

Why Emergent Curriculum???

- Emergent Curriculum is a child-centred approach to planning in child care centres
- Emergent Curriculum is how we meet our goal of providing a creative, nurturing, responsive environment to children.
- Emergent Curriculum is developmentally appropriate.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice

A Developmentally appropriate play setting is one where children most often...

- LEAD rather than follow the adult.
- CREATE rather than duplicate
- MOVE rather than wait
- MAKE THE LINES rather than color in the lines
- SPEAK rather than listen passively
- INITATE rather than imitate
- RAISE QUESTIONS rather than answer adult's questions
- SOLVE THEIR OWN PROBLEMS rather than the adult's problems
- MAKE ART rather than do crafts
- EMPHASIZE THE PROCESS rather than the product
- USE AUTHENTIC SKILLS rather than drill and practice
- MAKE BOOKS rather than fill in workbooks
- DECIDE rather than submit
- CHOOSE WISELY rather than being told
- MAKE A PLAN rather than follow the adult's plan
- TRY AGAIN rather than fail

(Adapted from the article "Butterfly Garden" Sandra Crosser)

What is Emergent Curriculum?

- Programs using an emergent curriculum approach explore what is “socially relevant, intellectually engaging, and personally meaningful to children” (Gastwick, 1999)
- Emergent Curriculum can be thought of as a redefinition of theme based planning- moving from adult themes, to topical relevant themes chosen by children.
- Emergent Curriculum is about...
 - Planning and then letting go
 - Responding to the interests and preferences of everyone in the room, including the ECEs
 - Celebrating the children
 - Enjoying the role you play with the children, the program, the families and the community

How is Emergent Curriculum done?

- ECEs develop their program plans in response to children’s actions and interests, using their observational skills to develop activities that will deepen the children’s interests and encourage them to explore further the world around them.
- ECEs use their observation skills to figure out what the topic of projects should be

EMERGENT CURRICULUM IS NOT ABOUT...

- Winging it
- Having no goals or purpose
- Only using children’s ideas
- Choosing trivial topics of interest
- Providing custodial care

Emergent Curriculum Program Planning Guidelines

- The program is based on children's free exploration and discovery in a well-planned environment
- The foundation of the program is the interests, needs and the developmental levels of the children
- Plans are developed in advance and reviewed regularly
- The plans are sufficiently flexible to meet the changing needs and interests of the children
- Program planning is done for indoor AND outdoor play
- Child initiated and adult initiated activities are planned.
- Prepare the environment in advance for "developmental themes" then observe individual interests
- Provide materials for basic experiences.
- Observe and know when to withdraw yourself, and when to include yourself
- A team approach to planning is used (HOW is this done? WHAT HAPPENS during these sessions?)
- Written records of plans are kept in the centre, i.e. planning sheets and curriculum webs

Planning Sheets

A planning sheet can be as simple as a form that includes the following information:

Initial provision of the environment

Things to sustain play

Ways to enrich the them or topic of interest

Options for children to represent the experience

Curriculum Webbing

Webbing allows ECEs to be creative, playful and free-flowing. It involves brainstorming about where a particular experience may lead and what other related activities may result from an initial idea. The curriculum web is a “tentative plan”. It is a starting place to begin trying ideas, paying attention to what happens, evaluating and moving on with further activities (Jones and Nimmo, 1994).

- A Curriculum Web is open ended...it grows and grows and branches off in new directions- just like the web of a spider.
- Several strands of the web may be occurring at one time in the room, depending on the children’s interests and needs.

Where do ideas for Emergent Curriculum come from??

There are a number of sources for ideas...

- Children’s play, comments and questions
- Adult interests and passions
- Things, events, and people in the environment
- Developmental tasks
- Family and cultural influence
- Serendipity, chance

Where does the process begin?

- Observation for potential interests and inviting children to become involved.
- Asking open ended questions “Tell me about...” What would you like to...?” What would happen if...” (prompts on a “wall of questions”)
- Drawing attention to things happening

NOTICE what is happening with

- The children
- Their families
- The room
- The centre
- The environment
- You

INVITING the children to pay attention to what is happening and to become involved in exploring what is going on. This is done by:

- Commenting on what you see
- Asking open-ended questions
- Making sure you are interesting materials and activities available

RESPONDING to children’s apparent interests, encouraging their responses in a variety of ways

For example a child is interested in tools...bring in tools, visit a mechanic, go to a garage, sketch or write about, use clay etc...

PROVIDING these things to encourage children’s further exploration:

- Space
- Materials

- Activities
- Experiences
- Time

CONNECTING everyone to the exploration. Connect past explorations and experiences (remember when we...) and leave avenues for further connection. Include families. Keep families in the loop to help to connect the experience.

DISCUSSING, confer, talk with the children about what is happening, what has happened and what they want to have happen next.

REFLECTING...time must be provided to adults to reflect on what has happened, and what is happening so that they can plan on how to extend and expand the experiences and on the children's learning. Planning time is important

DOCUMENTATION pulls it all together...for the children, for the child care practitioners and for the parents and families.

Documentation of children's experiences means keeping a record of what the children experienced, using:

- Print
- Pictures and Drawings
- Photographs
- Videotapes/video recordings

Why document??

- Documentation allows children to think, reflect upon and write about their experiences.
- Documentation helps to support emerging literacy
- Documentation helps children to reflect upon their actions
- Documentation helps to put children's questions and comments in context

- Documentation can further children's learning by encouraging them to describe, predict, hypothesize and investigate
- Documentation provides ECEs with insight into what the children are wondering about and where their interests lie. This information can then be used as a basis for further planning
- Documentation provides parents with information about what their children are doing at the centre and what interests and skills they are developing

BUT what is wrong with using a theme based approach?? How is this better???

TRADITIONAL THEME PLANNING Versus EMERGENT CURRICULUM

Themes/Units

Imposed by adult decision of what children will learn

Emergent curriculum

Response of adult based on what has happened with children

Themes/Units

Often artificially may have no relevance to children's reality or interests

Emergent Curriculum

Arises naturally from adult-child interactions

Themes/Units

Isolates learning into subjects

Emergent Curriculum

Connects learning with experience and prior learning

Themes/units

Often excludes other interests

Emergent Curriculum

Includes all interests

Themes/units

Product driven-related to topic

Emergent Curriculum

Process more likely

Themes/units

Hard to let go of theme for “teachable moments”

Emergent Curriculum

Uses teachable moments as they arise

Themes/units

Superficial attempts to link ideas before experience

Emergent Curriculum

Builds on and deepens experiences

Themes/units

Defined time frame for unit, plus calendar for units

Emergent Curriculum

Time frame responds to interests

Themes/units

Often prepackaged

Emergent Curriculum

Curriculum resources used for ideas after initial interest is found