



## IMPLEMENTING A CURRICULUM RESPONSIVELY: BUILDING ON INDIVIDUAL CHILDREN'S INTERESTS

### PRESENTER NOTES- OPTIONAL



#### OPTIONAL SLIDE 1:

##### ICE BREAKER

Think back to your own education—consider any learning setting or activity you enjoyed most (e.g., early childhood, elementary, or high school). What teacher, grade, subject, or course did you like the most? What do you remember about it? What did you find engaging and why?

Pair with a partner and describe the setting or activity you enjoyed the most. Describe what you liked and why. What do your memories have in common? How did your memory relate to your interests at that time?

Share your observations with the larger group. What role did your interests play in your learning? How did these experiences address your strengths and needs as a learner? How does this activity relate to our discussion of implementing a curriculum responsive to children's interests?

##### DEBRIEF

You may have noticed that one of the key themes in your memories is that you were interested in what you were learning. Humans, and young children in particular, are intrinsically motivated to explore objects, materials, and events that interest them. When we build on children's interests and address children's strengths and needs, children are more motivated and engaged. Over time, this intense, deep engagement leads to learning-related skills, behaviors, and concepts. Thus, when education staff build on children's interests, they enhance learning and development.

##### TRAINING NOTES

While participants work in pairs, circulate among them, listening to their stories. When appropriate, help participants notice the ways the ways positive learning memories illustrate how they were more engaged and enthusiastic because the educator built on their individual interests.

## Learning Activity: Planning to Build on Children's Interests



How can you implement your curriculum and be responsive to children's interests?

### OPTIONAL SLIDE 2:

#### LEARNING ACTIVITY

Think about the children with whom you work. Gather and record information about situational interests and children's personal interests. You can also use this activity in your individual planning or consider sharing this activity with your planning team, coach, or supervisor.

#### 1. Part 1: Situational & Personal Interests

##### ■ Situational Interests

- During your work with this group of children, what are some situational interests that have emerged? For example, are the children interested in a construction project across the street from your program setting? Are the children talking about something they share as an interest outside of the learning setting (e.g., a community event or holiday)?

##### ■ Personal Interests

- Observe daily during choice time. What materials do each child use regularly? What interest areas or learning centers does each child visit?
- Observe daily during outdoor play. What do different children do most during outdoor play?
- Have informal conversations throughout the day (e.g., during meal time, outdoor play). Look for themes in what children talk about. What ideas or topics do they talk about most? What does each child like to do when not in the early learning setting? For infants, what materials do they seem to explore the most?
- Talk to children's families. Ask families to share what the children like to do at home and in the community.
- Review what you recorded above. What did you notice about the children's personal and situational interests? How are they related? Throughout the rest of the activity, you will plan how to use your curriculum's resources responsive to the children's interests.

2. Part Two: Look at what your curriculum offers

- What, if any, guidance does it offer on how to plan learning experiences that build on children's interests?
- What specific curriculum resources might be related to children's interests? Be sure to consider the learning environment, learning experiences, and interactions. Write some specific ideas on your handout.
- How can you enhance or modify what your curriculum offers to build on children's situational and personal interests? Be sure to consider the learning environment, learning experiences, and interactions. Write some specific ideas on your handout.

3. Part Three: Plan and implement

Based on what you learned in parts one and two, develop a plan to implement something from your curriculum to build on children's interests. Then, implement your plan.

This activity walks you through the process of responsively implementing your curriculum based on children's situational and personal interests. As education staff, you plan for all children in the group. While each child may have varied interests, groups of children in the same age group are likely to share some. Use observations and individualized interactions to notice and learn about each child's interests. Identify themes in interests and consider these when implementing your curriculum. Your curriculum provides you with many tools and strategies to support children's development and learning, but you have the important role of making these curriculum resources meaningful to individual children based on their interests.

**MATERIALS NEEDED:**

- Optional Learning Activity: Planning to Build on Children's Interests