LET'S CHECK! ARE WE USING THE CURRICULUM WELL?

When your staff is learning or implementing a specific curriculum, they need ongoing opportunities to learn the math portion. They also need time to reflect on how well they are implementing the curriculum.

Here are some interactive activities to help staff do this during training sessions or staff meetings. Choose one or more activities from the list to engage staff in exploring the curriculum, assessing their own implementation, and reflecting on and planning for next steps. Be sure to prepare materials and staff ahead of time if needed.

SHARING

Measure up

Ask participants to pass around a ruler and share which parts of the math curriculum they have tried or are now using. They should tell how they "measure up" in using the math curriculum. For example, a teacher might say, "I measure up by making sure I put new materials in the math center every week. I also take anecdotal records on each child's math learning in the math center."

BRAINSTORMING

Word search

Make a list of key terms in the curriculum and challenge participants to identify where they can learn about these terms.

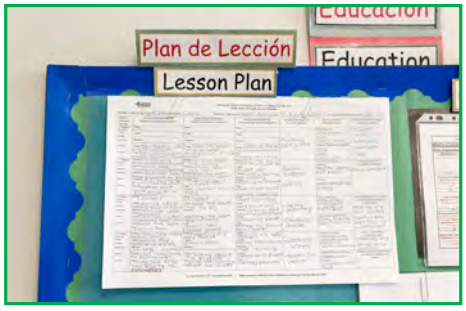
Mind maps

Also known as webbing, this approach can activate teachers' prior knowledge or help them review content. Ask participants to put a key word related to the math curriculum in the center of a large piece of paper—examples are "environment," "materials," "planning," "assessment," "interactions," and "goals." Then ask them to place related words around the key word and to organize their web. Invite participants to share their mind maps with the large group and to discuss how they chose key words and ideas.

IN THE CLASSROOM

Scavenger hunt

Using the curriculum, list key items that teachers should have in their classrooms, such as a lesson plan with math activities on it, measuring tools, and paper to make graphs. Pair teachers and send them to classrooms to hunt for these items. Teachers should write down which items they found and where. Use this activity to see how the environments support math and to find out what materials to add.



Lesson plan review
Ask teachers to bring their lesson plans from the last month. Pass out dot stickers and ask teachers to put a dot next to each activity on their lesson plan with a math focus. Ask teachers to:

- Count the number of dots.
- Look for trends as to when they did math activities. For example, did teachers often do math activities at circle time but not outdoors?
- Think about what math domain elements the activities covered. For example, did teachers provide a lot of measuring opportunities but not much geometry?

Invite teachers to set goals related to how they will increase the number of math activities throughout the day, across domain elements, and in the next month. Ask them to use the math curriculum to brainstorm materials and activities.

Peer observation
Invite teachers to observe each other using a checklist of criteria from their math curriculum. For example, teachers can read books with mathematical ideas and talk with children about them. Ask teachers to observe each other and then meet to discuss their observations and plan for next steps.

ROUND ROBIN

Domain elements
Make a poster with the title of each math domain element at the top. Ask participants to form groups of two to four and write two ideas from the curriculum about how to support that domain element. Participants will rotate through each poster.

Center areas
Make a poster with the name of each center area at the top (Dramatic Play, Library, Art, etc.). Ask participants to form groups of two to four and write two ideas from the curriculum about how to support math learning in that center area. Participants will rotate through each poster.

WORKING IN TEAMS

Write a question
Ask pairs of participants to write down one or two questions they have about the math curriculum. Ask several volunteers what their questions are and answer them or ask group members to answer them. A variation on this approach is to ask participants to form groups of four and discuss possible answers to the questions they wrote. Monitor the groups and direct them back to the curriculum if misunderstandings arise. Leave time at the end for a large group "Q-and-A" period to address any difficult issues.

Numbered heads together
Divide the large group into small equal-size groups and assign a number to each member of the group. Ask a question about part of the math curriculum. Participants put their heads together to find the answer in the curriculum or come up with an answer. The trainer calls a number, and the participant in each group who has that number writes a response on a piece of paper and shows it to the trainer. The participant may not get help from fellow teammates at this point. All teams with a correct response earn a point. Keep score as you go and offer prizes to the team with the highest point total.

This document was prepared under Grant #90HC0002 for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, by the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning.
SPRING 2014