissors, climbing a new structure, pedaling a bike, or cutting food with utensils). The additional support helps children experience success when they are close, but not quite ready, to perform the skill independently.

 A model can be demonstrated:
- Face to face
- In photographs or drawings
- In a video

This strategy works particularly well for a child who:
- Is learning expressive language or a new language.
- Requires social-emotional coaching (needs help labeling emotions, problem-solving, or regulating emotions).
- Tends to use limited or repetitive actions during play or other activities.
- Has the prerequisite skills needed to perform a new skill, and just needs to see or hear the new skill first.

NOTE

It's important to think about a child's current skill level when determining the next skill to model. Does the targeted skill match the child's current level of ability? If the answer is yes, go for it. If the answer is no, ask yourself, what is a reasonable step forward from what the child is already doing? It's discouraging for children to attempt a skill that they aren't ready to learn, or to be taught a skill that they could learn through independent exploration.

Photo 1

Issue: A child tends to get overwhelmed during hallway transitions, and often reacts by pushing and shouting at other children.

Modification: The teacher is aware that these transitions are difficult. She makes sure someone is present during such times to model deep breathing. This helps the child calm his body and return to the classroom without further disruption.

Photo 2

Issue: A child with mild motor delays is learning to hop on one foot.

Modification: The teacher creatively uses the dot rug to make the challenge more fun, and models the skill as she encourages him to try it.
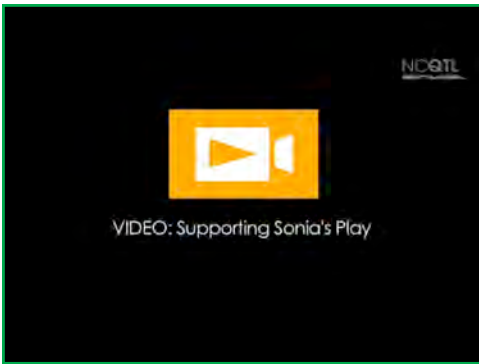
Length of video: Approximately 1 minute and 7 seconds

Introduce the video.

This video shows an example of adult support. The teacher uses modeling to support Sonia's participation in the dramatic play area. She then fades her support to promote Sonia's independence.
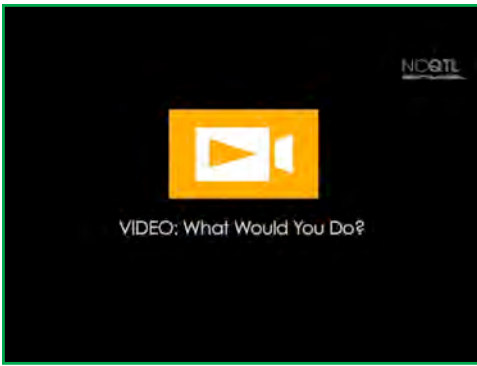
VIDEO

DISCUSSION

Ask participants to think of a different way the teacher could support Sonia, instead of modeling a play role.

Possible examples:

- Focus attention on some of the skills Sonia demonstrated earlier that day that are relevant to the dramatic play area.

- Join in and invite her to participate to see if, with the comfort of an adult's presence and encouragement, she'll start exploring her own play ideas.

Ask participants to discuss what might happen in Sonia's situation if the teacher doesn't decrease her level of support.

Length of video: Approximately 3 minutes and 2 seconds

SLIDE 14:
VIDEO LEARNING ACTIVITY:
WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

In this activity, participants watch a video showing four different children who are struggling to participate. After seeing each child's issue, pause and encourage participants to think about how they might support the child. Then continue to see how the teacher in the video chooses to help.

HANDOUT

Distribute the *What Would You Do?* learning activity and review the directions. Refer to the *Facilitator Guide* for information about how to structure this activity.

VIDEO

- **Child 1**
  Disengaging from a difficult task: A child struggles to complete a challenging puzzle. The teacher offers praise and encourages the child to persist.

- **Child 2**
  Disengaged from sensory play: A child mouths a toy instead of engaging with the sensory table materials. Because the teacher is present, she is available to model and encourage pretend play with the duck.

- **Child 3**
  Disengaged between activities: A child gets overwhelmed during the transition to free choice. The teacher offers suggestions and encouragement based on the child's strengths and interests.

- **Child 4**
  Disengaged from dramatic play: A child doesn't know what to do in the dramatic play area. The teacher joins in to model pretend play with the food.

JUST THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF SUPPORT

| Facilitate independence. | Look for signs of progress. |
| Decrease support as skill level improves. | Be prepared for variable behavior. |

EMPHASIZE ✳

Adjust the level of support in response to a child's level of participation.

SLIDE 15:
JUST THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF SUPPORT

Facilitate independence.

Use adult support sparingly. Although adult support can be a very effective way to support a child, it isn't always the *best* way to promote independence and success. Consider whether a less intrusive modification to the environment (or materials) could provide similar support while reducing the child's need to rely on others.

Look for signs of progress.

If adult support is the level of support necessary, carefully observe the child's behaviors to assess his or her progress.

Decrease support as skill level improves.

As the child begins to participate with more independence and confidence, it's important to adjust the level of support offered. This empowers the child, prevents dependency, and allows teachers and other adults to put their attention where it's most needed.

Be prepared for variable behavior.

Teaching is a dynamic process. Shifts in a child's life (vacation, illness, a decrease in motivation) may result in varying levels of independence. Be prepared to increase and decrease levels of support in response to the child's learning.

NOTE 🖵

Sometimes a child is still not making progress when an adult is consistently present to encourage or model, and after other modifications have been attempted. In this case, the adult may need to provide a higher level of support and increased learning opportunities to teach a specific learning objective. For more information about the different levels of highly individualized teaching, reference the *Highly Individualized Teaching and Learning: An Overview* in-service suite. For more information about increasing learning opportunities, reference the in-service suites in the *Embedded Teaching and Learning* series.
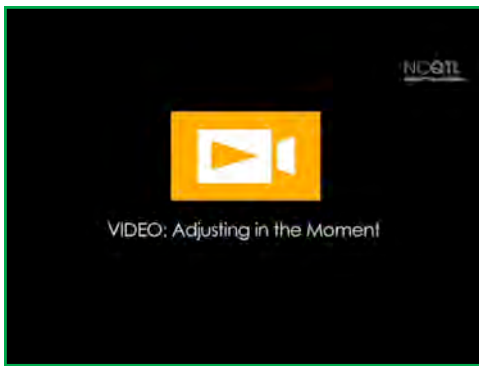
Length of video: Approximately 1 minute and 33 seconds

SLIDE 16:
VIDEO: ADJUSTING IN THE MOMENT

Introduce the video.

In this video, participants see an example of a teacher adjusting her level of support—in the moment—based on the child's shifting level of independence.

VIDEO

DISCUSSION

Possible questions:

Ask participants to note some of the ways the teacher provides adult support and adjusts her level of support.

Be sure the following points are addressed:

- The teacher joins the child's play.

- The teacher is in tune with the child's physical needs.

- When the child seems unstable, she offers a bit of physical support.

- When the child seems stable, the teacher lets go of his hand and gives gestural cues instead of physical support.

- The teacher offers encouragement and praise of the child's efforts at just the right moments to motivate persistence.

OR

Ask participants to think back to the supports they described for one of the children in the *What Would You Do?* learning activity.

- What would they expect the child to do next, to demonstrate progress?

- How would they adjust their level of adult support, based on the child's increased level of independence?

SLIDE 17:
DANIEL: SUPPORT AND EMPOWER

Support

Daniel, who is an advanced learner, is losing interest in free choice, particularly the block area. The teacher joins in to discuss and model a more complex structure for the child to work on.

Empower

After a couple days of offering ideas and support, the teacher notices that Daniel is independently engaged in the block area. She decides that, for now, she can stop providing him with additional challenge.

SLIDE 18:
SADIE: SUPPORT AND EMPOWER

Support

Sadie, who struggles with fine motor skills, loves flowers and enjoys sorting activities. Her teacher has noticed her timidly showing interest, but never fully engaging, in the tabletop activity. The teacher joins in and begins by talking about how Sadie is an expert sorter. She then goes on to model how to use the tweezers.

Empower

By the end of the week, the teacher observes that Sadie is confidently using the tweezers to sort the flowers. Instead of sitting down with her to offer encouragement, she decides not to break Sadie's concentration and observes from a distance.

REVIEW

Curriculum modifications promote participation.

Adult support:
- Join the child's play.
- Use praise and encouragement.
- Provide a model.

Support and Empower

SLIDE 19:
REVIEW

A curriculum modification is a small change that can make a big impact on a child's level of participation in your classroom.

Adult support is one of eight general types of curriculum modifications.

An adult can support a child by:

- Joining in the child's play.

- Using praise and encouragement.

- Providing a model.

Support *and* Empower:

Be there when a child needs support, but decrease support in response to the child's progress. Empower the child to successfully participate in classroom activities, routines, and interactions with independence.

HANDOUT

Distribute handouts if not distributed during presentation. Based on participant roles:

- Distribute and review *Tips for Teachers.*

- Distribute and review *Tools for Supervisors.*

- Distribute the *Helpful Resources* handout and review key resources.

NOTE

In-service suites are available for each of the eight types of modifications. Refer to these as needed, based on your participants' level of understanding of curriculum modifications.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:
SHARE THE FOLLOWING SUGGESTIONS WITH PARTICIPANTS:

- Work with a team member from your classroom to determine which children in your class might benefit from having an adult:

  » Join in the child's play.

  » Use praise and encouragement.

  » Provide a model.

- Make a plan.

- Determine who will be responsible for supporting each child, and decide which strategies will be most likely to increase participation.

- Give it a try!

SLIDE 20:
CLOSING

Provide participants with NCQTL contact information and encourage them to visit our website for additional resources.