

**Appendix 3A**

**Curriculum in Early Childhood Family Education: Philosophy and Implementation**

**2001**

**Purpose:**

The attached instrument has been developed for the following purposes:

1. To inform program staff, parents and any other interested individuals about the philosophy of curriculum in Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) and implications for implementation of the philosophy.
2. To guide ECFE staff in the cycle of planning, implementation, evaluation, and goal-setting for the purpose of program improvement.

This document can be used as a companion to the “Quality Indicators for Early Childhood Family Education Programs” when curriculum is a particular focus in program planning and self-evaluation.

**Introduction:**

Because Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) is available to every family with young children, and every family has diverse needs, no single curriculum is appropriate. There is, however, a clear rationale for an approach to curriculum based on the assumptions/beliefs about curriculum listed in this document.

These assumptions/beliefs are organized within an adapted version of the four categories of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) **definition of curriculum** listed below.

**Curriculum:**

An organized framework that delineates:

* the CONTENT (KNOWLEDGE, PERCEPTIONS and SKILLS) children/parents are to learn/experience,
* the PROCESSES through which children/parents achieve the above goals,
* the STAFF’s role in helping children/parents achieve these goals, and
* the CONTEXT in which teaching and learning occur.

The assumptions/belief statements on the attached chart state why ECFE programs do the things they do to achieve the goals of ECFE listed below:

**Mission of Early Childhood Family Education:**

To strengthen families through the education and support of all parents\* in providing the best possible environment for the healthy growth and development of their children.

**Goals of Early Childhood Family Education:**

1. Parent-child relationships support the child’s development in:
   1. physical well being and motor development,
   2. social and emotional development,
   3. approaches to learning (e.g., curiosity, persistence, attentiveness, reflection, interpretation, imagination, invention),
   4. language development and communication skills, and
   5. cognition and general knowledge.
2. Parents\* understand the importance of what they do with their children and how it changes over time.
3. Parents have the knowledge and realistic expectations to anticipate and meet the developmental needs of their children.
4. Parents demonstrate sensitive and responsive care and interaction with their children.
5. Parents and children experience a smooth transition from early childhood programs and services into kindergarten and the larger school system.
6. Parents are involved in their children’s learning and education in the school-age years.
7. Families participate in formal and informal social networks in their communities that support effective parenting.
8. Families are knowledgeable about and appropriately use community resources.

\* The word “parents” includes all individuals who function in a primary parenting role.

These goals, based on theory and research, allow for flexibility in local community implementation that includes input from parents as to their goals for themselves and their children. Curriculum, as defined above, reflects avenues through which these goals are accomplished.

**How to Use Document:**

The “implications for practice” listed on the following chart correspond with each assumption/belief on the chart. These “implications for practice” offer some recommended ways for staff to act on the assumptions and beliefs in order to accomplish the ECFE goals listed previously.

This document is designed so that it can be used by ECFE program staff and others to assess the level at which programs are implementing curriculum activities that are likely to accomplish program goals. Implementation can be assessed as to whether each implication for practice is to be achieved or has been achieved at one of the following five levels:

1. need more information to respond
2. needs to be done
3. planning stage
4. partially implemented
5. implemented with ongoing reassessment

Suggested uses of this document include the following:

* Periodic curriculum planning and goal setting
* Curriculum reassessment after several years of operation
* Orientation of new and current staff to curriculum in ECFE
* Staff development and performance evaluation

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