Curriculum Decision Making: Dimensions to Consider

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Introductions

• Please share:
  – Your name
  – Your job title
  – What brought you to this session?
  – What curriculum are you using/are you interested in using?
The Current Preschool Context

- Heightened understanding of young children’s abilities
- Rising preschool enrollment
- Increasing use of accountability standards and Quality Rating and Improvement Systems
- Many curriculum options and lack of guidance for choosing
“The National Research Council (2001) warns that . . a piecemeal approach can result in a disconnected conglomerate of activities and teaching methods, lacking focus, coherence, or comprehensiveness.”

(NAEYC/NAECS-SDE Position Statement)
This Presentation

• Decision-Making Framework
• Examining Curriculum Selection Resources
  – (Being a critical consumer)
• Closing Discussion
Decision-Making Framework

- Research base
- Theoretical orientation
- Comprehensive domains of learning
- Opportunities for differentiated instruction
- Coherent assessment system

Other Things to Consider:
- Professional development model
- Specific materials and space
- Related services
RESEARCH BASE

• Developed using research-based child development principles
•Evaluated with rigorous research methods
•Published by peer-reviewed journal or some other reputable source (i.e. department of education)
•Considers fidelity of implementation
•Associations with children’s learning outcomes
RESEARCH BASE CONT’D

• Do you know the research base for your current curriculum?
• Is there evidence to support its effectiveness?
• Report out in groups.
THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

• Clear theoretical framework
• Objectives, activities, materials, daily routine, and environment logically flow from the theory
• Definition of play and the teacher’s role in play
THEORETICAL ORIENTATION, CONT’D

• Take some time to reflect on the theoretical framework for your current curriculum, and how it affects the environment, materials, teacher’s role, etc.

• Report out to the whole group.
Domains of Learning

- Comprehensive or focused?
- Integrated or specific activities by domain?
- Emphasis on oral language development, higher order thinking, and problem solving or on discrete skill learning?

* Aligned with state standards?
• Take time to reflect on the learning domains and integration addressed in your current curriculum.
• Emphasis on oral language development, higher order thinking, and problem solving or on discrete skill learning?
• Report out to the whole group.
DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

• Age range
• Dual Language Learners
• Culturally sensitive
• Inclusive of children with varied social/emotional/cognitive/physical needs
DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION CONT’D

• Take time to reflect on the opportunities for differentiated instruction within your current curriculum.

• Discuss areas where it is effective and where it falls short.

• Report out to the whole group.
COHERENT ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

• Consistent with learning objectives and state expectations
• Includes constrained and unconstrained skills
• Provides insight into individual children
• Informs teachers’ practices
• Communicates with parents and future teachers
COHERENT ASSESSMENT SYSTEM CONT’D

• What type of assessment system is used with your current curriculum?
• What are the positives and negatives?
• What can you do to ensure it is implemented as intended?
• Report out to the whole group.
Other Things to Consider

• Professional development model
• Specific materials and space
• Related services
  – Parent programs
  – Transitions
Being a Critical Consumer

Find your curriculum on the resources provided.

• What criteria were used to rate your curriculum?

• How do these criteria differ from what we discussed?

• Why do you think that might be? (hint: what is the purpose of the resource?)
• What surprises you?
• What questions does this raise for you?
• Does the curriculum that you currently use / plan to use align with the curriculum components most important to you?
How has your perspective on choosing a curriculum changed?
Resources

• Preschool Curriculum Consumer Report; The National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning (NCQTL), 2010.