



# Building a Professional Learning Community in Childcare

**Build relationships and allow for collaboration between teachers and parents.**



Dr. Theresa Vadala

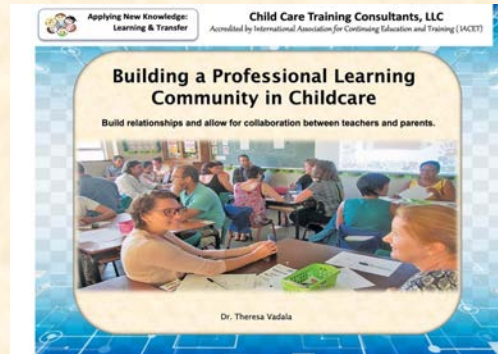


**Building a Professional Learning Community in Child Care**

**Theresa Vadala, Ed. D**

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<b>Title: NV CKA6.A Building a Professional Learning Community in Child Care</b> <b>CKA 6: Family and Community Relationships</b>	<b>2 Hours</b>	<b>0.2 CEUs</b>
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**Dr. Theresa Vadala**  
**(Instructor & Curriculum Designer)**





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### **Child Care Training Consultants LLC., Goal**

The goal is to empower educators as they take Child Development Associate (CDA) courses to make a powerful difference in the lives of young children!

### **Mission Statement**

"Child Care Training Consultants, LLC's is committed to provide research-based professional growth and development training courses primarily focused on the Child Development Associate. The CDA is the nation's premier credential that is transferable, valid, competency-based and nationally recognized in all 50 states, territories, the District of Columbia, community colleges and the United State Military.

### **Vision**

Child Care Training Consultants, LLC's vision is to provide the early childhood community with courses based on CDA competency standards to obtain their CDA Credential and assist in reaching their goal as an exceptional early childhood educator to ultimately achieve higher child outcomes.





### **About the Instructor**

Theresa has over 30 years experience in the field of Early Childhood Education. During that time, she served as a Preschool Teacher, Disabilities Coordinator, Program Facilitator, and Director of an Early Childcare Program. She has a Doctoral Degree in Educational Leadership with Specialization in Curriculum and Instructional Design. Theresa is a Professional Growth & Development Trainer and Curriculum Designer and offers web-based courses internationally. She is the Executive Director/Owner of the training organization Child Care Training Consultants, LLC., (CCTC).



### **Business Description**

Child Care Training Consultants, LLC. (CCTC) is an accredited provider (AP) with the International Association for Continuing Education and Training (IACET) that provides Continuing Education Units (CEU) for adult education nationally. The business is also a recognized training organization with the Council for Professional Recognition, Child Development Associate Council (CDA), National Credentialing Program.



# Learning Objectives

By the end of the training, participants will be able to:

- Identify opportunities for collaboration, barriers and how to commit to working together.
- Identify methods of communication, building parent-provider relationships and support.
- Identify ways to create a welcoming environment in the childcare facility.



# Learning Outcomes

By the end of the training, participants will be able to:

- ▶ Identify describe opportunities for collaboration, barriers and how to commit to working together.
- ▶ Identify 2-5 methods of communication, building parent-provider relationships and support.
- ▶ Identify 3-5 ways to create a welcoming environment in the childcare facility.





# Agenda

## **Part 1: A Professional Learning Community**

- Opportunities for Collaboration
- Barriers
- Commitment

## **Part 2: Supporting Parents**

- Communication
- Parent-Provider Relationship
- Supporting Parents

## **Part 3: Planning and Programming**

- A welcoming Environment
- Childcare Facility Environment
- Curriculum

## **Review**

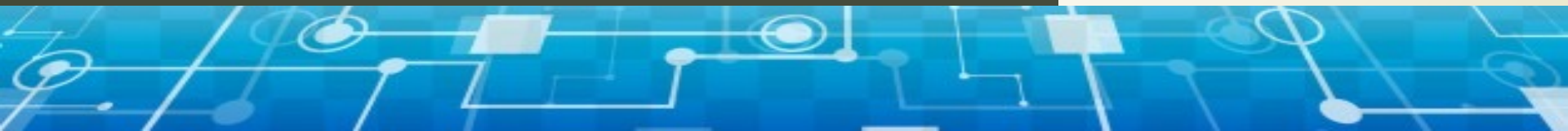
## **References**



## Part 1: What is a Professional Learning Community?

Educators committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve. Professional learning communities operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous, job-embedded learning for educators.

**The primary goal is to reach student achievement**





## What is a Professional Learning Community?

- The professional learning community model flows from the assumption that the core mission of formal education is not simply to ensure that students are taught but to ensure that they learn. This simple shift—from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning—has profound implications for schools.
- School mission statements that promise “learning for all” have become a cliché. But when a school staff takes that statement literally—when teachers view it as a pledge to ensure the success of each student profound changes begin to take place. The school staff finds itself asking, What school characteristics and practices have been most successful in helping all students achieve at high levels? How could we adopt those characteristics and practices in our own school? What commitments would we have to make to one another to create such a school? What indicators could we monitor to assess our progress? When the staff has built shared knowledge and found common ground on these questions, the school has a solid foundation for moving forward with its improvement initiative.





# Opportunities for Collaboration

Educators who are building a professional learning community recognize that they must work together to achieve their collective purpose of learning for all. Therefore, they create structures to promote a collaborative culture. Collaboration begins with finding time to connect with colleagues, to share thoughts, and provide support. Here are two tips for successful collaboration:

**1. Build Relationships:** Teaching is emotionally draining, and the best colleagues can be there for you in all types of situations. Pop your head into a colleague's classroom and let your laughter loose.

- ▶ Remember to ask your colleagues to share their trials and triumphs with you, too. Sometimes just asking fellow teachers how their day is going opens up the doors for productive and bonding conversations.
- ▶ The relationships you build with colleagues aren't just good for your mental well being; they're also the foundation of collaboration that can result in increased student achievement. Just like building relationships with students lays the groundwork for academic success, building relationships with colleagues lays the groundwork for effective collaboration.



# Opportunities for Collaboration

**2. Find Time to Collaborate:** Shared planning time allows teachers to collaborate during the school day. With shared planning time, teachers are able to make strides in planning rigorous and appropriate lessons for their students.

- Ideally, your school provides you time within the school day to collaborate with colleagues.
- The powerful collaboration that characterizes professional learning communities is a systematic process in which teachers work together to analyze and improve their classroom practice. Teachers work in teams, engaging in an ongoing cycle of questions that promote deep team learning. This process, in turn, leads to higher levels of student achievement.



# Removing Barriers

Schools must also give teachers time to analyze and discuss state and district curriculum documents. More important, teacher conversations must quickly move beyond “What are we expected to teach?” to “How will we know when each student has learned?” In addition, faculties must stop making excuses for failing to collaborate. Few educators publicly assert that working in isolation is the best strategy for improving schools. Instead, they give reasons why it is impossible for them to work together. In the final analysis, building the collaborative culture of a professional learning community is a question of will. A group of staff members who are determined to work together will find a way.





# Commitment

Professional learning communities judge their effectiveness on the basis of results. Working together to improve student achievement becomes the routine work of everyone in the school. Every teacher team participates in an ongoing process of identifying the current level of student achievement, establishing a goal to improve the current level, working together to achieve that goal, and providing periodic evidence of progress. Educators who focus on results must also stop limiting improvement goals to factors outside the classroom, such as student discipline and staff morale, and shift their attention to goals that focus on student learning.

Schedule regular meetings, check-ins, and an ongoing cycle of renewal for your learning. Include families, use surveys to gain topics of interests, communicate and collaborate on a regular basis.

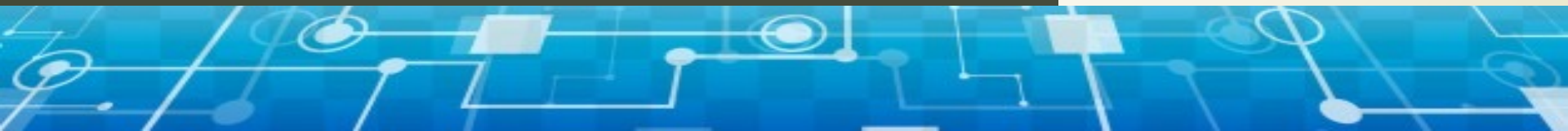




## Part 2: Supporting Parents

Parents' jobs and schedules make a difference in your job and schedule. If they need to go to work very early, you need to go to work very early. If they have a difficult day at work, you will notice. If they are having problems at home, you will notice that, too. You might notice that they are not paying for the childcare on time. They might complain to you that they can never get everything done. Or they might look stressed or depressed.

Your job is to take care of children, but you might be able to help the parents, too. You cannot give therapy, but you can give support. You cannot teach them everything they need to know about time management or finances, but you might be able to help them get information about those things. Parents who can handle time, money, and emotions well will do a better job taking care of children. That will make your job easier, too.





# Communication

Communication between parents and providers is not always easy or smooth, though. Parents may say some things that stop providers in their tracks.

- ▶ Why are the kids always playing?
- ▶ Why don't you teach reading and math?
- ▶ My sister's childcare provider takes the kids on field trips. When are you going to the museum?
- ▶ I noticed a bruise on Juan's leg last night. What did you do to him yesterday?

As a provider, you also may say things that make parents confused or angry.

- ▶ I need to raise my rates starting next week.
- ▶ I need to take my child to the doctor tomorrow, so you will need to make other arrangements for the morning.
- ▶ Your child isn't getting along with the other children. I'm afraid I can't take care of him any more.





## Parent – Provider Relationship

Studies have shown that children do better when parents and childcare providers do similar things—that is, when they are consistent. And children's well-being is the most important part of childcare. It is important for parents to choose settings that fit their childrearing practices. It is important for providers, on the other hand, to describe their practices clearly and to adjust to the parents' goals at times. It is also important that parents have one special provider as a contact person to keep the lines of communication open.



# Parent – Provider Relationship

Research confirms that effective parent, family, and community engagement is:

- ▶ **Systemic**— anchored in leadership priorities, program management, continuous improvement systems, and staff development
- ▶ **Integrated**— effective PFCE activities are carried out throughout the entire organization
- ▶ **Comprehensive**— the full range of strengths, interests and needs of the adults and children in a family are considered, and staff support families by connecting them with services and resources to achieve their goals
- ▶ **Outcomes-based and data-driven**— enabling, parents, teachers, program directors, family service providers, and community partners to find new solutions to new challenges

Good relationships are also valuable for you and for the parents. If you get along with them well, you will have an easier time talking about the problems you are having with their child. Parents may be more willing to pay you on time. A parent who likes you will be more comfortable with leaving his or her child in your care. Then there may be fewer problems with crying and clinging children.





## Parents – Provide Relationships

- ▶ Choose a good time to talk, especially the first time. Make sure you can talk in a private place. Choose a time when you will not be in a hurry.
- ▶ If both parents are involved with the child, try to talk to both of them. Talk with them together if they are comfortable with working together. Talk with them separately if they are not comfortable.
- ▶ Listen. Give parents your full attention when they are talking to you. Listen to them without trying to fix, judge, criticize, or change their feelings.
- ▶ Try to understand the parent's feelings and perspectives. Repeat what you understand. Make statements such as "I can understand why you would feel that way," "It sounds like you are..." or "That must be really difficult when...." Remember that understanding does not mean you agree with another person's perspective; it only means you understand.
- ▶ Review your agency policies regarding family information and changes in information. Make sure you know about custody arrangements and any restraining orders.





# Inclusion

- Inclusive child care seeks the full integration of children with disabilities into the child care and pre-school setting.
- The activities and materials used in most early childhood classrooms are designed to meet the needs of many children with or without disabilities. When they do not meet the specific needs of a child, they can be adapted or expanded to accommodate that child's individual needs. The purpose of an adaptation is to assist children in compensating for intellectual, physical, or behavioral challenges. They allow children to use their current skills while promoting the acquisition of new skills. Adaptations can make the difference between a child merely being present in the class and a child being actively involved.
- Developing adaptations and accommodations for a child with special needs is a continuous process that involves each child's collaborative team. The first step is to assess the child's abilities and the environment where the child will be spending time. Once the goals and objectives are identified and expectations for the child's participation in that environment are established, the team selects or creates adaptations and accommodations that address those needs. Once implemented, their effectiveness should be assessed on an ongoing basis and revised, as needed.



## Inclusion continued...

To meet the specific needs of a child, changes may need to be made in one or more of the following instructional conditions. Remember, when the child can participate in an activity, as it is, no changes need to be made.

- **Instructional groupings or arrangements** – For any given activity there are a number of instructional arrangements from which to choose: large groups, small groups, cooperative learning groups, peer partners, one-to-one instruction, and/or independent tasks.
- **Lesson format** - The format of a lesson may be altered to meet the needs of a child by including more opportunities for whole class discussions, games, role playing, activity-based lessons, experiential lessons, demonstrations, and/or thematic lesson organization.
- **Teaching strategies** - A change in teaching strategies can influence a child's ability to participate. Examples include: simplifying directions, addition of visual information, use of concrete materials/examples, sequencing learning tasks from easy to hard, repeated opportunities to practice skills, changes in the schedule of reinforcement, elaboration or shaping of responses, verbal prompts and/or direct physical assistance.
- **Curricular goals and learning outcomes** - To match the needs of a child within the context of an activity, it may be appropriate to individualize the learning objectives. This can often be accomplished using the same activities and materials. If children are working on a classification concept by sorting blocks, a child with a disability could participate in the same activity but focus of reaching, grasping, and releasing skills.



## Inclusion continued...

- **Adaptations to the method for responding** - Sometimes children may understand a concept yet need an adaptation in the way they demonstrate that knowledge. Use of augmentative communication systems, eye gaze, and demonstrations may better allow a child to demonstrate his/her skills.
- **Environmental conditions** - The environmental arrangement is an important aspect of any early childhood setting. Changes in lighting, noise level, visual and auditory input, physical arrangement of the room or equipment, and accessibility of materials are important considerations.
- **Modification of instructional materials** - It is sometimes necessary to physically adapt instructional or play materials to facilitate a child's participation. Materials can be physically adapted by increasing stability (Dycem™ or Velcro™ on materials), ease of handling (adding handles, making materials larger), accessibility (developing a hand splint to hold materials, attaching an elastic cord or string to objects so they can be easily moved or retrieved), visual clarity or distinctiveness (adding contrast or specialized lighting), or size.
- **Level of personal assistance** - A child's need for assistance may range from periodic spot checks to close continuous supervision. Assistance may vary from day to day and be provided by adults or peers.
- **An alternative activity** - This curricular adaptation should be used as a last choice when the above conditions cannot be used to meet a child's needs.

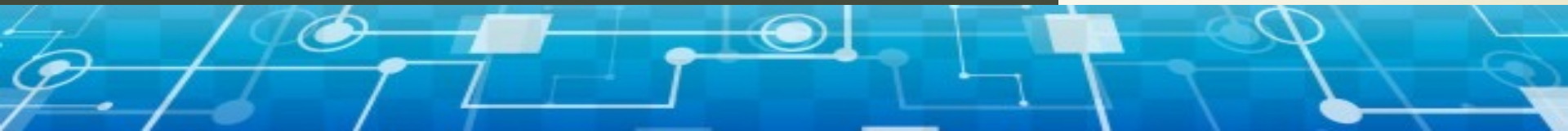




## Part 3: Questions to Consider for Planning and Programming:

- \* What does the program staff understand about the process of early learning and early relationships?
- \* What types of trainings does the program offer about continuity of care and primary caregiving?
- \* How do the organizational structure and personnel policies of the agency support continuity of care?
- \* How does the staff feel about working with restricted or expanded age groups?
- \* Does the staff have the range of skills needed to work with mixed age groups or the range of the first three years of life?
- \* How does the program support children and families when caregivers or home visitors leave?
- \* How do licensing or accreditation requirements impact the plan for continuity?
- \* Are parents involved in planning and programming?
- \* Are parents involved in the curriculum developments/adding their ideas?

A system of continuity of care helps to nurture the important relationships between primary caregiver and the child. It is within the context of these relationships that children grow and develop. When young children and their caregivers are tuned into one another, and when caregivers can read the child's emotional cues and respond appropriately to his or her needs in a timely fashion, their interactions tend to be successful and the relationship is likely to support [the child's] healthy development in multiple domains, including communication, cognition, social-emotional competence, and moral understanding.







# A Welcoming Environment

- \* Create a welcoming environment for parents so that they can enter the room, help children get settled, connect with a teacher, and hang out at the end of day.
- \* Arrange for and invite parents to regular (monthly) parent/staff meetings to talk about their children and hear how other parents and children are doing.
- \* Provide regular, reflective supervision so staff can discuss their emotions and responses to children and parents.



# A Welcoming Environment

A child's environment affects their development and behavior. Well-planned, indoor and outdoor environments make it easier for children to learn, to get along with one another and become independent. Effective environments can also make things easier for the child care provider. A quality learning environment should send these messages to children:

- **This is a good place to be.**
- **You can trust all the big people in this place.**
- **You can be independent and do many exciting things that will help you learn.**
- **You can get away and be by yourself or be with friends whenever you want to.**
- **This is a safe place to explore and try out your ideas.**
- **Everything here is for you and you can use it whenever you like.**
- **You know where things are and they're always in the same place.**
- **This is a happy place that helps you learn new things.**
- **Somebody knows you and know what you like to do.**



# A Welcoming Environment

The design and layout of the classroom affects how children interact and how safe and connected they feel in the classroom space. Do children have room to move in the classroom? Is the circle time area large enough for children to cross their legs, or are they clustered together with little room to move?

Take a good look at the furniture in the classroom, as well as how the space is divided up. Are the activity centers situated in one part of the room? Is there a quiet space where children are able to work without disruptions from others? Is there really a need for a large teacher's desk, or would a small cubby or locker suffice?

- **Defined Play Spaces** *that offer challenging play opportunities and promote acceptable behavior.*
- **Defined Quiet Spaces** *that allow children to take a break and refocus their energies, while at the same time can be supervised by child care provider.*
- **Curriculum & Activities** *that are age-appropriate and support Early Learning Guidelines.*
- **A Variety of Equipment and Play Materials** *that are age-appropriate and accessible by children.*
- **Children's Artwork** *and other colorful, realistic pictures and photographs displayed at children's eye level.*



# Creating a Healthy and Safe Environment

An important goal of all Child Care programs is to offer an opportunity for quality child care services and programs in locally owned or controlled spaces. The design must meet the needs of children, their parents, classroom personnel, service personnel, and administrators.

To achieve these objectives, it is recommended that planners take the following steps:

- **Support** the care of children by creating environments that allow staff to focus their efforts on nurturing and caring for children. The design should provide features that encourage strong, positive relationships between staff and children.
- **Create** an environment that comfortably accommodates the needs of staff in order to attract and retain highly qualified people.
- **Design** centers that are pleasing and will enhance the involvement of families and the children's caregivers in the center.
- **Respond** to local cultures, climate, and regional preferences in designing the center. Seek and consider the goals of parents, the sponsoring agency, and the governing board of directors.
- **Create** a center environment that attests to Head Start's high level of commitment to providing appropriate, well-planned and beautiful environments for children of the community. The appearance and functional arrangement of the center should enhance the center's assets.
- **Design** "through the eyes of a child" with sensitivity to children's scale. Consider how the children will use the space, what they will see from their perspective, and what kind of experience they will have in the environment.





# Healthy and Safe Environment

- **Provide** an intriguing environment with features and literal “themes” that reflect the community and its culture. For example, tribal Head Start programs may provide language activities, legends, and dance activities, use traditional symbols for their wall decorations, or use traditional colors, songs, and music during their “circle” activities.
- **Size** the classroom to accommodate recommended group sizes and adult-to-child ratios. The design should use space efficiently and incorporate features such as strategically situated storage.
- **Provide** durable and cost effective materials and design details. Designers should consider the intense use a center receives and should be particularly sensitive to the life cycle cost of materials.
- **Establish** a distinctly child-oriented environment within a controlled facility. The impression created by the design should be the antithesis of a typical institutional setting. The center should “feel like home” for the child.
- **Create** an accessible center for the disabled, staff, parents and children and emphasize cost effectiveness.
- **Provide** a healthful indoor and outdoor environment.





# Curriculum Design

Involve your families in the curriculum process. Your curriculum is your guide on how you nurture children's development. It allows you to offer experiences that help children learn about themselves and the world around them. Your curriculum includes:

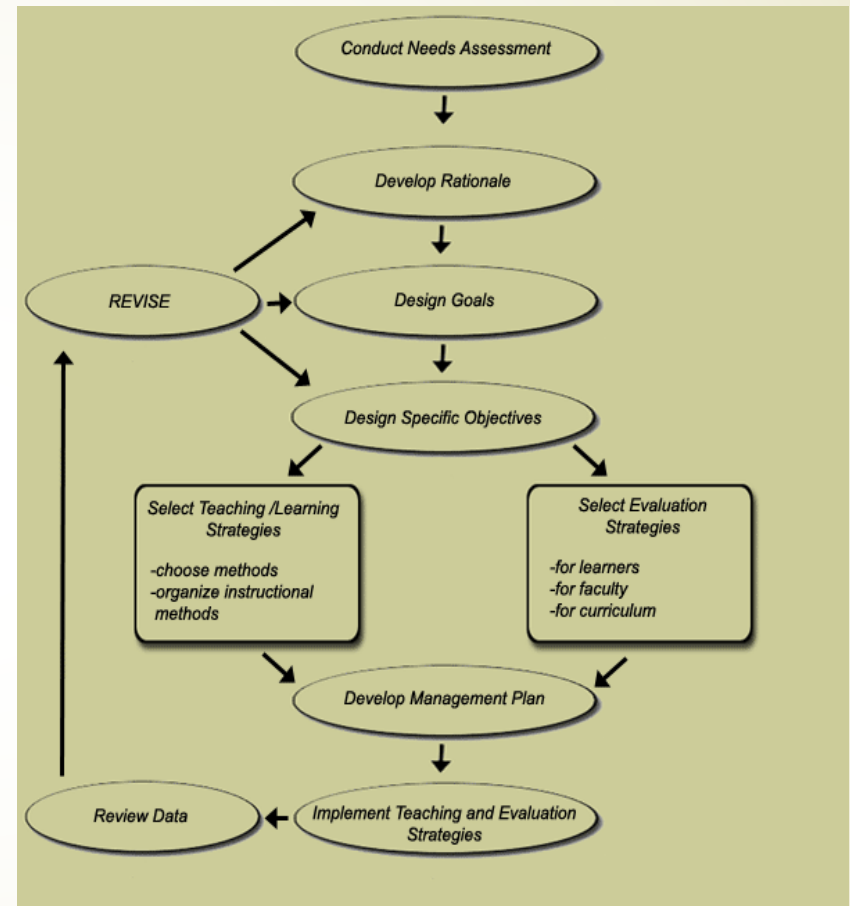
- Planned activities
- Materials and equipment
- Interactions between children and providers and among children
- Your curriculum should focus on all areas of child development:
- Cognitive/intellectual - numbers and shapes, counting, patterns and measurement, sense of space, knowledge and experience with the world, art, movement and dramatic play
- Language/literacy - communication (listening, understanding and speaking), knowing about letters and word sounds and patterns, knowing about print and books
- Social - cooperation, positive social relationships, respect for others, knowledge about families and communities
- Emotional - self control and knowledge about feelings
- Physical - gross motor skills, fine motor skills, active play and health and safety
- Cultural - awareness and appreciation of their own and others' cultures
- Approaches to learning - initiative and curiosity, engagement and persistence and reasoning and problem solving

Your curriculum is based on providers' observations of the needs, strengths and interests of the individual children in care. It builds new experiences and expectations based on children's previously learned knowledge and skills. Providers need to be intentional in the methods used to support children's learning. Your curriculum should support children with disabilities and children whose home language is not English.



# Curriculum Plan

- ▶ The curriculum plan is a document that lists all the experiences, events and activities that are available for the children throughout the course of the day. The experiences and activities planned on the curriculum plan are follow up, extension ideas, based on children's interest, family input, intentional teaching etc. and are sourced from a variety of documents such as observations, learning stories and more.
- ▶ As part of implementing a curriculum plan, documentation (learning stories and observations) becomes a resource tool that is used to reflect on and extend upon the children's learning and development. This is done by linking further learning opportunities from these documents to the curriculum plan.
- ▶ Each experience on the curriculum plan is intentional and must have a learning outcome (objective), a reason why that particular experience is being provided and clearly states where the experience originated from. This provides a clear link to the learning objective and to the original source or specific documentation of where this experience originated from.





## Curriculum Plan continued...

When thinking about what experiences / activities to implement on the curriculum plan (previously known as “program”), information or evidence needs to be gathered which supports children’s learning and development. Find out from families what their child interests are. The collection of evidence you gather to form your curriculum should come from a variety of sources. Once the sources have been collected, these can be used to make up the curriculum plan. The collection of evidence and the information gathered should come from the following sources:

- Children’s Interests
- Child Input / Family Input / Community Events
- Intentional Teaching
- Children’s Portfolios
- Daily Diary
- Spontaneous Experiences
- Observations
- Continuation Of Children’s Learning
- Group Experiences
- Supporting Skills and Development





## Putting It All Together

A healthy classroom needs to address the needs of the whole child, rather than simply focusing on one or two aspects of a child's health. With this in mind it is also important to remember that all health and safety issues should address the children's emotional, cognitive, language, and social skills. Teachers can play an important role in strengthening children's healthy attitudes and knowledge; just remember a healthy and well-organized classroom also speaks volumes! Communicate, collaborate and include the community!





# Review

By the end of the training, participants will be able to:

- ▶ Identify describe opportunities for collaboration, barriers and how to commit to working together.
- ▶ Identify 2-5 methods of communication, building parent-provider relationships and support.
- ▶ Identify 3-5 ways to create a welcoming environment in the childcare facility.



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