Infant/Toddler Curriculum and Individualization

Jessica A Sugrue, M.S.
Child Care Training Specialist
Afterschool/Early Childhood Master Professional-Workshop Trainer
Child Development Bureau-Division for Children, Youth and Families
Department of Health and Human Services-State of New Hampshire

A Partnership between the ACF Region 1 Child Development Bureau and Health and Human Services
Module 3: Curriculum and Individualization

- Understand the role of the consultant in curriculum and individualization
- Define curriculum for infants and toddlers
- Explore distinctions between curriculum in early childhood settings
- Revisit key terms: developmentally appropriate curriculum and individualized curriculum
- Explore resources and tools for classroom and program practice and supporting infants, toddlers and their families
- Understand importance of family engagement
What is the role of the child care consultant?

- Scan the environment—are they using a curriculum

- Ask program—what is their curriculum plan—do they individualize for infants and toddlers?

- Share resources and tools to help them develop curriculum

- Is relationship based practice in curriculum implementation
The development that occurs from birth to three lays the foundation for all future learning (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2000)

In your partner groups explore the following questions:

✓ What is curriculum?
✓ What is infant and toddler curriculum?
✓ How is it different?
✓ What does it feel like?
✓ Why is it important?
At its simplest, curriculum is defined as WHAT TO TEACH and HOW TO TEACH IT.
(Frede and Ackerman 2007)

With infants and toddlers, teaching looks different as it is rooted in relationships and context.
Activity One: 
Distinctions Between Curricula for Infants and Toddlers

In your partner groups complete the following:

- Explore Table 1 on pg. 12
- Differences between infant/toddler and preschool
- Choose two aspects of curriculum—look at both infant and toddler and preschool
- Develop a brief summary to “teach the group”
- Share anything you think is missing
- Share why this important for consultants to consider
Why Individualize Curriculum?

The purpose of individualization of curriculum is to ensure that planned activities and experiences appropriately support the unfolding development of each child at his or her unique pace.
• “In high quality infant/toddler programs, the interests of the child and the belief that each child has a curriculum are what drive practice.” (Lally, 2000)

• The adult’s role is to discover the infant’s curriculum and support it’s implementation.
What is the adult role of facilitating curriculum development?

- A basic knowledge of infant/toddler development
- Ability to be flexible
- Awareness
- Creating experiences and interactions

Why might this be challenging?
Individualized Curriculum Process

- Observation
- Implementation
- Documentation
- Planning
- Reflection
Observation

What skills has this child mastered in:
* communication or language
* cognition
* motor development
* social skills
* emotional development/self regulation

What skills or activities appear to lead to frustration or challenge?

What interactions, objects, or activities engage his attention?

How does she react to objects and others around her?
Documentation

“Documentation is the intentional recording of daily experiences in the infant/toddler environment in order to capture and communicate children’s learning and development.”
Supporting Reflective Practice

• What developmental skill or activity does she appear to be working on?
• What objects or activities hold his interest?
• What is she trying to do?
• How did my action affect the outcome of the child’s experience?
• What questions do I have for the family about this?
Planning

• Ensure experiences planned for the infant/toddler provide opportunities for growth across domains.
• Remember to plan for each segment of the I/T program: Relationships, Routines, & Environments
Revisit! The Role of the Consultant

The consultant should:

• Review child files/portfolios for ongoing documentation of child progress
• Review child development plans and determine if there is evidence of – a focus on relationships as a context for learning, provision for coordination among caregivers in the room, attention to the effects of staff transitions on children
• Observe the environment – is it set up to help children reach their goals?
KEY PARTNERS AND RESOURCES

- ITERS-R Infant and Toddler Rating Scale
- Center for Disease Control
- Zero to Three
- State individual Early Learning Standards
- Family Centered Early Supports and Services (FCESS)
- Strengthening Families
- Home visiting
- Early Intervention and Part C Services
In your partner groups, discuss resources in your community for infants, toddlers and their families-

- What should be added to this list?
- What are effective strategies to share this information?
Parents are the first teachers. What does this mean? How is it implemented?
The Role of the Consultant

The consultant should:

• Review plans – is there evidence of parent involvement in curriculum development?

• Review policies and procedures related to inclusion of children with special needs

Let’s take a closer look:

In your partner groups look at Activity III, discuss, reflect and be prepared to share your findings.
In Summary

• Consultants should be prepared to discuss curriculum and guide practice on what quality curriculum looks like

• Understand the fundamentals of relationship, experience and process as it pertains to the Infant/Toddler learning environment

• Support programs to understand steps they can take towards evaluation of their curriculum