

Implementing Infant and Toddler Curriculum with Fidelity: Teacher Time

Treshawn Anderson: Hi, everyone. Welcome to Teacher Time, and happy Friday. I'm Treshawn Anderson, and joining me today is Judi Stevenson-Garcia. Hi, Judi.

Judi Stevenson-Garcia: Hi, Treshawn.

Treshawn: Hey, so, we're from the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning, and we're excited to be here today to talk about how to implement infant-toddler curriculum with fidelity. So, if you've been joining us for Teacher Time for the past several year — sorry — for the past several years, you'll notice that, this season, things are going to look a little different. This season, we're using a new platform; it's called ON24—for Teacher Time and that is supposed to be more user-friendly, a little bit more customizable, and friendlier on the eyes. But before we begin, we want to go over a few housekeeping items that we'll be using during this webinar, as we'll be using some of this during our webinar at this time.

Judi: Right. Hopefully, some of you — Well, you've already found the chat box. A lot of you are in there saying hello. It's nice to see all of you in there introducing yourselves, saying hi, telling us where you're from and what you appreciate about your curriculum. And all of the widgets that you open, you — you get them from the bottom of your screen, but once you open them, you can move them around and resize them, so feel free to move them and make this webinar kind of what you want it to be. We'll use the chat room widget throughout, so make sure you find that. Go in and say hello. But if you have specific questions about any of the topics that we are discussing, you can use the Q&A widget. It's purple on your screen, and you can open that up and send a question, and we'll try — We'll do our best to answer those questions during the webinar. There's a copy of today's slides and the viewer gui — the viewer's guide and then, also, additional resources that we have for you in the resource list icon. That's green. You can find the resource list. You open that up. You can download the — the slide deck. You can download the Viewer's Guide. And then you can access the other resources that we have there for you. We really encourage you to use the Viewer's Guide as a way to reflect on the content that we have today, and then any of the other resources that you might find useful, we'd love for you to access those there.

You can find additional answers to some of the common technical issues in the help widget at the bottom of your screen. And then, also, just so you know, there's going to be an on-demand version of this webinar right after the webinar, about 30 minutes later. You can access it at any time through the link, and we'll also post it on MyPeers for you if you want to share it or if you want to view it again. Remember, if you want to continue the conversation that we start here today, you can always connect with us, and other teachers, and family child care providers, and staff in the Teacher Time community, and you'll find a link to that MyPeers community in your Viewer's Guide, along with other useful resources that are related to what we're talking about today. And then the last thing is, at the end of this webinar, we're going to post a link to an evaluation form. I know you all look for that. So once you click on that link and give us some feedback that we use to improve our future webisodes, you can also then download a certificate of completion for your participation. And if you're watching this webinar along with other colleagues and only one of you registered, you can share that link with your colleagues, who can also provide feedback and then get a certificate of completion.

Treshawn: So, there's a couple people I noticed in the chat box saying that they're having trouble with sound. We have an ON24 tech guy that will help us out in the chat box. His name is Jake, so be looking out for some information from him in case you need some help. And, also, in the Q&A box, there's a separate folder for any tech issues and questions that you want him to directly address. So, if you can hear us, we want this next hour to be as interactive as possible, so feel free to chat using the chat box as you guys are already doing, which is great. We're going to be using the purple Q&A box to ask questions to our guest expert. And then, each episode this season, we're going to begin with three big takeaway points that are going to be related to our topic, and then we'll chat with a guest expert, who's going to give us some strategies to take back to our classrooms and family child care homes. And then the Q&A pod is there for you to ask questions specific to — specifically to our guest expert, so make sure to make use of it. And then, finally, we're going to end off our episode with some reflection and planning.

Judi: Sounds good. All right. So, let's get started. So, today we're here to talk about implementing infant

and toddler curriculum with fidelity, and where we want to start in terms of fidelity is with the Framework for Effective Practice. And hopefully many of you are familiar with the Frame — the Framework for Effective Practice, but it represents the five components of quality teaching and learning. So, the first is the foundation. This focuses on providing nurturing and engaging environments for children. And then, next, we have the first pillar, which focuses on implementing research-based curriculum and teaching practices. The pillar on the other side is about screening and ongoing assessment. And then the roof focuses on highly individualized teaching and learning for children with a real focus on children with suspected delays and diagnosed disabilities. And then, finally, at the center of our Framework are the parents and families that we support in our programs.

So this Teacher Time season this year, we're focusing on the House Framework and what it means really to implement these — these different components well. And we're going to talk about individualized teaching and learning throughout all of our episodes. If you remember, if you were with us in our last Teacher Time episode, the infant and toddler one, we talked about creating safe and nurturing learning environments for infants and toddlers. Our second episode focused on preschoolers. And that's part of the foundation of the house. Today, we're focusing on implementing infant and toddler curriculum with fidelity, which is really related to that left pillar — Implementing research-based curriculum and teaching practices. And because this is one of the pillars that holds up the house, we want — we think of implementing curriculum with fidelity as a way to make that pillar really strong to support the house, so in other words, the curriculum and teaching practices pillar is only going to be as strong as our commitment to implementing curriculum with fidelity.

So we're hoping you'll -- we'll help you figure that out, what it really means to implement curriculum with fidelity, so you can make sure that pillar is really strong. So, today, we're going to cover a few strategies that'll help you implement your curriculum with fidelity. First, we're going to start with trying to understand the curriculum that you use. We're going to give you some guidance around what you can do to help you really understand the curriculum that you're using. And then we'll talk about specific parts of your curriculum, like the scope and sequence, how to individualize, and strategies you can use to make sure that you're really using your curriculum the way that it was intended to be used. And then, last, we'll talk a little bit about how you can figure out what's going on in — in your curriculum implementation, what's going well, and then how to address some challenges you might be having in using your curriculum.

Treshawn: Thanks, Judi, for going over that. So, what do we mean by implementing curriculum with fidelity? When we were thinking about this episode, the first thing that came to mind for me was a chocolate cake, obviously, but we'll explain that in a little bit. So, implementing curriculum with fidelity means using the curriculum the way that the authors really designed — designed it with the goal of meeting the individual needs of each children — each child that we care for. So, for example, if you take a box of cake mix and it has a set of instructions on the back. Well, if you follow those instructions, then that will result in a nice cake. Nice, deliciously moist cake that you see here on your screen. And if we follow those directions, we'll make a cake that's as beautiful and delicious as the picture on the box. Right? But if we decide to improvise or maybe skip some ingredients, then that cake may not turn out the way that we hoped.

[Laughter]

So, and we can think about curriculum fidelity in the same way. The developers really designed a set of practices, routines, and learning opportunities, and suggest books and materials for you to use that will support children's learning and development if they're used as designed. So as teachers and family child care providers, it's our responsibility to follow our curriculum or the instructions on the cake box to support children in meeting the learning outcomes that we hope for, which would be a deliciously moist cake. But before we jump into our content for the day, we want to hear from you, and some of you guys have already told us which curriculum you're using. But we know that there's lots of different infant-toddler curricula out there. So if you could take a minute to tell us which curriculum you're using using this poll. So you should be able to see a poll on your screen, and since there's so many curricula out there, you might have to scroll down a little bit to find the one that your program uses, and if you don't see that specific one, go ahead and push "other," or if you're not sure, feel free to put "not sure." So, I'll give you a moment to take this poll so we can see what's going on. And some of you are putting it in the chat box, which is great, but if you want to do the poll, interact with us that way, then that's great, too. So, I see some results coming in. Lots of

people are using Creative Curriculum. Some people are using HighScope. We've got some Frog Street, Beautiful Beginnings. Some people aren't sure. That's awesome. That means you're in the right place. Okay. So, let's look at some of the results that we found. And I'm going to scroll down so you guys can see all of them. So, a lot of you, about 70 percent of you guys, are using Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers & Twos, also known as Teaching Strategies, which is the publisher. Some Creative Curriculum for Family Child Care. Great. So, we got some family child care providers here. Some HighScope. About 8 percent of people are using HighScope Infant-Toddler Curriculum. And as we go down, we see some Frog Street for infants and toddlers, some Beautiful Beginnings. We've got a couple "not sures" and some "others," so I'm interested to see what those other was. I see Gee Whiz. I see PAT, GGK. Parents as Teachers, Partners for Healthy Babies. Great.

Judi: Yeah, those would be some of our home visitors that we've got in the room using some home visiting curriculum.

Treshawn: Yeah, that's awesome. Okay, so, to help us get it started, we've invited a guest today to help us think a little bit more about how to get to know our curriculum. Jennifer Marcella-Burdett is one of our partners, and she works with WestEd. Jennifer has spent a lot of her time recently focused on understanding infant-toddler curricula and developing resources to help teachers and family child care providers better understand and use their curricula, so we're going to bring on Jennifer.

Jennifer Marcella-Burdett: Hi, everyone. Thanks for having me.

Judi: Hi, Jennifer. Thank you so much for joining us today. I know you are recovering from an illness, so we're glad that you found your voice so that you can come spend some time with us here today, so it's nice to have you. So, maybe just we can start first by thinking about how... We mentioned it's really important to kind of know your curriculum, so what are some things that we can do as teachers or family child care providers or even home visitors to get to know our curriculum better?

Jennifer: Definitely. So, I think getting to know your curriculum is the first step in implementing a curriculum with fidelity. And like most things, getting to know your curriculum is a process that's going to take time. And I'm sure a lot of the teachers and providers that are here with us today, they're at various stages of implementing your curriculum, so I'll go through a general process, and then you can think about, what's the starting point for yourself or the staff that you work with? So, an initial starting point might be to explore the offerings from your curriculum publisher. What kinds of professional development and training opportunities are there? Usually, publishers will offer both introductory courses, as well as some more advanced offerings for you to expand your knowledge on specific aspects of the curriculum. And then, beyond these more formal opportunities, you definitely want to have the physical curriculum materials right in front of you to read and explore, to mark them up if they're your own copies. And if you are just beginning to implement a curriculum or perhaps you're training a new staff member, a really great place to start is with a curriculum's user guide, a welcome guide, or their overarching manual. Some curricula also have some introductory videos. But these more foundational pieces of the curriculum will really give you a sense of the overall approach and all of the resources that come with the curriculum and how they fit together. And then, once you have that initial sense, you can start to dig into the specific pieces of your curriculum, such as the learning goals or the learning experiences or the curriculum's approach to individualization.

Treshawn: That's awesome. So, I know I just got a box of lots of different curricula, and they come with lots of different things that I haven't quite cracked open yet, but can you tell the audience — What are some resources that curriculum typically come — typically come with in that big box?

Jennifer: Sure. So, we're very familiar with opening those boxes and trying to make sense of everything that's inside of them. So, like I mentioned, the first thing you'd want to look for is if there's a welcome guide, or a user guide, or an overarching manual. That's going to give you the initial look into the curriculum. From there, it's really useful to look for the curriculum's learning goals. I think this is one of the first places where you can get a sense of the scope of the curriculum or which domains of development they cover. And these may be right in the manual, but they may be in an accompanying CD, or handout, or an appendix, so sometimes you do have to look around for them. And then, after that, you might want to check out the learning experiences. So what — what — how are they offered? Are they activity cards? Do they have lesson plans, or do they have curriculum webs that are organized into different units? Getting a

sense for really the meat of the curriculum. And then a lot of curricula also come with materials that you can add to your environment, so they may have specific manipulatives, books that you can think about how to integrate into your infant and toddler environment. And you also want to see if there's any resources that really focus on individualization to meet children's diverse needs. So are there any resources focusing on how to support children who are dual language learners or children who are learning tribal languages, and if there's any resources that are going to help you individualize the environment and your learning experiences, also, for children with disabilities, or suspected delays, or any other kind of special needs.

Judi: That's great. That sounds like a lot to manage. So I'm wondering — For those of you who are listening to that long list that Jennifer just laid out for us, tell us in the chat box, are there components that she mentioned that your curricula maybe don't have or that you aren't familiar with. Or is there a piece of your curriculum that you feel like you could use some more support and understanding? Have you read the welcome guide or the curriculum guide in your curriculum? Do you even know where it is? Have you seen it? So, tell us in the chat box kind of where your successes or challenges are in terms of understanding what's involved, the materials that are involved in your curriculum, and then while you tell us some of those — those things, Jennifer, if you could help us understand a little bit more about — I think you mentioned earlier the meat of your curriculum, and I think, in some ways, it's really important for us to know what our curriculum says about how children learn and how we can individualize. You mentioned that as a really important piece, so how can we figure out what our curriculum's approach is to those things?

Jennifer: So, as we know, for infants and toddlers, relationship-based care is really going to be at the heart of a curriculum. And infants and toddlers learn best through nurturing and responsive interactions with their caregivers during daily routines, during play, and also as they're — as infants and toddlers are actively exploring their environment. So when you're digging into your curriculum's approach, you really want to pay attention to, how is my curriculum helping me build positive relationships with infants and toddlers. What kind of guidance are they offering in terms of, how do I set up the environment? Or how do I support children's development and learning during those caregiving routines? Are they providing some concrete strategies, or are they providing some vignettes and examples? That will really help you learn a bit more about their approach to teaching and learning. And especially for infants and toddlers, which we'll continue to talk about today, individualization is key, so hopefully your curriculum provides you some information about how you individualize schedules, routines, the environment, and the learning experiences based on the children that -- that you have in your group. So learning about children's interests and thinking about how to integrate their cultures and their home languages right into the classroom. And, if you have any children with disabilities or other special needs, thinking about how to make your environment and experiences really inclusive and accessible for all children.

Judi: Yeah, someone mentioned in the chat box that they need more information on dual language learners, so I think they're seeing that as -- as a gap in their curriculum in terms of how to support dual-language learners. And someone else mentioned also that sometimes the — especially Creative Curriculum is so intense that it's really hard to get teachers kind of up and run -- running on it to, like, read through all of the materials. So that seems like a challenge that several of our participants have mentioned.

Treshawn: Yeah, and it looks like Creative Curriculum comes with some videos, too, that teachers can go online and look at to help inform their lesson plans and things of that nature. So sometimes we don't have the time to sit and read a curriculum guidebook, but going online for a few minutes and looking at a video could also help. So for — So Jennifer, for infant-toddler curriculum, what do we know about the scope of learning domains that are covered by the curriculum? We're going to talk a little bit about scope and sequence, and think it'd be great to start to introduce our audience to some of these words. So what do we know about the scope of learning domains that are covered by curriculum?

Jennifer: Sure. So for infants and toddlers, we do know that learning is really integrated, and ideally your curriculum is going to be offering supports and guidance for how you really facilitate children's learning and development in all domains of development, which is, the scope of the curriculum is, which domains does it actually cover? And as they mentioned, we just finished a comprehensive review of infant-toddler curricula. So, most curricula are addressing the five infant-toddler domains in the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, or the ELOF, so that's really great, but it's important to note that sometimes the names of the domains, they might be a little bit different in your actual curriculum, so approaches to learning might

actually not be called out separately. It might be embedded within the social-emotional and cognitive domains. We've also seen that the domain of cognition has been called intellectual development. So it doesn't really matter what they're called, but just really understanding, what domains of development is your curriculum addressing. And in order to identify the scope of your curriculum, a good place to start is that curriculum manual. A lot of times, they will just list it out for you, what domains they cover. Sometimes, they don't, and you have to do a little more digging, but, again, looking at the curriculum's learning goals or the learning experiences. Oftentimes, they're actually organized around the domains of development, and they'll highlight any connections of how the — how the experiences sometimes support more than one domain of development, which I think is a helpful tool, especially for beginning teachers.

Judi: Yeah, definitely. I think that's super helpful. So, tell us a little bit about you — You mentioned learning experiences. So the learning experiences that the curriculum includes, like reading books together, singing songs, or sensory opportunities, and then the — the adult-child interactions, how do — What can we look for in a curriculum, and — and how would we — Or what could help us understand how those things relate to children's developmental stages?

Jennifer: So I think when most people hear the term "curriculum," that — that defined set of learning experiences is what comes to mind for them. And with infants and toddlers, who are developing so quickly in the first three years of life, I think it's really helpful to look at the sequence of learning experiences really as a helpful tool for teachers and family child care providers to support infants and toddlers as they're developing skills and concepts in each domain. And curricula address this in a variety of ways. So, some curricula will actually organize their activities by age. They might have activities that are appropriate for children 0 to 6 months or 6 to 12 months and so on and so forth, whereas other curricula will actually have just a set of experiences, but within each activity, they will provide a range of scaffolding strategies to support children at different developmental levels. And I think an example here is really helpful. So, your curriculum might have an activity around a texture trail, and for younger infants, it might suggest that teachers actually bring the infant close to the texture trail so they can explore it with their hands, and it may have some sample prompts to describe what the child is touching or what the teacher is doing, whereas, for older infants and toddlers, who may be a bit more mobile, it might suggest that you allow the children to crawl or walk over the texture trail and have them explore with different parts of their body, and the prompts might introduce a little bit more complex vocabulary or encourage a back-and-forth interaction based on what an older infant may be pointing at or what a toddler may be noticing about the texture trail.

Treshawn: That's a great example on how to still implement the curriculum, but meet the needs of multiple ages within your classroom. So, now let's talk about families. What resources does curriculum typically offer to provide engagement for families in their children's learning at home?

Jennifer: Yeah, so, building relationships with families is really helpful. It's mutually beneficial. It helps you learn more about the child so you can really create that individualized care environment. And then it's also a springboard for parents and families to extend children's learning at home. So, some of the resources that your curriculum might come with might include some parent letters or enrollment forms or interview templates, basically materials that are going to facilitate that two-way communication with families. And they also may provide... Curriculum may also provide some information on child development that's presented in a more family-friendly way. And some curricula then even provides some activities or strategies that parents might try out at home that are related to the curriculum's learning experiences.

Judi: I love that. I think that's so important, especially with infants and toddlers, right, to make sure that that communication is very clear with families. I'd love to hear from our participants, and I know that many of you use Creative Curriculum, but I'm not super familiar with the supports Creative Curriculum provides in terms of engaging with families and partnering with them around curriculum implementation. So for those of you who are listening, could you just tell us in the chat box, you know, what — what supports are there for engaging with families. Does your curriculum provide anything that you've found to be particularly helpful? Are there strategies that you use maybe on your own outside of your curriculum to engage families in understanding and participating in the curriculum? I would really love to hear what you have to say about that. And while you're telling us that, Jennifer, I noticed in the chat box somebody asked if there was any information about research that you've done recently on curriculum, and I know you have a resource to share with us about using curriculum, so maybe you could tell us a little bit about one of the

resources we have on the ECLKC.

Jennifer: Sure. So, what you're seeing on the screen is the Curriculum Quick Guide. It's available on the ECLKC. And this is a really helpful resource to walk you through this process that we just talked about. It is something that you can use by yourselves, or you can use it with your teaching team, or your ed manager, or coach or supervisor, and it helps you really dig deeply into everything that your curriculum offers. So, how does your curriculum address the learning environment or learning goals? And if you've already been implementing your curriculum for a little while, it goes one step further, and it provides you some reflection questions for you to really think about what's going well, what are some areas of challenge for you, and what are some ways you might be able to improve? So definitely check this resource out on the ECLKC to help you learn more about your curriculum and how you might enhance your own implementation of it.

Treshawn: Yeah, so the — the link to the Quick Guide is in the green resources tab on your screen. So, thank you, Jennifer, for really giving us an overview of what that is and helping teachers implement their curriculum with fidelity. If you guys have specific questions about your curriculum and how to use it with fidelity, go ahead and put it in the purple Q&A box, and we'll do our best to try to answer them throughout the webinar. So, we're going to take a little — move a little closer into the three things that Jennifer mentioned that will help you understand your curriculum and be able to use it with fidelity. So, like Judi mentioned earlier, it all starts with understanding your curriculum. So we're gonna — we're going to talk about specific parts of your curriculum, like the scope and sequence and individualization, and then help you — that help you use your curriculum as it was intended. And then we'll talk a little bit about how you can figure out what's going well for you and where you have challenges in using your curriculum. When you understand these three things together, then you'll be able to better prepare yourself to use your program's curriculum with some fidelity.

Judi: Exactly. Okay, so, let's think about the first thing — and Jennifer mentioned this briefly — the scope and sequence. So, the scope is referring to the areas of development addressed by the curriculum, such as your social-emotional development, cognitive, or physical development. And then the sequence is about the learning experiences that support and extend children's learning at various levels of development. Just like Jennifer was talking about, having a sensory trail that can be accessible by different children at different levels of development. So this will — In your curriculum, it'll be different activities or different learning materials that will start simply and then progress to be more complex as children grow and develop. And you can use your ongoing child assessment tool, whatever assessment tool that you're using, to really help you understand children's developmental levels and where they are, and then you use your curriculum sequence to plan for the learning experiences that are going to support the infants and toddlers where they are and also to help them move in their development. You can build your plan for learning experiences that are going to encourage and extend children's development.

Treshawn: Yeah, so, for example, you might notice that many of your mobile infants are trying to take their first step, either by cruising around the water table, or standing up independently, or moving around using their hands and their feet, and your curriculum scope states that this area of development falls within the physical or gross motor developmental domain. And your curriculum may provide or present a sequence of learning experiences, or activities, or teaching practices to support children as they're going through these different stages of large motor development. The activities and experiences may call for different types of materials and equipment, and so your curriculum may guide you on how to use routines and learning experiences for infants and toddlers and may also provide suggestions on how to tailor these experiences in ways that support children who are at developmental — different developmental levels or who have suspected delays or diagnosed disabilities. So using your curriculum scope and sequence will help you focus on specific areas of learning and development and plan appropriate learning opportunities to support the growth and development of children in those areas, and it'll also ensure that you're covering all areas of development and not just the ones that children are used to or the ones that you're naturally drawn to.

Judi: Exactly. And one thing that you'll notice probably with your curriculum is that the names of the developmental domains or the subdomains in the scope for your curriculum may not match exactly with the ELOF, and that's okay. So, for example, the ELOF Approaches to Learning domain talks about emotional and behavioral self-regulation, but you might find goals related to emotional and behavior self-regulation under social-emotional scope and sequence in your curriculum, and that's okay. They're still aligned in your

— If you're implementing your curriculum, that means you're still going to be supporting children's growth and development toward the ELOF goals. So one thing that we would advise you to do, depending on your curriculum, is to have a conversation with your supervisor, or your coach, or other colleagues about how your curriculum is aligned to the ELOF so you can understand that, and then this will really help you think as you go through the scope and sequence to include that as part of your planning each week.

Treshawn: So, we're going to give you guys -- We've talked a lot. We're going to give you guys a time to try this out. So we're going to give you an example, and then we want you to think about the scope and the sequence. So, for example, imagine you work with toddlers. For some of you, just think about your own group of children. And there's a few toddlers in your classroom that have shown interest in writing, and you notice that when you're taking notes, they want to take notes. They want to take your pen and make marks on your paper. So, tell us, what scope do you think this would fall under in your curriculum? Remember, scope refers to the different areas of curriculum — the different areas of development that our curriculum supports, so use this poll that you can see now, and which one do you think is the correct answer? Fine motor development. Does it fall under language and literacy? Does it fall under gross motor development? So, I'm getting some answers in. You can change your answer if you choose. And some of you are answering in the chat box. So, let's see what the results say. So, looks like the majority of people said this falls under small motor development, and some people think it falls under language and literacy and gross motor development. So, now let's think about sequence. We're going to talk about the answer in a little bit, but let's talk about sequence. In what ways might the curriculum sequence help support these children? Remember, sequence is about the materials and learning opportunities that are designed to support children's learning in this area. So select the activity from the poll here that might support children's development in this area, in writing. So we have giving children a thick crayon to use to make marks on a paper, adding small manipulatives that children can use to strengthen their grip, and then having writing tools available to use in the writing center. So, which answer do you choose? Okay. We've got some answers coming in. It's like I need a drum roll here. Let's give our answer. So, great. So, it looks like, under the fine motor development of scope, your curriculum may give you developmental progressions of children's early writing skills and may offer suggestions on developmentally appropriate activities and materials you can use to provide for children as they use thick crayons and help beef up their writing skills, so good. So, if you chose the small motor — One thing to note, though — Sorry. Before I get into that, one thing to note, though, for infants and toddlers is that development is really integrated and this means that children's development in one area can easily influence the development in different areas, and that's what Jennifer was talking about today. So, using our example, children's emergent writing can fall under the use of their fine motor skills, but it can also influence their language and literacy and perceptual development, so those of you that chose both fine motor and language and literacy, you're definitely on the right track.

Judi: And I would also say I see that a number of people said, "All three," or included having a variety of writing tools in the writing center. And I would say, for our older toddlers, you know, they might be getting to a place where having a designated spot for writing is appropriate. We want to remember, too, that if we have some younger toddlers or older infants who are starting to show interest in writing, that anywhere can be a writing center. We can offer them materials. We don't have to have a center in the -- in our classroom or in our program setting just for writing, which is kind of typically something you'd see in an older — maybe in a preschool classroom. But definitely offering writing materials, like you mentioned, giving them crayons to make marks on the paper is really the main idea that we want to have to provide children with opportunities to explore and grow in that area. So let's take a few minutes to watch a video of a teacher implementing learning experiences in her curriculum using different foods, and so, while you watch this video, you should be able to move your chat box so that you can keep your chat open while you're watching the video, but let's think about what her curriculum might have suggested in terms of scope and sequence. So what developmental domains is she focused on, and then what is the sequence of learning and development that she's focused on that's maybe leading her to plan this experience? So, let's watch.

[Video clip begins]

Woman No. 1: You like it? Mia has opened her banana all the way. She's getting all the banana out of there.

Huh, Mia? Yes.

[Laughter]

You're pulling that peel with your teeth, yes, and getting that banana open. How's it taste? Hmm? Does it taste the same or different than the avocado? Hmm? What do you think? You think it tastes the same or different? Hmm? Bananas are sweet. Huh? And the avocados are not so sweet. They're just plain. You see her avocado seed? Yes, this was in the middle of the avocado.

[Video clip ends]

Judi: So, let us know what you think. What do you think was maybe the scope or the developmental domains that her curriculum is focused on there? Tell us in the chat box what you think, and then, also, what are some of the skills that she's hoping to develop here along the developmental sequence? I see Deandra saying, "Allowing children to explore and compare." Sure. There could be suggestions within her curriculum that include experiences that encourage children to investigate the properties of materials, right? Soft and hard, sweet or plain, same and different. Language, definitely. She's offering them some real vocabulary words, some great vocabulary around the comparisons between. Self-help skills. Sure. "Can you get this banana open?" Right? That's one of the things that they were working on. I think going along with that is some fine motor skills, perhaps, and helping them to use their hands to explore lots of language. Science and sensory. Definitely. We can think — With this example, you all are hitting on the right marks there. This teacher was really intentional about her choice to use avocados. We saw an avocado seed in there the children had explored earlier. It's a food that's grown locally, and it's relevant to the kids in that program. So, they're experiencing different fruits with different tastes and different textures. In perceptual, motor, and physical development domain in the ELOF, we talk about healthy eating and learning to make nutritious food choices, so that's something that she's promoting. So, it's going to be important for you to talk with families and think about your own teaching philosophy about how you want to introduce new foods and potentially allowing children to explore the foods by kind of having this opportunity to squish or smash the foods and try them while they're doing that, kind of exploring them with all of their senses. It's definitely important to be mindful of the culture of the children and families in your programs. Make sure that you're implementing curriculum in a way that meets children's needs and then is also representative and respectful of the different cultures that you have represented in your group.

Treshawn: Yeah, that's great. I think using food is a great way to introduce lots of different developmental domains. Research tells us that children make more developmental gains when teachers use curricula materials and teaching strategies in the ways that the authors have designed them to be used, so when you take time to understand your curriculum scope and sequence, you gain a better understanding of why — of the why behind the curriculum's approach or how sequencing is intended to support children at various developmental levels. And by understanding the rationale and the purpose behind your curriculum's approach, you'll be better equipped to put it into practice in the way that it was designed, which is the whole point of this webinar is implementing your curriculum with fidelity, the way it was designed, and doing this while ensuring that you can still individualize for the children in your group setting.

Judi: Yeah, I've heard from teachers that they feel like sometimes implementing curriculum with fidelity means that they can't individualize, that they have to stick to a script and really can't flex to meet the needs of individual children. And that is not what we mean when we say implementing curriculum with fidelity. It's still possible to focus on and understand the scope and sequence and follow the guidance that your curriculum provides while also making sure that you have enough flexibility to meet the individual needs of all the children that you're working with, so let's think about that just a little bit more closely — the individualization. If we go back to the cake example that Treshawn mentioned at the beginning, sometimes a recipe will call for a specific ingredient. For example, maybe vanilla frosting. But if I was making a cake for Treshawn, I would not be using vanilla frosting because I know she loves chocolate. So what am I going to do? Well, I'm going to follow the directions. I'm still going to let the cake cool before I put the icing on, right, because that's a very important step when you're icing a cake. But instead of using vanilla, I'm going to try to adjust my baking to meet the needs, the interests of my friend, Treshawn, to make sure that I have a cake that comes out okay, but that's also going to be something that you want to eat. So this is kind of how we think about our curriculum and implementation. Individualization means that you're responding to

the needs of the children that you are working with. And especially with infants and toddlers, it's so important to understand their unique interests, their natural curiosity, their individual abilities so that we're really paying attention to where they are developmentally, what they need, and then our work is to implement a curriculum that really fits the children in our group, but also in a way that's going to meet each child where they are in terms of their schedule, in terms of the learning opportunities that you provide. The experiences for the children in your program should feel like they're designed for those specific children that you are working with.

Treshawn: Thanks for my chocolate cake.

[Laughter]

When you're working to individualize within your curriculum, there might be times where you're going to need to adjust your routines, your teaching practices, your learning opportunities, or classroom schedules to fit the needs of these specific children. And our Head Start Performance Standards — or Head Start Program Performance Standards, speak of making significant adaptations to curricula. However, what we're talking about today is for just minor changes. So when they talk about specifically major changes, the Head Start Performance Standards are talking about changes to the curriculum that affect the foundational components, like the learning goals and the scope and sequence or the content — the content in the specific learning domains, but it's okay to make minor adjustments to your routines and your learning opportunities and your schedules, because you're trying to be responsive to the needs of the children. But if you have questions about how to make these adjustments, speak to your supervisor or your coach. And just to give you an example, an infant might refuse breakfast before they come to school, and he may not be ready to engage in the learning experience that you've planned for him, along with his two favorite friends, so if you adjust the normal routine and you give him a snack first, knowing that you're going to adjust later in the day or even within the week and circle back to that experience to give him that learning opportunity so he can get the most out of the experience and not really try to force him to do it while he's hungry. You'll notice that meals and routines — Mealtimes and routines really help reinforce the skills that you're planning in your activities. Mealtimes, diapering, and different routines are a great time to build learning experiences for infants and toddlers because they're a big part of the day for babies, and routines are really helpful for children who are dual language learners because you can use this time to really interact with them one-on-one or in small groups, and you can really individualize during this time, as well. So, incorporating children's home languages when possible also helps promote children's language development. So we can individualize in lots of different ways.

Judi: Yeah, I think it's really important. We have some questions in the chat box about, "So, what does it — what does this mean to — to implement curriculum with fidelity?" And I think — And someone has mentioned, "I think it's really helpful staying true or faithful to the curriculum." So while you're still going to offer — You're going to have routines in place that you're going to use. You're going to have learning opportunities. The responsiveness to the child is where the individualization comes in, and that doesn't mean that you're not being true to the curriculum. You're still going to offer these opportunities, but at the same time, you have to be responsible to the children that you're working with to make sure that you're meeting their needs. So if you have dual-language learners, like you mentioned, you might want to have stories or finger plays in the languages represented by the children in your classroom. Or if you have... If you're in an area where you have children who — In a farming or rural area where a particular crop is in season, and you want to explore the process of growing this plant, like the avocados. Right? That's something that you can bring in that would be individualizing based on the children and families in your program while still staying true to the goals and the scope and sequence of your curriculum. If you work in a family child care setting, it's really important to make sure that you have some individualization because you really are meeting the needs of lots of different children who are at lots of different developmental stages and this will take a little bit of extra planning. And then, also, you know, what's really important is, if you have children in your programs who have suspected delays or identified disabilities, we have to — We just naturally have to adapt our learning opportunities and our environments to make sure that we're meeting the physical, social-emotional, or language abilities of the children in our programs. So if you work with a child or children who have identified disabilities, they'll also have an individualized family service plan, or an IFSP. That document gives you specific guidelines for how to meet the needs of those children. So all of those things are going to help you support individualizing while also making sure that you're maintaining the kind of major components of your curriculum. I think, Treshawn, we have an activity that

might help our participants understand this distinction a little bit.

Treshawn: Yeah, it is. So, we're going to play a game. We'll give you a couple of examples of individualization, and you tell us if we are still implementing the curriculum with fidelity. So, let's go with the first example. So, teacher Shayna's curriculum calls for exploring different textures during outdoor play, and it's been raining all week long, and she hasn't been able to get outside and take her toddlers out to do this activity, but, instead, teacher Shayna decides to explore different textures in different areas of the classroom. So is she still implementing the curriculum with fidelity? Go ahead and tell us in the — Go ahead and hit the poll or tell us in the chat box yes or no. What do you think? So, her curriculum calls for different textures outside. She can't get outside, so she does it inside instead. What do you think? Is that still implementing curriculum with fidelity? We've got lots of yeses. Yes, the correct answer is yes. So, sometimes you have to make modifications in your daily routine to meet both the needs of the children and the weather, but finding ways to still provide the children with the learning experiences that the curriculum suggests. So, that's one example. Let's try another one. Good job, guys.

Judi: So, in this case, we have Adriana. Her curriculum guidebook says that she's going to facilitate — She should be facilitating toddlers' gross motor, hand-eye coordination. So, gross motor, hand-eye coordination — coordination. And a suggestion in her guidebook is to have children throwing and catching soft balls outside on the playground. Not softballs, but balls that are soft. Adriana doesn't have any of those kind of balls, so, instead, she provides puzzles to help them work on their eye-hand coordination. So is this still implementing the curriculum with fidelity? Let's see what you think. I see some people are participating in the chat box. Treshawn, you want to go ahead and tell us?

Treshawn: Yeah. Some people needed some time to think about this one.

Judi: Oh, some time. This one is a little bit more challenging. So, while -- so here, we're — I mean, and this is a good question. But we're going to say no because when you think about the adaptation, it's not meeting the goal of the curriculum, which is to facilitate gross motor. So, she's still looking at motor skills and supporting fine motor or small motor skills, but the puzzles have a different — are a different material for supporting a different skill level, so we want to make sure that if you're going to make an adaptation, that you're still focused on meeting the developmental needs that are the focus of the learning opportunity, which, in this case, is going to be gross motor. So she would probably want to find something else to help children throw and toss. If she doesn't have a ball that's soft, she might have some other kind of soft material that would kind of get at the same learning goal.

Treshawn: Good. So, let's go with the last one. So, Carmelo's curriculum says to help infants begin to understand how their bodies move and where their bodies are in space by singing songs that call for identifying their body parts, so the curriculum suggests singing "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes" One of my favorites. Carmelo thinks older infants might enjoy this, but he has some younger infants who really smile and love when he sings "If You're Happy and You Know It" to them. So he finds time to sing that song to them each day during the day. And so he names the body parts. He claps his hands. He stomps their feet. He touches their nose, and he gently moves the children's hands and feet as he sings the words. So do you think he's developing his curriculum with fidelity still? Give you some time to answer. So, we've got... Well, I don't want to tell you the answer.

[Laughter]

Judi: The chat box is giving it away.

Treshawn: Yeah. Chat box giving it away, but that's good. So, yeah, the correct answer is yes. So, although he changed the song, like teacher Adriana, she changed the material, but he changed the song, but he's still staying true to the purpose of the activity, which is helping children understand how their bodies move. So, you guys did a great job on understanding how to implement your curriculum with fidelity.

Judi: So, let's take a look at a video of a teacher and child interacting in their learning environment, and I think this'll help us understand a little bit about the implementation. So, as you're watching, tell us in the chat box what you see in terms of this teacher using what she knows about the child to implement her curriculum with fidelity.

Treshawn: Give me a second while I get it up.

[Video clip begins]

Woman No. 2: Samaria.

[Toy clicking]

[Toy clicking]

Go get it. Go get it. Look. Right here. Look.

[Toy clicking]

Here we go.

[Clicking continues]

[Toy clicks]

You got it!

[Laughter]

Can you get it inside? Where'd it go? You see it? What happened?

[Toy clicking]

There it go.

Judi: So, I don't know if any of you noticed here. She... Obviously she's supporting this child in moving freely and independently in her environment, but, also she kind of challenges the child, and this has to do with, like, the sequencing, right? Like offering opportunities that will challenge a child. She puts the toy a little bit further away to encourage the child to move toward it, which I think is great. She puts the toy up a little bit higher to encourage the baby to try to stand. But this is all her understanding of the child's development, where she is, and then where she needs to go physically, and then just providing a really open and supportive environment for that. Maria mentioned that getting a child to move and explore in the environment is exactly the goal of that, so thank you for that.

Treshawn: So, we know that implementing curriculum with fidelity takes some thoughtful planning. First, you have to get to know your curriculum, like we talked with Jennifer about. Then you individualize for the children in your care. Now we're going to talk about the third strategy, which is reflecting on how you're using the curriculum. So, after you've followed the instructions on the cake box... Sorry. After you've followed the instructions on the cake box, you swapped out some ingredients to meet the needs of your chocolate-lover friend. Now it's time to let your curriculum — let your cake bake, not your curriculum. Sorry.

[Laughter]

During this time, you're reflecting on your work and observing your cake bake in the oven. In other words, you've studied your curriculum scope and sequence, including how they align with your classroom routine and teaching practices, and you've individualized some of the materials and learning experiences for the children in your care. Now you can reflect on your implementation.

Judi: Yeah, so, tell us in the chat box if you have thought about this. What parts of your curriculum are easy or hard to implement? Some of you have already mentioned some of those things. What's confusing? How well do you individualize? Are your learning environments, routines, and teaching practices in line with what the curriculum recommends? These are big questions about whether or not you're implementing curriculum with fidelity. And then you want to take some time to look, observe closely how the children are engaging in the environment and with the experiences you provide. Are they interested? Are they exploring the environment? Are they challenged? Tell us some things in the chat box maybe that would be clues that you might need to adjust your curriculum or your implementation of your curriculum. So, for example, you might notice that some toys in your room are never played with, so what would that be telling you, if you notice that there are toys that your children are just maybe not interested or never play with? What would

that tell you about how your curriculum is working? You might think that if a child is easily frustrated with an activity that's too hard for them, then they're not going to want to play with the toy or the activity. You might see that children are kind of wandering around and don't know where they need to be or are not interested in the toys they're offered. The toys might be too easy or too simple for them, or they might be too challenging. And sometimes this can lead to some behaviors that we find challenging. Oh, Mary has said, "Toys may not have been introduced properly." Ruby said, "Negative behavior," right? So, sometimes, if a child is bored with a toy, they're going to throw it instead of play with it because they're kind of done with it, right? So we want to make sure that we're focused on that. Let me see what else we have. "If the children are not engaging with materials, you might see some negative behavior." Yeah. So, that's a good thing. If you're noticing negative behaviors, it's a good indication that you might want to focus a little bit more closely on the activities and materials that you're offering.

Treshawn: So, as we close, we want to remind you that curriculum developers design a set of instructions and activities and have suggested books and materials that would enhance children's learning if they're done properly, and as teachers and family child care providers, it's our responsibility to really follow this curriculum in order to achieve the learning outcomes intended. With that being said, we encourage you to get to know your curriculum so that you can be confident in implementing it. Individualize the way you use your curriculum so that you can meet the needs of all children. And reflect with a colleague or a coach or by yourself after a full day, a week of teaching, and think about, what are you doing well, and what are some challenges you've noticed with implementing the curriculum? Being reflective and thoughtful about your teaching practices really helps us get the most — Really helps children get the most out of their day. And if you look at your viewer's guide, you'll see that we've given you a few questions to reflect on about your curriculum and teaching practices, and we encourage you to reflect on these questions and see how you've made a difference in the way that you use your curriculum.

Judi: That's great. So, the last two things we want to highlight. First is the Safe Foundations, Healthy Futures campaign, which many of you have probably heard of. This is — We can support this through research-based curriculum because they're designed to keep children safe by giving you a structure for your day. And when your curriculum is planned for and followed as it's intended, you have more time to be present with your children and enjoy the time together and provide a safe and nurturing learning environment so that you don't have to worry about kind of implementing or paperwork that's involved, or planning. You have it planned, and you know your curriculum well. Then you can implement it and really be present for your kids. The goal of this campaign is to make sure that all children are safe and to eliminate preventable risk to children's health, safety, and well-being, and here at "Teacher Time," we're supporting this effort by giving you some really practical ways to implement your curriculum with fidelity. You can follow the latest news and information on the Safe Foundations, Healthy Futures campaign by joining the Safe Foundations, Healthy Futures community on MyPeers. Also available in the resource widget are links to an ECLKC page that provides resources on creating a culture of safety.

Treshawn: So, we encourage you to, again, join us on MyPeers, the "Teacher Time" community, the Safe Foundations, Healthy Futures MyPeers community. Go online and give your info for the Text4Teachers and ELOF2GO. Those are both in English and Spanish now. And then we want to remind you about the next upcoming "Teacher Time" episodes in January and in February. And then all of these links can be found in your viewer's guide.

Judi: So, great. Well, that brings us to the end of our hour. Please go to MyPeers if you have additional questions about implementing curriculum with fidelity. You guys have been wonderful in this chat box, supporting each other and giving each other tips and ideas for how to implement curriculum with fidelity. So go to "Teacher Time," the community on MyPeers, and continue the conversation there, and Treshawn and I are in there, too, so we'd love to chat with you on MyPeers. And we hope you all have a wonderful New Year, and we'll see you next year on our next "Teacher Time" episode.

Treshawn: And hang on for the evaluation link because it's coming. Go ahead and fill that out and send it to colleagues that may not have registered and have them fill it out, as well. Nice chatting with everyone.

Judi: Yeah, thanks, everyone.