

## Guidelines for Selecting High Quality Curriculum for Young Children

There isn't clear agreement in the field of early care and education on how to define "curriculum". It has been suggested that the key to quality curriculum for young children is in the "how", or the manner in which learning experiences are planned and implemented (Gronlund, 2006). The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), suggests "... it (curriculum) provides the framework for developing a coherent set of learning experiences that enables children to reach identified goals." (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, p.42). Others suggest many elements of practice fall under the umbrella of curriculum – not only the content (what children are learning), but also the arrangement of the learning environment, routines and schedules, how children and teachers interact, and how learning is assessed (Epstein, 2007).

One comprehensive description suggests there are four essential elements of an early childhood curriculum framework (Grisham-Brown, et.al. 2005). In some cases, one resource will not meet the criteria for all four components; a variety of sources will need to be selected to address all elements. These elements include:

- **Assessment**– to determine children's developmental levels in any given area and used as a *starting point to guide instruction* – i.e. – program planning
- **Scope and Sequence** – defines developmental domains or content areas such as social-emotional, motor, language/literacy, etc. and learner goals, generally presented in a sequence, usually developmental from simple to difficult/least mature to more mature skills
- **Activities & Teaching Strategies** – daily routines and schedule, arranging the environment, children's experiences, and what teachers do and say to support learning
- **Progress Monitoring** – sometimes referred to as "on-going assessment" - a systematic process of collecting information about a child's learning over time to measure progress toward identified learning outcomes

The following scoring rubric was developed based on this comprehensive description of curriculum and is intended for use as a guide when selecting or developing early childhood curriculum of high quality.

### References

- Copple, C. & Bredekamp, S. Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children Birth through Age 8. NAEYC, Washington, DC, 2009
- Epstein, A. The Intentional Teacher – Choosing the Best Strategies for Young Children's Learning. NAEYC, Washington, DC, 2007
- Grisham-Brown, J., Hemmeter, M.L., & Pretti-Frontczak, K. Blended Practices for Teaching Young Children in Inclusive Settings. Paul Brookes Pub., Baltimore, MD, 2005
- Gronlund, G. Making Early Learning Standards Come Alive – Connecting Your Practice & Curriculum to State Guidelines. Redleaf Press, St. Paul, MN, 2006

***“Research clearly demonstrates that children learn more in programs where there is a well planned and implemented curriculum. Thus, it is essential for every early childhood setting – be it a school, a center, or a family child care home – to have a high-quality curriculum in written form and for teachers and care providers to use it to guide their planning and implementation of learning experiences.”***

Bredekamp & Copple, 2009, p. 41-42