

**Head Start Program Performance Standards**  
**Education: Curriculum and Effective Teaching Practices**

[Music]

Sharon Yandian: Thank you for joining us to learn more about the new education requirements. I'm Sharon Yandian. Amanda Bryans: And I'm Amanda Bryans.

Sharon: Today, we're gonna talk with you about an aspect of the new education requirements. We're gonna focus on curriculum and effective teaching practices.

Amanda: First, let's talk about the required elements of a curriculum. Specifically, curriculum must be based on scientifically valid research, have standardized training procedures and curriculum materials, align with the Early Learning Outcomes Framework and is appropriate the state Early Learning Guidelines, and be sufficiently content rich. It also must have an organized scope and sequence.

Sharon: Oh, Could you tell us a little bit more about what is developmental scope and sequence?

Amanda: I was hoping you would ask. The scope means the range or the breadth of what is covered in the curriculum. It tells you what things the children are gonna be learning in that area, in those areas across the year. And the sequence means the order in which things are covered. The sequence should be based on knowledge of child development and their increasing knowledge and skills as they learn throughout the year. This does not mean you have to do the same thing with all children at the same time.

Sharon: That's right. Individual age must occur based on each child's developmental status. That sequence helps a teacher plan the order of instruction.

Amanda: That's right and the sequence helps the teacher know what to do next. We talk a lot about scaffolding and scaffolding means that the child has skills and knowledge and that you are building on those skills and knowledge as you go along with the curriculum. And that sequence really can help you do that. And especially when you use it together with the developmental sequences we provide in the Headstart Early Learning Outcomes Framework. And content rich is one of my favorite things to talk about. This area means that each domain includes enough really interesting and engaging instruction and experience to allow children to establish a strong foundation in that area and to be launched on a path of continued progress. A content rich curriculum provides a breadth and depth of teaching and learning experiences and activities across all areas of the Headstart Early Learning Outcomes Framework. And it includes varied experiences over time with the balance of child initiated and more adult directed activities. It allows children to fully explore and build on ideas as they develop increasing knowledge and skills. A lot of teachers really get excited when they think about how to make sure and to infuse content rich activities within their classrooms.

Sharon: Yeah.

Amanda: Or home visitors in their home base settings.

Sharon: Absolutely, I mean that's really the fun of teaching, isn't it? That was really helpful information. Should we move on to the new requirements related to curriculum fidelity?

Amanda: I think so. This is another area where we've really had a lot of questions. Our new standards do require that programs ensure that they monitor the curriculum of, the fidelity of curriculum implementation. And again, it's not a complicated idea. But in order to kind of judge whether curriculum is effective or not, you have to know that you use the curriculum fully, that you follow the instructions, that teachers got the training that's required, and that you're doing all parts of the curriculum and using the curricular materials to support children's development. And we're asking that programs really monitor that by looking at things like lesson plans and by doing observations in classrooms.

Sharon: I think that captures it. You're really trying to ensure that the curriculum is being implemented as the developers intended. That's really good information, Amanda. I'm wondering now just in the interest of time if we want to move on and talk about our new requirements related to effective teaching practices?

Amanda: Sure, this is another one of my favorite areas, I think because for a long time, we talked about intentionality in teaching. I think that our regulations give a lot more context and support around what we mean when we think about intentional or effective teaching practices. The standards say that we emphasize nurturing and responsiveness. This is kind of the root of all effective teaching practice. A strong relationship with a child and effective interactions.

Sharon: And Amanda, I wonder if I might just add as you go on one of the things that we did stress in prior videos is that we really are talking about birth to five, so it's important when we think about nurturing and responsive exciting because that needs to happen birth to five as do all the other things that you're gonna also mention. So that's how we've written the regulations in this case.

Amanda: That's right, it doesn't end when people are not infants or toddlers. That is still the root of effective teaching practice. You also, we require that teaching practices focus on promoting growth. And we've talked already a lot about the progressions in the Early Learning Outcomes Framework, so I won't dwell on that again. We also talked about the need to integrate child assessment data as you individualize and also plan for groups of children and that you include developmentally appropriate learning experiences in language, literacy, social and emotional development, math, science, social studies, creative arts and physical development. And this is really important because although creative arts and social studies are not specifically included in the Outcomes Framework, they are still conduits for children's development across the areas of the framework. They're still requirements in Headstart classrooms.

Sharon: But I think for now, if we could, it'd probably make sense to unpack a little bit. What are some of those research based instructional practices that teachers can implement to help them accomplish these goals?

Amanda: Yeah, I think that's important to give some examples. And I want to remind our viewers that those research based practices are included as part of many curricula but they can be used with any curriculum. So there are things that kind of rise above the curriculum and should just be used by all teachers. Things like responsive teaching. We know from research that responding to children's interests and needs and building on their experiences results in better cognitive and social development for four year olds. Research has told us that social and educational outcomes of play are improved when adults provide support that extends and enriches play activities. And we know that when there are intentional, planned and organized teaching experiences promoting specific outcomes, we get better outcomes for children. We know a lot about reading with children. We know rather than just reading to large groups of children who are pretty non participatory, children learn more language when we read in more interactive ways.

Sharon: Yeah, there's so many examples of strategies using new and different words. We call them what, juicy. Juicy vocabulary. So I think what you're saying is the idea is that teachers, their coaches and supervisors are aware of these different strategies and how they can be used to support children's learning. And when programs review their curriculum, they consider not just what is that content as it's described, but how do teachers, how are they directed to teach according to what those strategies are. The curriculum should describe the research that supports content and the teaching and instructional practices it includes.

Amanda: And I think that it would be good to wrap up today, Sharon, by talking about kind of how do we know that these things are in place in Headstart classrooms? And let's just take a minute to talk about what you would expect to see if you were on a home visit or in a classroom and some of these things that we're talking about here in terms of content rich curriculum and effective teaching practices are there.

Sharon: Well, really, we're building the foundation for children's love of learning. What I really need to see is that they are, I'm hearing laughter. What about you?

Amanda: That's right. I also look for the Cs. The curiosity, creativity, collaboration and critical thinking. I want to see children asking questions and trying things out and really feeling free to explore a lot of the learning environment and materials with their teachers.

Sharon: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, we want to see strong relationships. And it grows out of all of the things that we just talked about.

Amanda: The last and probably most important thing that I want to see is joy. I want our youngest children to have experiences in their early childhood settings that are not every minute of every day, but overall are full of excitement and joy and that their teachers are feeling the same way.

Sharon: That's absolutely right. If you don't see joy a good deal of the time, then I think you need to go back and figure out why. Fortunately, I've had the opportunity to visit many joyful classrooms.

Amanda: Yeah, I have as well. And I think on that note, Sharon, we would like to thank our audience for joining us today. And we encourage you to continue using these videos, to view them, to look at them in chunks and to use them in training and also to keep your questions coming through the ECLKC contact us. Thanks again. [Music]