THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
Quality Teaching and Learning

PRESENTER NOTES
ACTIVITY SIMPLIFICATION

This guide offers suggestions for presenting ***Curriculum Modifications: Activity Simplification***. This in-service suite includes a PowerPoint presentation and supporting materials. Please use and adapt these materials as needed for specific audiences.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- PowerPoint presentation (16 slides)
- Projector and audio equipment
- Learning Activities:
  - » *Break It Down*
  - » *Change or Reduce*
- Tips for Teachers
- Flip chart or similar large paper, and markers for writing participant ideas

BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

- The purpose of this presentation is to provide participants with a deeper understanding of one type of curriculum modification: *activity simplification.*
- This is one in a series of in-service suites on curriculum modifications. If participants need a basic introduction to curriculum modifications before focusing on the eight general types, please reference the *Curriculum Modifications: An Introduction* in-service suite; for a brief review, reference the *Tips for Teachers* handout from that suite.
- Participants are encouraged to consider how using activity simplification can increase the participation of specific children in their class.
- Learning activities offer participants opportunities to identify how to use activity simplification based on the specific needs, strengths, and interests of individual children.
- Many of the examples provided in this in-service suite can support a variety of children, based on a variety of needs. Consider adapting the scenarios and supplementing with your own to fit your particular audience.

NOTE

The *Helpful Resources* and *Tools for Supervisors* handouts are overarching tools that apply to all of the in-service suites in the Curriculum Modifications series. They can be found in the *Curriculum Modifications: An Introduction* in-service suite.

NCQTL

SLIDE 1:
CURRICULUM MODIFICATIONS: ACTIVITY SIMPLIFICATION

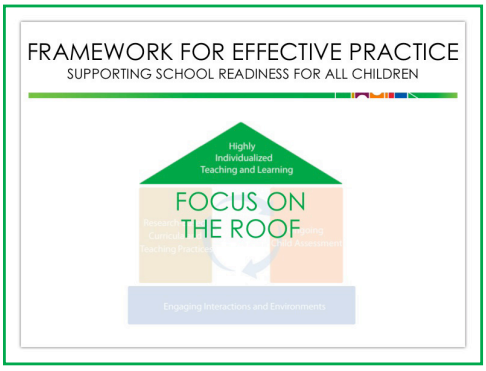
Introductions:

- Begin the training by giving participants background information on yourself.
- Provide an opportunity for participants to introduce themselves (where they are working, their current roles, etc.)
- Conduct an icebreaker related to using *activity simplification* to promote participation.

Example: When have you simplified an activity by breaking it down into smaller parts or fewer steps for yourself or others?

Possible answers:

- Running a 5k race; walk for a half mile, then run for a half mile, then repeat to the end of the race.
- Making a quilt; one person sews the top pieces together, another pins the top, batting, and backing, and the last person quilts it together.
- Putting a puzzle together; one person lays out the corner and edge pieces while another person works on the center.



SLIDE 2:
NCQTL'S FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE EVERYDAY PRACTICE

Introduce NCQTL.

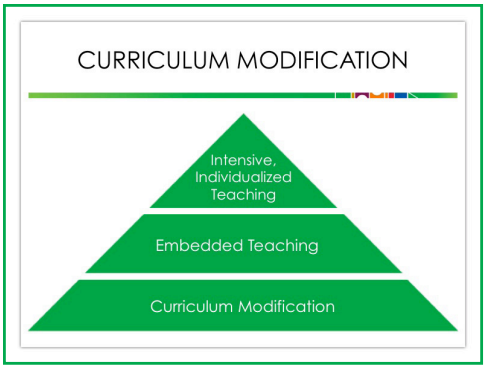
The four components of the House Framework support school readiness for all children.

After the foundation of the house is secure and all the indicators of a high-quality early childhood program are in place, there may still be children who are struggling to participate or to maximize their potential.

These children may include:

- A child who isn't making progress and needs extra support in a particular area of learning.
- A child with an Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- A child who is a dual language learner (DLL).
- A child who seems to be excelling in some areas of learning and in need of more challenge.

All these children can be supported or challenged, based on their unique needs, by using the teaching strategies introduced in the roof.

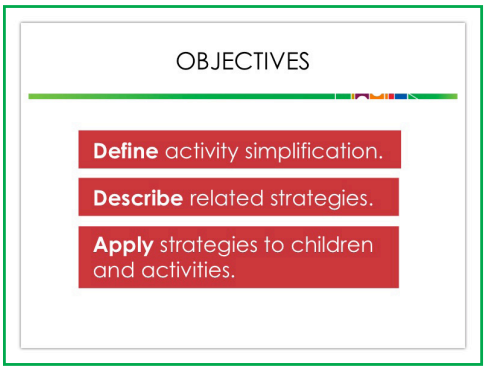


SLIDE 3:
CURRICULUM MODIFICATION

The roof portion of the Framework for Effective Practice is separated into three tiers of highly individualized teaching: *Curriculum Modification, Embedded Teaching,* and *Intensive Individualized Teaching*. In the roof, the levels of support intensify from the bottom tier to the top.

Curriculum Modification is the bottom tier of the roof. This tier is about making *small* changes or additions to classroom activities that have a *big* impact on a child's engagement and learning.

This in-service suite focuses on how, with some careful planning, activity simplification can be used to promote children's participation and learning.

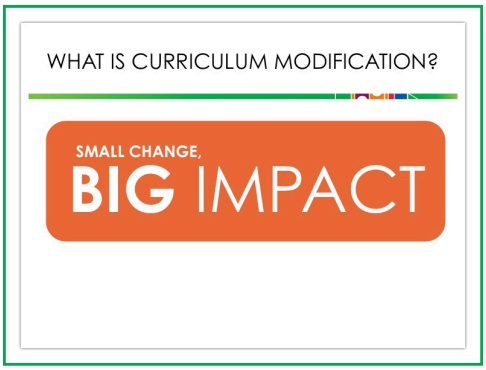


SLIDE 4:
OBJECTIVES

Objectives for the presentation:

- Define activity simplification
- Describe related strategies
- Apply strategies to children and activities

The last objective refers to the learning activities, which encourage participants to think about how activity simplification can be integrated into the classroom curriculum to promote participation.



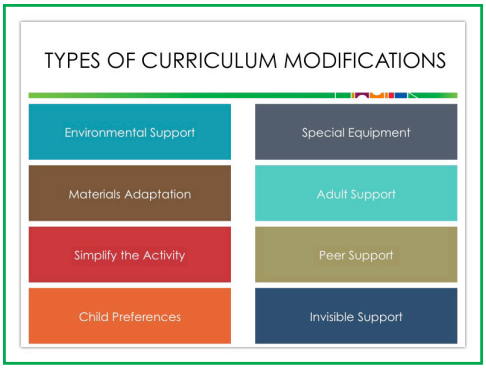
SLIDE 5:
WHAT IS CURRICULUM MODIFICATION?

Definition: A curriculum modification is a change to the classroom activity or materials in order to facilitate or maximize a child's participation in planned activities, interactions, and routines. Curriculum modifications do not significantly alter the content, scope, or sequence of a curriculum.

A curriculum modification:

- Increases a child's ability to participate.
- Requires just a little extra thought and planning.
- Is easy to implement.
- Has a fairly immediate impact if it's going to work.
- Does not need additional resources, in most cases.

A curriculum modification is a small change that can make a powerful impact on a child's participation, sense of belonging, and opportunity to learn.



EMPHASIZE

Focus on the strategy that is the best fit for the child.

SLIDE 6:
TYPES OF CURRICULUM MODIFICATIONS

Classroom activities and routines can be modified and adapted in a variety of ways. The eight general types of curriculum modifications are:

Environmental support	Special equipment
Materials adaptation	Adult support
Simplify the activity	Peer support
Child preferences	Invisible support

The focus of this in-service suite is on activity simplification.

NOTE

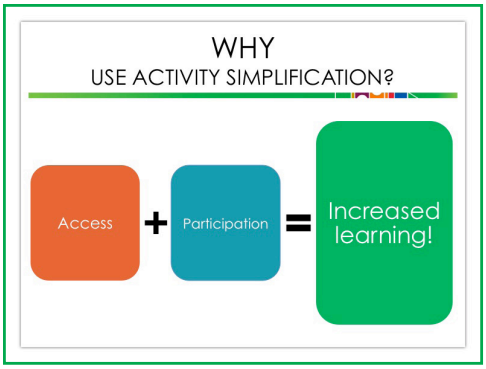
Some examples of the modifications in this presentation can fit into other categories *in addition* to activity simplification (i.e. peer support, adult support, materials adaptation). Encourage participants to focus on children's particular needs and interests rather than the type of modification that is being discussed.

SLIDE 7:
ACTIVITY SIMPLIFICATION

Definition: "Simplifying a complicated task by breaking it down into smaller parts or reducing the number of steps."

Reference for definition:

Sandall, S., & Schwartz, I. (2008). *Building blocks for teaching preschoolers with special needs*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.



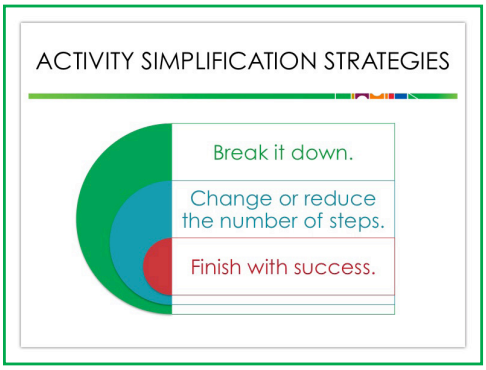
SLIDE 8:
WHY USE ACTIVITY SIMPLIFICATION?

Teachers work hard to develop lessons that get each *individual* child *actively involved* in learning. Even with the most thoughtful lesson plans and well-structured classrooms, some children still struggle to participate or to maximize their potential. Simple modifications to the curriculum, such as activity simplification, can help these children progress.

More specifically, teachers who modify activities and materials based on individual needs and strengths ensure that children are *not bound by a single way of participating*. Successful learning can then take place in a variety of ways.

Access + Participation = Increased Learning

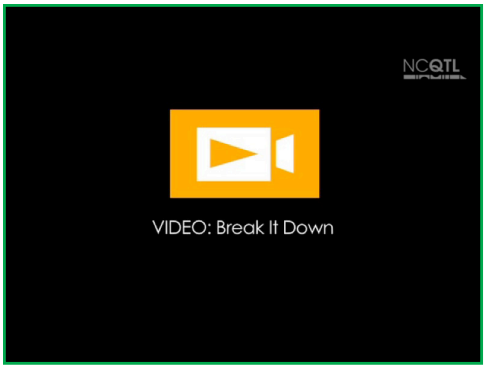
- Modifications provide **access** to the planned activities, interactions, and routines.
- Increased access leads to a higher level of **participation**.
- Participating in a meaningful way provides a greater opportunity for **learning**.



SLIDE 9:
ACTIVITY SIMPLIFICATION STRATEGIES

Activities and tasks often require multiple steps and can be confusing for some children. Three strategies can help simplify an activity:

- Break it down.
- Change or reduce the number of steps.
- Finish with success.



Length of video: Approximately 1 minute and 32 seconds

SLIDE 10:
BREAK IT DOWN

When an activity or task is complicated it is helpful to "break it down" into smaller, more manageable parts.

One way to break down an activity into steps is to complete the activity on your own and write down the steps. It is also helpful to have a colleague perform the steps.

Observe children to see how an activity can be broken down. How do they put on smocks before painting? How do children play dentist in dramatic play?

Once you determine the steps and sequence you may choose to illustrate those steps. These are called play plans or sequence charts. Consider posting these plans in key areas—a sequence chart for washing hands above the sink, or a play plan in dramatic play. They will be handy when a child needs assistance.

VIDEO

Introduce the video.

This video illustrates how to break down one task: making toast.

Points to highlight from the video:

- First, think about the task as a whole.
- Activities or tasks may be broken down into different steps to meet the needs of individual children.

DISCUSSION

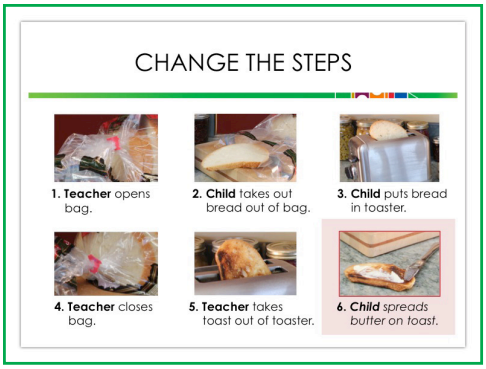
Ask participants: Can you think of examples when you broke down an activity into smaller steps to increase a child's level of participation?

LEARNING ACTIVITY:
BREAK IT DOWN

This learning activity gives participants an opportunity to practice breaking a task or activity into smaller parts.

HANDOUT

- Distribute the *Break It Down* learning activity and review the directions.
- Refer to the *Facilitator Guide* for specific details.



SLIDE 11:
CHANGE THE STEPS

Some children may need the steps changed. A child with a physical disability may not be able to hold the toast and spread butter.

Simplify the step by changing it to "Child spreads the butter while the teacher holds the bread." For some, the change may be a permanent adaptation, while for other children an altered step can be changed over time back to the original step.

SLIDE 12:
REDUCE THE NUMBER OF STEPS FOR THE CHILD

Reducing the number of required steps is another approach. Participation is increased when a child completes steps one and two. Gradually increase the number of steps a child needs to do until the child can complete the entire sequence of steps in the activity.

LEARNING ACTIVITY:
CHANGE OR REDUCE

In this learning activity, participants practice how to make a task easier by changing or reducing the steps a child needs to complete.

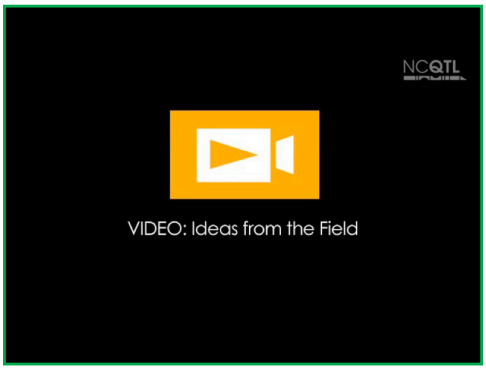
HANDOUT

Refer to the *Change or Reduce: Facilitator Guide* for detailed directions. There is no participant handout for this activity.

SLIDE 13:
FINISH WITH SUCCESS

Finish with success is a strategy to use with tasks or activities that are long or complicated.

The teacher completes or helps child on every step except the last two (e.g., takes toast out of toaster and spreads butter on toast). The child completes the last step independently. Over time, the teacher increases the number of steps the child completes independently.



Length of video: Approximately 3 minutes and 43 seconds

SLIDE 14:
IDEAS FROM THE FIELD

Introduce the video.

This video illustrates how teachers simplify activities in their classrooms.

VIDEO

DISCUSSION

- What ideas did you get from the video?
- How have you simplified activities for some children in your classroom?

Possible answers:

- Make materials more available to children.
- Use puzzles with a smaller number of pieces.
- Write just three or four lines on your paper.
- Write the first letter of the first name.

SLIDE 15:
REVIEW

A curriculum modification is a small change that can make a big impact on a child's level of participation in your classroom.

Activity simplification is one of eight general types of curriculum modifications. Strategies include:

- Breaking it down.
- Changing or reducing the number of steps.
- Finishing with success.

Simplifying the activity is one way a teacher can promote engagement and learning.

HANDOUT

Distribute handouts, if not distributed during presentation.

- Distribute and review *Tips for Teachers*.
- Distribute and review *Tools for Supervisors*.
- Distribute the *Helpful Resources* handout and review key resources.

NOTE

In-service suites are available for each of the eight types of modifications. Refer to these as needed, based on your participants' understanding of curriculum modifications.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:
SHARE THE FOLLOWING SUGGESTIONS WITH PARTICIPANTS:

- Work with a team member from your classroom to determine which children in your class might benefit from simplifying a complicated task or activity.
- Make a plan.
- Determine who will be in charge of tasks (break down steps, set up data collection system, etc.).
- Give it a try!

SLIDE 16:
CLOSING

Provide participants with NCQTL contact information and encourage them to visit our website for additional resources.