

15-minute In-service Suite: Implementing a Curriculum Responsively Building on Children's Interests

Narrator: Welcome to this presentation of the 15-minute In-service Suite on implementing a curriculum responsively by building on children's interests. This suite describes how education staff in all program settings can implement curricula and partner with families to provide learning experiences that respond to children's interests. This suite is one in a series of modules that help education staff and home visitors implement a research-based curriculum responsively, building on children's and families' cultures and on children's learning, development, and interests.

The framework for effective practice, or house framework, helps us think about the elements needed to support children's preparation and readiness for school. The elements are the foundation, the pillars, and the roof. When connected to one another, they form a single structure that surrounds the family in the center, because as we implement each component of the house in partnership with parents and families, we foster children's learning and development. This suite supports the left pillar of the house framework, implementing research-based curriculum and teaching practices.

So, why is building on children's interests while implementing curriculum important? Children play an active role in their own learning. When children engage in experiences of interest, they are more likely to demonstrate curiosity and sustain attention for longer periods of time. This helps them engage in deeper explorations. Over time, this intense, deep engagement leads to learning and development across the ELOF domains. Likewise, education staff play an active role in using a curriculum's resources to plan environments, learning experiences, and interactions that respond to children's interests.

Teacher: Usually, Darron, he likes reading books. One or two of them were his favorite books, but as you see, I put different books, and he didn't want it. He said, "No, not this. Not this."

Narrator: To learn about children's individual interests, look at formal and informal observation data and have conversations with families. If you're a home visitor, ask families to share what they have observed about their children's interests. Even the youngest infants show us what interests them. They may turn their heads, looking and listening in the direction of an interesting object or sound, or they may reach for, touch, grasp, and even chew on interesting objects. As infants become more mobile, they may roll, push, or crawl toward objects and people that catch their attention. Older infants may communicate their interest in an object by pointing. Toddlers and preschoolers might express their interest verbally, saying, "That," or, "I want," or, "Can I have?" Children show excitement and curiosity by talking about what interests them throughout their day. When children ask you to repeat the same learning experience, hear the same story, or talk about the same topics, they are showing you what interests them. Teachers and family child care providers use the curriculum's guidance responsively to set up a learning environment that provides children with opportunities for choice, play, exploration,

and experimentation. They may also adjust the curriculum's activities or teaching practices to make them more meaningful and engaging for children in their group. Additionally, planning scheduled time for small groups, large groups, and individual interactions helps teachers and family/child providers learn about children's interests. Home visitors collaborate with families to use their home-based curriculum to build on children's interests. For example, home visitors may support families as they communicate during routines and learn about children's interests. Together, home visitors and families may share observations about how children engage when they are interested in objects or topics. Implementing a program's curriculum in ways that respond to children's interests is an ongoing process. The time teachers, family child care providers, and home visitors take to notice children's interests and discuss them with families provides meaningful information that promotes children's learning across domains.

We hope you have new ideas to expand on the ways you learn about children's interests. Use this information to partner with families and to provide environments, learning experiences, and interactions that respond to children's interests. For more information, see the complete 15-Minute suite on implementing a curriculum responsive to children's interests, and take a look at our tips and tools and helpful resources.