



Tip Sheet: What Is Curriculum?

How is “curriculum” defined?

Curriculum = A written long-term plan to make sure children develop into well-rounded individuals. Development is so important in the early years, that we do not simply want to hope that children get all of the opportunities they need to learn, we want to put a long-term plan in place to make sure learning happens. We call the plan for the children's learning the “curriculum”.

What does curriculum include?

Curriculum is more than enjoyable activities. It's everything you do. It includes things such as:

- Goals for children's learning
- Routines and how they help children achieve the learning goals
- Experiences through which children will achieve the learning goals
- Roles for adults and parents to help children achieve the learning goals
- Materials and toys needed to reach the learning goals
- The space in which learning takes place
- The program's values and beliefs

Why Should I Use a Curriculum?

- Curriculum provides a long-term plan– there is an organized and thoughtful way to make sure children learn.
- Curriculum makes talking with families easier– families know what you are doing and why.
- Curriculum saves time– you know what to do and when to do it.
- Curriculum makes team work easier– everyone is on the same page, using the same plan.
- Curriculum helps you be organized. When you are organized and prepared, your day is easier.
- Curriculum is a sign of professionalism. Professionals have a plan and then put their plan into action.

Is a curriculum necessary for all ages of children?

Yes, however, curricula will look different for each age group and setting. For example, a family child care curriculum will be different than a center-based toddler curriculum. There are many “right” curricula choices available. The key is making the right choice for you! Find a curriculum that fits your unique style. Visit www.brightnd.org for more tools to help you choose a curriculum.

Helpful Hint!

Curriculum answers two important questions:

- 1) Where am I going with the children's learning?
- 2) How am I going to get there?

