

**2015 CCPRC Annual Meeting
Session Summary: Workshop A-4**

Session: Workshop A-4 What Does Curricula Mean in the Context of Working with Infants and Toddlers? And How do we Verify How Curricula are Being Used? 12.02.15

1. Descriptive Information

<p>Workshop A-4 Independence H & I</p> <p><i>What Does Curricula Mean in the Context of Working with Infants and Toddlers? And How do we Verify How Curricula are Being Used?</i></p> <p>What is the state of evidence on curricula for infants and toddlers? This discussion will include: (1) current definitions and key elements of “empirically based curricula” from key stakeholders and (2) current practices for reporting on and confirming the use of an empirically based curriculum for infants and toddlers.</p>	<p>Facilitator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Helen Raikes, University of Nebraska-Lincoln <p>Presenters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rachel Chazan Cohen, University of Massachusetts-Boston• Martha Zaslow, Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) and Child Trends <p>Discussant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Amanda Bryans, OHS, ACF <p>Scribe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Danielle Hegseth, Child Trends
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2. Documents in Session Folder (Please list any electronic documents or web links used during the session.)

- PowerPoint slides
- Table of people who have put forth definitions of an infant toddler curriculum

3. Brief Summary of Presentations – Introduction

Facilitator How does the audience think about infant toddler curriculum? Have they been asked to use or verify the use of an infant toddler curriculum? Want to hear from the audience and set the stage for this being a dialogue.

Audience member: Struggling with how to verify; right now just having purchased it is the best they can do – but that doesn't tell us anything about how it's being used/implemented.

Audience member: cost analysis and workforce analysis the big question is what do you need in terms of qualifications for working with infants and toddlers. With curricula, same question – what qualifications does a teacher need to implement an infant toddler curriculum?

Audience member: Writing a new infant toddler curriculum, one things struggling, is how to emphasize process when working with babies, while at the same time recognizing that many caregivers are not ready to operate at an abstract level in terms of how to “do” process.

Facilitator: process is such an important part of curriculum, it's so important. What about demonstrating the evidence base other than it comes from principals of early childhood development – I was feeling bad until I realized that that is the case with most infant toddler curricula.

Audience Member: Working with policy makers, trying to make decisions about approving curricula, how they understand the use of curricula to inform and facilitate instruction.

Audience Member: Is verifying use different than choosing a preschool curriculum, if so, how and why?

Audience Member: Developing an observational tool to measure the quality of interactions between teachers and infant toddlers – now looking at tools for supporting quality in those classrooms, so where does the curriculum fit in when thinking about observational tools – where do these two things intersect.

Audience Member: Looking at how other professionals that support children, OTs, PTs, etc. – how do they understand infant toddler curriculum and how can they use those tools, knowledge.

Not sure if we have any answers, but hopefully the conversation will enrich the field. Based on how many people are in this room shows how this has changed, the focus is shifting somewhat with infants and toddlers the new frontier for early learning. We are seeing an increase in the professionalization of the workforce, but without the pay and recognition of these teachers while there is recognition that these age groups are different than preschool. The incredible reliance on relationships and adults makes this a very special time. This has resulted in systems asking for more evidence based for curricula for infants and toddlers. It is evidence derived, but not evidenced based. Also, is “curriculum” even the right word for this age group? Just like school readiness for infants and toddlers?

- **Summary of Presentation #1: The What and the How**

How are people defining infant toddler curriculum? It is different for this age group – we have the what: the curricula and the how: the pedagogy. We can't separate these so how do we bring them together in an appropriate way for infants and toddlers.

The WHAT

Activities [and experiences that](#) must be based on children's sleep wake cycle, their interests and abilities. Environments should be intentionally designed to support development and these types of activities.

The HOW

The activities and environment is based on deep knowledge of development, the mechanisms, need to show this knowledge in their responsive interactions. They also know the family – another key piece with infants and toddlers; there is an imperative to work with families daily to talk about needs. There is also the process of individualizing, which is the process of ongoing assessment, observation and documentation – there is implementing the activity, but you have to cycle back and document the impact.

Implications for practice

This is not an adult lead kind of learning, it is child lead. The infant and toddler have their own agenda and we have to identify that. Professional development – Teachers need to understand child development and assessment in order to be successful in what we're calling a curricula and how they interact and form relationships with children and their families.

- **Summary of Presentation #2: The Verification Process**

We really are embracing a definition of curricula that embraces the “what” and the “how,” but with verification we're talking about owning a particular curriculum. The challenge is including both the “what” and the “how” – when looking for exemplars for identifying the verification of the “what” and the “how” we did find good examples.

Verification of the WHAT

Requesting documentation that meets early learning guidelines, or one from a set the state has chosen, it will specify what needs to go into the activities, but not specify a named curriculum.

Verification of the HOW

Ongoing process of identifying goals; assess and reassess whether the infant toddler is learning and then identify the goal.

Examples

1. Head Start Monitoring Protocol
2. NAEYC Accreditation
3. New Mexico Ongoing Documentation of the Cycle

What is missing?

A focus on implementation in the context of supportive and sustained relationship – is the feedback of families? How can we address this? We have new observational measures and we need to think about how to build this into our infant and toddler studies.

4. Brief Summary of Discussion

In head start we have been wrestling with the process of implementing and measuring curriculum use by having purchased a curriculum as a proxy for curriculum implementation. But now we're thinking about fidelity and we want to get more sophisticated about measuring how implementation is happening in classroom and the implications for low or high fidelity. The challenge we have is how to make sure we're providing them all the opportunities of education without having them experience failure because they haven't progressed on a prescribed time table. You have to know where each baby is progressing to address their needs individually and facilitating their support, we have to be there at the right time with the right support for that baby.

How do we verify knowledge and use of knowledge? When you think about activities in curricula it's these very formulaic activities, but provocations is a different way of thinking about activities in a way that interesting to the children. Then you observe and responsively interact with the kids as they discover and explore – this ought to be a central process in infant toddler curricula.

5. Summary of Key issues raised (facilitators are encouraged to spend the last 3-5 minutes of workshops summarizing the key issues raised during the session; bullets below are prompts for capturing the kinds of issues we're looking for)

This is a new frontier but we should remember the joy of working with babies so the right people can be drawn to the work. It's difficult to think and talk about curriculum in the context of infant and toddlers, but we can think about this without losing the focus on the child.

- *Emerging findings that may be of particular interest to policy-makers and ACF?*

How do we house measures and support people's use of them? Teacher qualifications for infant toddler teachers; these teachers need to be the most qualified and experienced teachers in the field. Individualization and goal setting is so important to be used consistently across age groups. It's critical to consider the importance of coaching in the workforce – thinking about coaching in terms of curriculum implementation.

- *Methodological issues including innovative methodologies that may help maximize resources available for research and evaluation?*

The model has to be appropriate to the theory of the program, how do you capture or define the observation and planning process.

- *Follow-up activities suggested to address questions and gaps (e.g., secondary analyses of data, consensus meetings of experts, research synthesis or brief, webinar, etc.)?*
- *Recommendations about future ACF child care research directions and priorities?*

Overall Purpose:

- Capture "flavor"
- Major focus

Have a dialogue on infant toddler curriculum to provide guidance to the field on how to think about infant toddler curriculum. Is this right? Should it be adjusted in some way?

- New developments
- Controversial topics

How to support high quality workforce, high qualifications to even be an infant toddler teacher

- Implications for future research

The importance of the social emotional development of infants and toddlers; the curriculum model has to be appropriate to the theory of the program, how do you capture or define the observation and planning process.

“CUPID” group looking at how what competencies infant toddler providers need to know – want to take this “what” “how” framework and see what we are and are not capturing. One big finding they currently have is how parenting and relationship styles really contribute to their knowledge about infant toddler development.

What is the purpose of verification? How we do it and why, the verification process will look different for both processes, what does an abbreviated verification process look like? This would be something a program can do versus what would be done for research purposes.

Another important consideration is the “who” – this cannot be left out of the discussion. Who is trying to implement the curriculum – this is not just about accountability but also about inspiration and becoming a part of what is implemented in the classroom.

Development of a tool to understand how teachers are individualizing instruction – what kinds of questions could be asked at that higher level? What are the systems questions we could be asking to better support teaches?

What are the tools that help teachers observe and how do we support a workforce with this?

For infants and toddlers, should we begin with assessment? And then go on to set goals and scaffold?

- Any direct connection to current legislation