



This guide offers suggestions for presenting **Curriculum Modifications: Child Preferences**. 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 (19 slides)
- Optional slides (3)
- Projector and audio equipment
- Learning Activities:
 - » *Integrating Child Preferences*
 - » *Planning for Child Preferences* (Optional)
- Tips for Teachers
- Tools 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: *child preferences*.
- 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 child preferences can increase the participation of specific children in their class.
- Learning activities offer participants opportunities to learn strategies involving child preferences 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.
- The optional learning activity and optional slides are described in detail at the end of this document.

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.



SLIDE 1: CURRICULUM MODIFICATIONS: CHILD PREFERENCES

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 *child preferences* to promote participation.

Example: What preferences motivate you to be more engaged in *your* tasks?

Possible answers:

- Listening to a favorite song list while cleaning house
- Munching on a favorite snack while pushing through a difficult task at work
- Enlisting a good friend to work out with you at the gym
- Having a family movie night or other fun, shared activity on Fridays to encourage your family to reconnect at the end of the week





SLIDE 2: NCQTL'S FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE EVERYDAY PRACTICE

Introduce NCQTL.

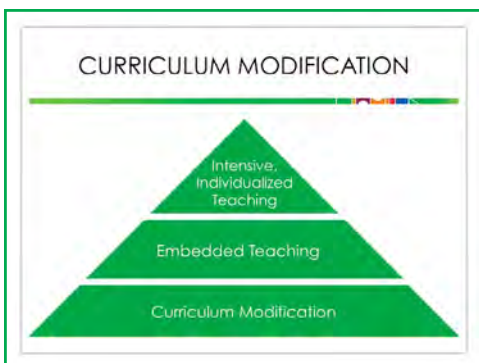
The four components of the House Framework support school readiness for all children.

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.



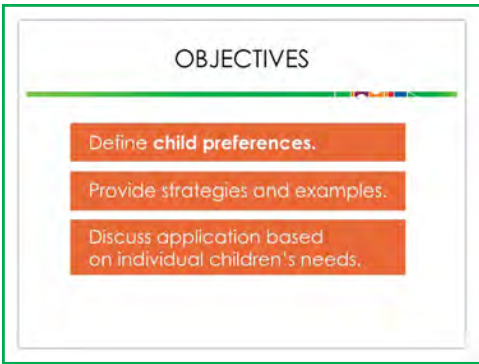
SLIDE 3: CURRICULUM MODIFICATION

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, child preferences can be used to promote children's participation and learning.





SLIDE 4: OBJECTIVES

Objectives for the presentation:

- Define child preferences.
- 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 individual children's preferences can be integrated into the classroom curriculum to promote participation.



SLIDE 5: WHAT IS CURRICULUM MODIFICATION?

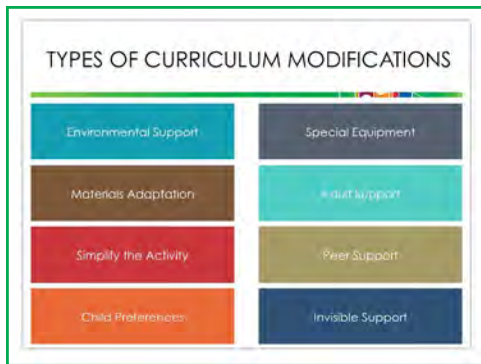
Definition: A curriculum modification is a change to the classroom activity or materials in order to facilitate or maximize a child's participation in planned activities, interactions, and routines. Curriculum modifications do not significantly alter the content, scope, or sequence of a curriculum.

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.





EMPHASIZE *

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 child preferences.

NOTE

Some examples of the modifications in this presentation can fit into other categories *in addition* to child preferences (i.e. peer support, adult support, materials adaptation). Encourage participants to focus on children’s individual needs and interests rather than the type of modification that is being discussed.



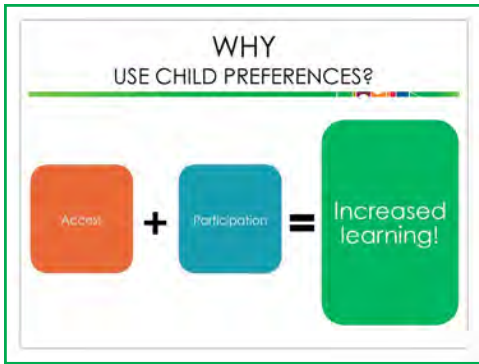
SLIDE 7: CHILD PREFERENCES

Definition: “If the child is not taking advantage of the available opportunities, identify and integrate the child’s preferences.”

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 CHILD PREFERENCES?

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 child preferences, 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**.



Length of video: Approximately 1 minute and 27 seconds

EMPHASIZE *

Children are more likely to learn new skills and concepts when their interest has been captured.

SLIDE 9: VIDEO: INTEGRATING CHILD PREFERENCES

Introduce the video.

In this video, two teachers discuss how they use children's preferences to increase participation in learning opportunities.

VIDEO 

DISCUSSION 

Ask participants to share comments and questions.





SLIDE 10: IDENTIFY PREFERENCES

Carefully observe children’s play and interaction with the physical environment and others to determine what they most enjoy.

Look beyond the obvious to see if there are more **subtle but consistent themes** in their actions, activities, and tendencies.

Children stay engaged longer and are better able to take in and process new information when they are motivated, calm, and genuinely interested.

Questions to ask when determining what children prefer:

- What makes the child smile?
- What does the child gravitate to when given a choice?
- Who does the child choose to spend the most time with?
- When does the child seem the most calm and attentive?

EMPHASIZE *

There is no better way for children to learn than with the materials, activities, and people they love.

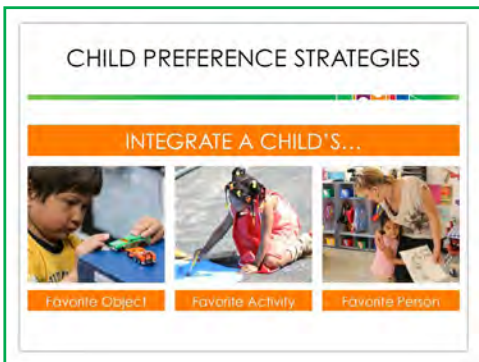
OPTIONAL

LEARNING ACTIVITY: PLANNING FOR CHILD PREFERENCES

In this activity, participants identify the preferences of specific children in their classrooms and practice using that information during classroom planning to increase the participation of those children.

NOTE

Presenter notes for optional learning activities are located at the end of this document, after the closing slide.



SLIDE 11: CHILD PREFERENCE STRATEGIES

To increase a child’s participation, integrate a child’s favorite:

- Objects
- Activities
- People





EMPHASIZE *

These examples will not necessarily work with all children with the given issue; the goal is to see examples and generalize ideas relevant to the children that you work with.

SLIDE 12: FAVORITE OBJECTS

Favorite objects can be used to spark interest in an activity or interaction, or to motivate a higher level of participation.

Observe which objects the child chooses when given a choice.

Favorite toys or materials, examples of different categories:

- Topics of high interest (outer space, the ocean, dinosaurs, animals, insects, transportation, construction, fantasy)
- Cognitive strengths (A child who identifies letters in the alphabet may enjoy magnet toys, puzzles, games, etc. designed to build on that strength.)
- Favorite children's characters (figurines, action figures, stickers, books, music, dolls, play sets)
- Sentimental associations (a favorite blanket, a trinket that reminds the child of someone special)
- Tactile (playdough, shaving cream, finger paint, squishy toys, water, sand, crinkly paper, soft pillows)
- Visual (light-up toys, bubbles, tinsel, shiny play jewelry, mirror, kaleidoscope, rain stick)
- Auditory (toys that make silly sounds or music)
- Spinning (a top, fan, wheels, gears, pinwheel)
- Cause and effect (pop-up toys, balls, squirt bottles, toys with buttons)

Photo 1

Issue: A child is not yet counting with one-to-one correspondence.

Modification: The teacher knows the child loves bugs. She puts plastic bugs in the math center; the bugs can be counted one by one as the child drops them into a bug jar.

Photo 2

Issue: A child struggles to attend for longer periods of time during large group activities such as circle.

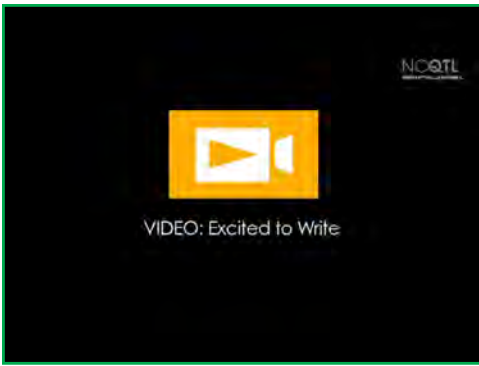
Modification: The teacher places a highly preferred squishy ball on the child's mat. The child is not only motivated to go straight to the circle time mat, but also has something to fidget with. This extends the amount of time the child can spend with the group during circle.

Photo 3

Issue: A child does not transition independently with his peers to outside.

Modification: The teacher gives the child a favorite toy car to hold during the transition and then play with after he is outside.





Length of video: Approximately 31 seconds

SLIDE 13: VIDEO: EXCITED TO WRITE

Introduce the video.

This video shows how putting a favorite sticker on a pencil helped a little girl with her handwriting.

VIDEO 

DISCUSSION 

Ask participants: Can you think of an example when you integrated a child's preferred object(s) to increase his or her level of participation?



FAVORITE ACTIVITIES



SLIDE 14: FAVORITE ACTIVITIES

Observe which activities the child chooses in his or her free time. Then consider how those activities can be used in a variety of ways to increase the child's level of participation.

Questions to consider—does the child like activities that are more:

- Physically active or stationary?
- Noisy or quiet?
- Visually stimulating or calming?
- Social or solitary?

Examples of activities:

- Playing on the computer
- Cooking
- Reading
- Eating
- Musical activities (instruments, singing, listening to music)
- Tactile activities (playdough, gak, shaving cream)
- Gross motor activities (dancing, jumping, climbing, swinging, running)
- Fine motor activities (writing, using scissors, coloring, painting, working with manipulatives)
- Imaginative play (playing house or doctor, dressing up, acting out a play)
- Building and fitting things together (blocks, interlocking toy bricks, trains, puzzles)
- Projects or activities with a series of steps (constructing an erupting volcano, writing and illustrating a book)

Photo 1

Issue: A child finishes small group activities before others and needs more challenge.

Modification: The teacher knows the child loves to draw. He provides a preferred drawing toy that the child can use to sketch maps (another topic of interest).

Photo 2

Issue: A child is very hesitant to sit close to peers during circle time.

Modification: The teacher knows the child loves to read. She posts the words to the circle time songs just outside of the circle. Gradually she will integrate the reading materials into the circle and bring the child closer to his peers.





Length of video: Approximately 1 minute and 16 seconds

SLIDE 15: VIDEO: TRAIN STATION

Introduce the video.

Dr. Gail Joseph, PhD (National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning) tells a story of a teacher who uses a child's love of trains to motivate a higher level of social engagement with peers.

VIDEO 

DISCUSSION 

Ask participants: Can you think of an example when you integrated a child's preferred activity to increase his or her level of participation?



SLIDE 16: FAVORITE PEOPLE

People can also be highly motivating to children. **Observe which people the child gravitates to.** Peers and adults, sometimes just by their presence and modeling, can make a child feel more excited about participating in a challenging task.

Examples of favorite people:

- Teachers
- Teaching assistants
- Peers
- School staff
- Family members (in person during drop-off or pick up, or in photos, photo books, or videos)
- Neighbors

Photo 1

Issue: A child tends to get frustrated while putting interlocking puzzles together.

Modification: The teacher arranges for a trusted peer to work alongside the child to encourage her.

Photo 2

Issue: A child is not using utensils to feed herself independently.

Modification: The teacher asks her assistant, whom the child adores, to encourage and support the child.



WATERMELON



BUBBLES



BIKE RIDING



LEARNING ACTIVITY: INTEGRATING CHILD PREFERENCES

In this activity, participants consider ways to promote the participation of specific children with unique needs, based on their knowledge of each child's preferences.

HANDOUT

- Distribute the *Integrating Child Preferences* learning activity and review the directions.
- Refer to the *Facilitator Guide* for the scenarios used in the learning activity. Once completed, ask participants to share some of their examples.

This activity can be extended by giving pairs or groups more than one scenario, or by encouraging participants to use a current scenario from their own classroom.

OPTIONAL SLIDES

The optional slides Watermelon, Bubbles, and Bike Riding provide examples for large group discussion that can further encourage participants to think creatively about integrating children's preferences.

Presenter notes for the optional slides are provided at the end of this document.

EMPHASIZE 

Be creative.





SLIDE 17: THINGS TO CONSIDER

Minimize disruption to others

Bigger and flashier is not always better. If the same effect can be gained from a toy, activity, or preference that will minimize disruption to the activity or learning of others, choose the less intrusive option.

Have materials readily available

Once a strategy is selected, it's more likely to be implemented when the materials have been prepared in advance and placed where they are most likely to be needed.

Adjust as preferences change

Preferences do not necessarily stay the same. Continue taking the time to observe children's preferences and be open to making adjustments based on children's new interests.

Be prepared for "Why?"

Some children might find it unfair that they do not have access to a toy or materials that another child is given. Take some time to think about how you and your team will respond to those questions.

Possible responses:

- Give other children access to the same materials when you are comfortable giving them more choices and flexibility (free choice time or outside time).
- Talk with the children about everyone's unique strengths, challenges, and needs. Explain that your responsibility is to help each of them in the way that fits them best.



REVIEW

Curriculum modifications promote participation.

Child preferences: Integrate a child's...

- Favorite objects
- Favorite activities
- Favorite people

Learn what they **LOVE**
so they **LOVE** what you teach.

EMPHASIZE *

Learn what they love so they love what you teach!

SLIDE 18: REVIEW

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

Child preference is one of eight general types of curriculum modifications. Strategies include identifying and integrating a child's favorite:

- Objects
- Activities
- People

By observing and using what children enjoy, you can increase their motivation to engage and learn.

HANDOUT

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

- Distribute and review *Tips for Teachers*.
- Distribute and review *Tools for Supervisors*
- Distribute and review *Tools for Teachers*.
- 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 identifying and integrating a preferred:
 - » Object
 - » Activity
 - » Person
- Make a plan.
- Determine who will be in charge of preparation tasks (gathering materials, preparing materials, placing materials where they are most likely to be needed).
- Give it a try!





SLIDE 19: CLOSING

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



OPTIONAL

LEARNING ACTIVITY: PLANNING FOR CHILD PREFERENCES

Suggested placement is after Slide 10.

In this activity, participants identify the preferences of specific children in their classrooms and then consider how they can use that information in their planning to increase the participation of those children.

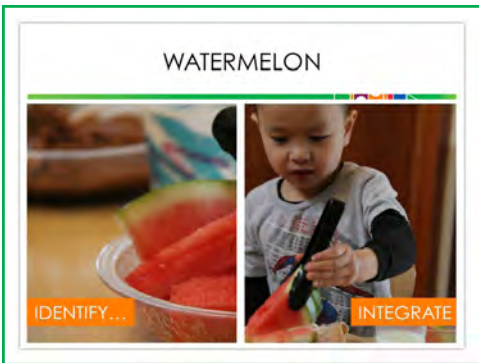
The last column of the activity can be filled out at your discretion, depending on the needs of your group and as time allows.

HANDOUT

Distribute the *Planning for Child Preferences* optional learning activity and review directions.

DISCUSSION

Did this task come easily to you? If not, what can you do to increase your awareness of the preferences of the children in your class?



OPTIONAL SLIDE 1:

WATERMELON

Suggested placement for the three optional slides is after the learning activity that follows Slide 16.

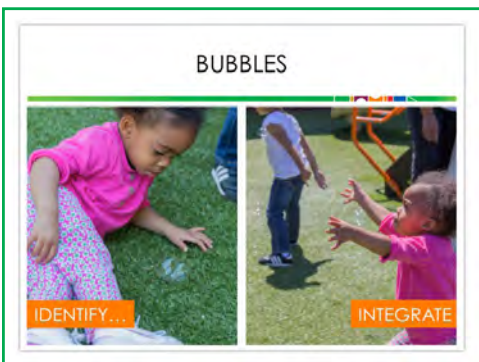
For all three slides, participants use the information about a specific child's preference and brainstorm ways to integrate that preference into daily activities and routines.

DISCUSSION

Chao loves watermelon. How could you use that information to promote his fine motor development?

Possible responses:

- Provide watermelon and serving tongs at lunch or snack time. Encourage Chao to serve himself using the tongs.
- Ask Chao to use his fingers to pick up any remaining seeds on his plate to put in the garbage.



OPTIONAL SLIDE 2:

BUBBLES

DISCUSSION

Shawna loves bubbles. How could you use that information to promote her participation in large motor activities during outside time? Help her transition from outside to inside with a calm body?

Possible responses:

Integrate bubbles into a variety of games and routines:

- Play "capture the bubbles." Chase the bubbles while singing favorite songs.
- Simon says "pop the bubbles."
- Explain to her that after she climbs to the top of the stairs, bubbles will be blown up to her.
- Let her have a turn blowing bubbles after she runs to a predetermined finish line.
- When it is time to go inside, blow bubbles for the class while leading them into the classroom.

BIKE RIDING



OPTIONAL SLIDE 3: BIKE RIDING

DISCUSSION

Brendan loves bike riding and has shown comfort playing with a little girl named Rachel. How could you use that information to promote his ability to initiate and play collaboratively with peers?

Possible response:

Facilitate a round of “follow the leader” on bikes with Brendan, Rachel, and any interested peers. Encourage Brendan to verbally invite his peers to join in the game and to explain to them the rules of the game.