

## CURRICULUM PLANNING

Curriculum is not just about activities. Rather, it must reflect children's abilities, questions and interests, and provide experiences that are intentionally created with specific performance standards in mind. Try curriculum planning in this step-by-step manner:

<b>How To Get Started</b>	<b>Ask Yourself</b>
Identify the developmental characteristics of the age/specific population.  Regularly assess individual abilities.	
Define two (2) performance standards for each of the four (4) domains on which to focus.	What performance standards are appropriate to the children's present development?  How will learning styles and varying abilities be accommodated?
Select an appropriate experience and determine the best context(s) (thematic/project investigations; play based/learning centers) and processes for children to be engaged.	What interests are going to be supported? Can children be involved in the planning? What content, concepts should be introduced? What context is best suited for the experience?
Distinguish among teaching behaviors and strategies.	How involved should the teacher be: direct, guide or model? What teaching strategies will work best? Have diversity and language issues been considered?
Organize the environment and materials.	What areas need to be changed? What materials are needed for introducing, sustaining, enriching the children's inquiry?
Observe learning experiences and projects carefully to assess and facilitate future planning.	What knowledge/content are the children gaining (assessment)? What experiences are working? Not successful? What further questions do the children have? Are there enough materials and time to explore? What materials, teacher strategies are necessary to sustain the experience? Is the interest and inquiry coming to an end? What other interests are becoming prevalent? What performance standards are emerging/ mastered? What performance standards are most appropriate to plan for next?

Planning in this way may appear daunting at first, but with practice they will become routine for you and a part of the daily routine. The following tips for starting may help:

- Strengthen your knowledge of the children. Observe and document their behaviors and interests. This will provide information for selecting performance standards. Begin by selecting two or three child performance standards as focal points.

- Collaborate with a colleague by discussing reflections and ideas as a way of supporting and encouraging each other. Adults also benefit from the construction of knowledge in a social context.
- Start in one area of the room. Observe and reflect on the interests and questions that arise when children work with materials in the art area, with blocks or at the sensory table, for example. Sometimes a response at the moment is the appropriate teaching strategy; other times reflective discussion and collaboration with colleagues better serves children's ideas.
- Take the children's ideas, interests and questions seriously. Consider how you might engage their thinking, keeping in mind curriculum expectations, particularly those in language, literacy, math and science.

Excerpted from *A Guide to Early Childhood Program Development, State of Connecticut-State Board of Education, 2007*