



Infant and Toddler “Curriculum”

All babies and toddlers follow a natural “curriculum.” For example, they learn to move their bodies, interpret sights and sounds, recognize special people, speak language(s), or imitate adults as they gather information about their world.

Planned activities support and extend this natural curriculum. Educators make thoughtful choices in planning activities and learning experiences that will excite and satisfy children’s curiosity. This carefully planned and balanced program will support children’s learning in all areas of development—and encourage them to have fun while learning!

- **Plan for flexibility.** Infants are likely to be on individual schedules. Toddlers enjoy some rituals and group activities, but also have their own paces and agendas.
- **Create a comfortable rhythm to each day.** Balance active and quiet times and indoor and outdoor time. Consider children’s individual patterns as well as the needs of the group.
- **Pay attention to all areas of development.** Babies and toddlers explore and communicate with their whole bodies and all of their senses. It is hard to separate physical, intellectual, and social-emotional learning because development is integrated. At the same time, children need daily opportunities to practice skills in each area.
- **Know your group.** Choose activities that will engage children from purchased curricula, websites, or your own collection. Notice how the children approach each activity. What fascinates, amazes, or surprises them? What did they learn?
- **Use Learning Guidelines to assess, reflect, and plan.** Offer activities and materials that help you discover what each child knows and can do. Plan experiences that let children practice newly learned skills and take on new challenges.
- **Keep track of growth.** Jot a note or snap a photo when a child does something new, exciting, or puzzling. Take time each day to organize your observations. Talk with parents, colleagues, and older toddlers themselves about what you notice.
- **Build on children’s interests.** Notice what toddlers are talking, playing, worrying, and wondering about. Build curriculum themes around their questions. Look for ways to engage different senses and learning approaches.
- **Deepen understanding over time.** Extend curriculum themes as children learn more. What can you add to spark more conversation? What family and community resources can you tap? What new topics, words, pictures, and books can you introduce?
- **Incorporate family and cultural assets.** Keep families in the loop. Let them know what themes their children have been exploring and the concepts and skills they have been working on. Encourage family input as you plan new learning opportunities.