THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
Quality Teaching and Learning

PRESENTER NOTES
CURRICULUM MODIFICATIONS: AN INTRODUCTION

This guide offers suggestions for presenting ***Curriculum Modifications: An Introduction***. 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 (26 slides)
- Projector and audio equipment
- Learning Activities:
  - » *Child Participation Evaluation Form*
  - » *You're Already Doing It!*
  - » *Name That Modification*
- Tips for Teachers
- Tools for Teachers
  - » *Child Participation Evaluation Form*
  - » *Self Reflection: What Modifications Did I Use This Week?*
- Tools for Supervisors
  - » *You're Already Doing It!*
- Helpful Resources
- 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 foundational understanding of curriculum modification and the value of using curriculum modifications to support individual children. In addition, eight general types of modifications are introduced.
- This introduction to *Curriculum Modifications* is an overview and is not an in depth study of any one modification. It can be used either as a refresher for participants who are already familiar with the content or as a preface to additional training on curriculum modification.
- Participants are encouraged to consider how curriculum modifications can enhance their practice and benefit children in their classroom.
- Learning activities offer participants opportunities to consider which children are in need of curriculum modifications in order to fully participate in classroom activities, reflect on the modifications they are already implementing in their classrooms, and to become more familiar with the different types of modifications.

NOTE

There are different types of learners who benefit from curriculum modifications, including children who struggle to learn, children who need additional support because they are dual language learners, and children who need more challenge because they are advanced learners.
It is important to keep in mind that some modification types will be more relevant than others, based on individual children's needs.

NCQTL

These documents provide support and additional documentation for this in-service suite:

Adaptations for Children Who Are Advanced in Development:
http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/eecd/Curriculum/Teaching%20Strategies/edudev_art_00603_121305.html

Adaptations for Children With Disabilities
http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/eecd/Curriculum/Teaching%20Strategies/edudev_art_00602_121305.html

Head Start Center for Inclusion, Curriculum Modification Module:
http://depts.washington.edu/hscenter/modules-curriculum-modifications

Strategies for Supporting All Dual Language Learners:
http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/docs/dll-strategies.pdf

SLIDE 1:
CURRICULUM MODIFICATIONS: AN INTRODUCTION

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 modifications to promote the participation of individuals.

Example: Ask participants to think of the simple strategies they use to manage their day and do their best work.

Possible answers:

- Using an electronic calendar to keep track of your daily schedule.
- Placing sticky notes in noticeable places to help you remember ideas, items, commitments.
- Breaking a task or goal down into baby steps when feeling overwhelmed.
- Getting a larger computer screen to make it easier to engage in work that requires a focus on visual details.
- Integrating a favorite activity with a challenging one for motivation. (Listening to music while pushing through a deadline.)
- Meeting with a respected friend to get guidance on an issue you are struggling with.
- Sitting in a comfortable chair for back support or to stay focused.

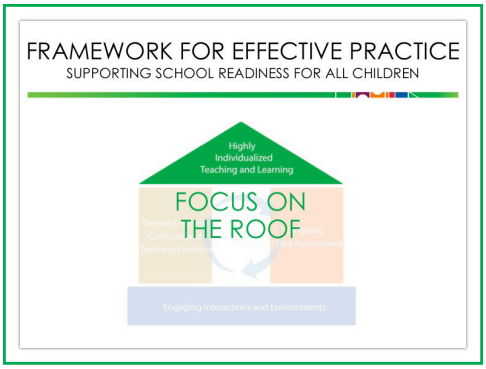
SLIDE 1 CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

SLIDE 1 CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

- Listening to a calming CD to bring down your stress level after a busy day.
- Saving the best activities for last as a reward for doing less preferred activities.
- Exercising in the morning when you have the most energy and motivation.

NOTE

An optional idea is to write the examples that participants share on a flip chart, large butcher paper, or whiteboard and put it up in a visible place. You could use these examples in the learning activity after Slide 12, *Simple But Intentional*, to discuss the planning necessary to implement these strategies. After Slide 23, *You're Already Doing It!* you could use them to discuss the type(s) of curriculum modification(s) each example could be.



SLIDE 2:
NCQTL'S FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE EVERYDAY PRACTICE

Introduce NCQTL.

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

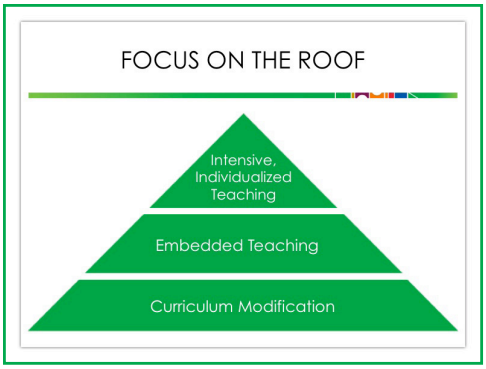
- The foundation represents effective and engaging interactions and environments.
- The pillars represent research-based curricula and teaching practices, and ongoing child assessment.
- The roof represents highly individualized teaching and learning.
- All four components interact with each other and are essential for effective practices.
- This in-service suite fits into the roof of the House, *Highly Individualized Teaching and Learning*.

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.

This may be:

- 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 is 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:
FOCUS ON THE ROOF

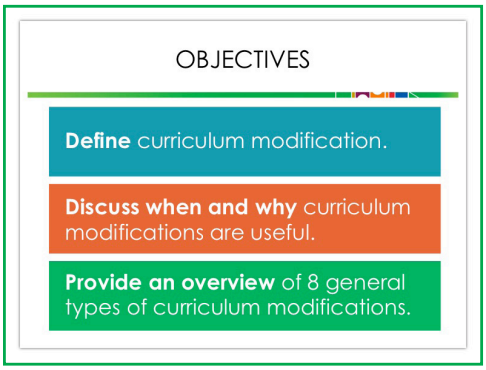
The roof portion of the Framework for Effective Practice is separated into three tiers of highly individualized teaching. *Curriculum Modifications, Embedded Teaching,* and *Intensive Individualized Teaching*. In the roof, the levels of support intensify from the bottom tier to the top.

Curriculum Modifications is the bottom tier of the roof. Here, ideas are provided for making small changes or additions to classroom activities that have a *big* impact on a child's engagement and learning. Multiple examples are provided to support a variety of individual needs.

Embedded Teaching represents the middle tier of the roof. This level provides strategies to embed learning opportunities into planned classroom activities. These strategies highlight ways to work with children on their learning objectives within ongoing classroom activities, instead of removing them to a one-on-one setting.

Intensive Individualized Teaching is the top section of the roof. This top section focuses on intensive teaching strategies to help children make progress on learning objectives. These strategies are structured, intensive, and highly individualized to suit a child's unique needs.

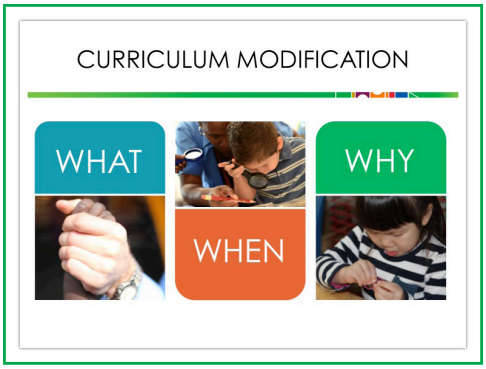
This in-service suite focuses on the bottom tier, and how, with some careful planning, curriculum modifications can be used to promote child participation and learning.



SLIDE 4:
OBJECTIVES

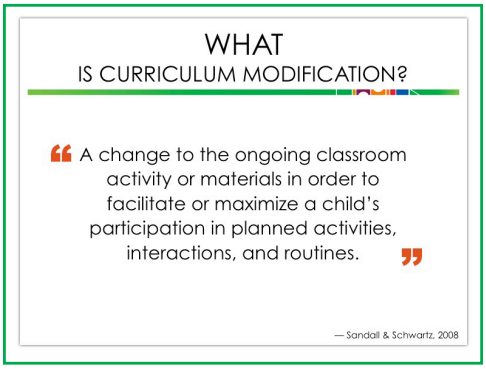
Objectives for the presentation:

- Define what a curriculum modification is.
- Discuss when and why curriculum modifications are useful.
- Provide an overview of eight general types of modifications that can be used in your classroom.



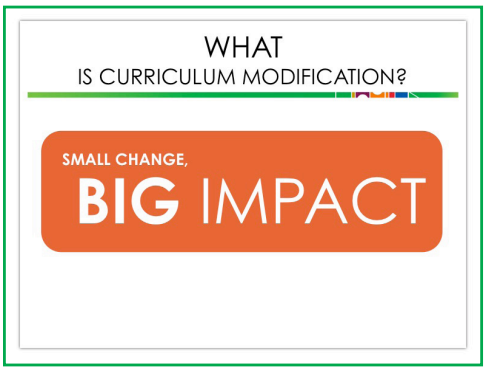
SLIDE 5:
CURRICULUM MODIFICATION

- What is curriculum modification?
- When is it effective to modify the curriculum?
- Why is curriculum modification considered best practice?



SLIDE 6:
WHAT IS CURRICULUM MODIFICATION?

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.

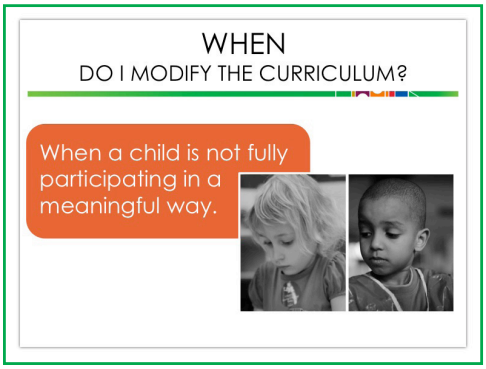


SLIDE 7:
WHAT IS CURRICULUM MODIFICATION?

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 *

Small change, BIG impact.



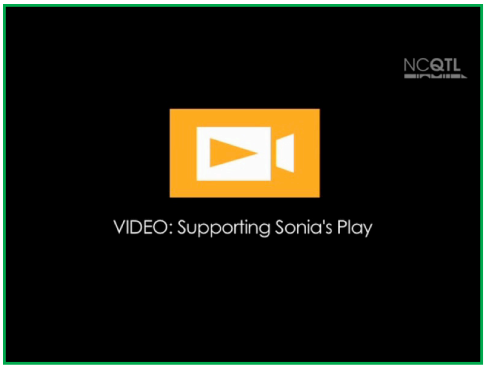
SLIDE 8:
WHEN DO I MODIFY THE CURRICULUM?

A modification is most effective when the child is interested but not fully participating in one or more of the classroom activities, interactions or routines. This may be the result of a physical impairment, a developmental need, or a communication barrier.

In some cases, however, the child's interest is lacking. In these situations modifications such as child preference, adult support, and peer support can be designed specifically to spark interest so that the child can take full advantage of the learning opportunity.

Use curriculum modifications:

- When all elements of the foundation are secure.
- When the child is interested, but still not fully participating.
- Before moving on to more intensive individualized instruction.



Length of video: Approximately 1 minute, 8 seconds

SLIDE 9:
VIDEO: SUPPORTING SONIA'S PLAY

Introduce the video.

Inform participants that the animation they are about to view is an example of adult support. The teacher uses modeling to support Sonia's participation in the dramatic play area, and then quickly fades her support in order to promote Sonia's independence.

VIDEO

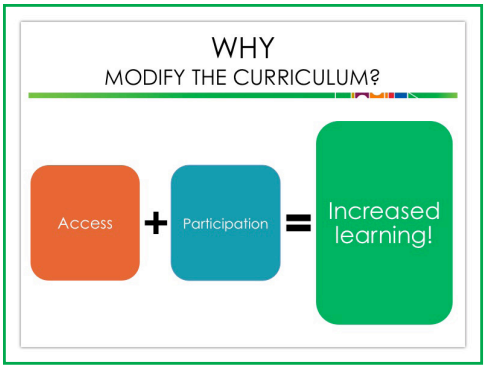
DISCUSSION

Emphasize that adult support is only one of many ways to promote child participation. Examples of different types of curriculum modifications are offered later in the presentation.

Ask participants to suggest other ways that the teacher could promote Sonia's participation without the need for an adult to be present.

Possible answers:

- Suggest to a peer who is skilled in the role of "play-leader" to invite Sonia to play.
- Post a visual play script (that shows pictures of a play sequence) in the dramatic play area. For example: First make a grocery list, then put groceries in the cart, then go through the checkout line.
- Add some items to the dramatic play area that Sonia prefers and is comfortable with.



SLIDE 10:
WHY MODIFY THE CURRICULUM?

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 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 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**.

EMPHASIZE

Curriculum modifications enhance participation and learning.

DISCUSSION – PART 1

This is Part 1 of a two-part activity. In Part 1, participants share examples of supports. In Part 2, which follows Slide 12, participants will reflect on the planning that is required to implement examples from Part 1. These same examples are then used in the *You're Already Doing It!* learning activity that follows Slide 23.

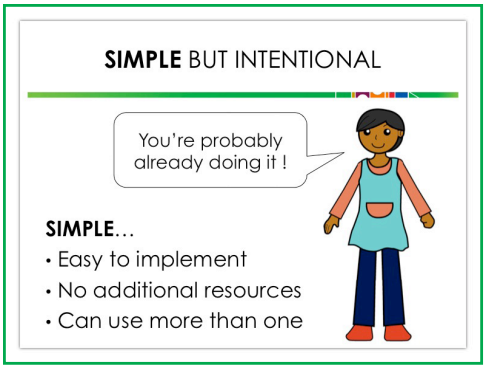
Have participants think of a child in their class who is struggling to participate in a classroom activity or routine, (arrival, circle, small group, free choice, meal time, toileting, clean up time, etc.).

What simple strategies have they tried to support that child?

On a flip chart, large butcher paper, or whiteboard, make two columns: a column for "supports/modifications" and a column for "planning." Write down the examples of supports that participants share.

NOTE

Encourage participants to include examples of children who are dual language learners and of children who are advanced learners, as well as of children who are struggling to learn.



SLIDE 11: SIMPLE BUT INTENTIONAL

SIMPLE…

Curriculum modifications are usually **simple and easy to implement**. They don't take a great deal of valuable teacher-time to put into place, so the teacher and student gain a lot without much effort.

Modifications and adaptations are **low cost or free** and do not usually require more resources. Common classroom materials can be used with a little bit of creativity.

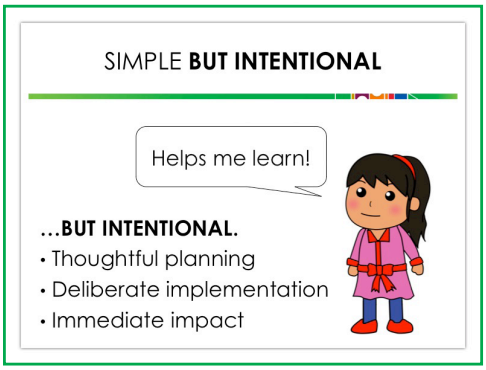
In some cases **more than one modification** is beneficial to help a child participate in an activity, routine, or interaction. Using multiple modifications is easy to do considering the simplicity of most modifications.

EMPHASIZE

Low cost. Easy to implement.

Highlight:

Many teachers are already using modifications but they may not realize there is a name for this teaching strategy. This point can be empowering to teachers.



SLIDE 12: SIMPLE BUT INTENTIONAL

…BUT INTENTIONAL

Curriculum modifications are simple, but they need to be planned and implemented with intention for the greatest impact.

If a child needs more support or more challenge, it takes **thoughtful planning** to identify the most appropriate curriculum modifications based on the individual needs of that child.

Once you identify one or more modifications, you can plan for implementation. **Deliberate implementation** offers the child consistent opportunities to participate at their highest level.

When well planned and used intentionally, curriculum modifications often have an **immediate impact** on the child's level of participation. This allows teachers to make prompt decisions regarding the effectiveness of the strategies they have implemented.

By intentionally modifying curriculum for children, teachers **increase children's opportunities to learn.**

EMPHASIZE

Plan and implement with *intention*.

NOTE

As appropriate, before moving into Discussion Part 2, refer participants back to the personal examples shared at the beginning of the presentation following Slide 1. Ask them to describe the thought and planning that it took to put the supports that they use in their daily life into practice.

SLIDE 12 CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

SLIDE 12 CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

If necessary provide some corresponding examples:

- Electronic calendar: because of a struggle to remember appointments and to get to places on time…
  - » After brainstorming, decided to use this strategy to organize and move through the day more smoothly: loaded software on computer or other device, entered important tasks and events, and set alerts.
- Sticky notes: because there are so many things to remember each day that little things were being forgotten…
  - » After brainstorming, decided to use this strategy for staff reminders: bought sticky notes, put them where they were easily accessible, made sure a pen was nearby, and posted the notes where they could easily be seen.
- Break down a task or goal: because it can be overwhelming to take on a large project or new goal…
  - » After brainstorming, decided to try this strategy to decrease anxiety: divided the large goal into smaller tasks that are more easily attainable. (To lose weight: started making healthier food choices, then began to reduce portion sizes, then started walking for exercise, then began cross-training.)

DISCUSSION – PART 2

This is Part 2 of a two-part discussion. Refer participants to the examples they shared after Slide 10. Take notes in the "Planning" column. Provide guiding questions, or examples, if necessary.

Possible guiding questions:

- Why did you decide to make modifications for this child?
- Who did you need to involve and what conversations took place? (assistant teacher, consultant, etc.)
- What materials did you need to gather?
- How did you make the modification(s) available to the child as needed?
- How did you decide to continue or discontinue the strategy?

Length of video: Approximately 3 minutes

SLIDE 13:
VIDEO: SMALL CHANGE, BIG IMPACT

Introduce the video.

Inform participants that in this video, experts in the field of early childhood education provide an overview of curriculum modification, including the positive impact it can have on child participation. The experts are:

- Dr. Susan Sandall, PhD (National Center for Quality Teaching and Learning)
- Dr. Gail Joseph, PhD (National Center for Quality Teaching and Learning)
- Dr. Ilene Schwartz, PhD (The Norris and Dorothy Haring Center for Applied Research and Training in Education)

VIDEO

DISCUSSION

Ask participants to share comments and questions.

EMPHASIZE

To promote participation of all children, it is important to know each child's needs and interests.

LEARNING ACTIVITY: CHILD PARTICIPATION EVALUATION FORM

In this activity, participants increase their awareness of a child's need for additional support or enrichment throughout the day. This may be a child who is struggling to learn, a child who is a dual language learner (DLL), or a child who is an advanced learner.

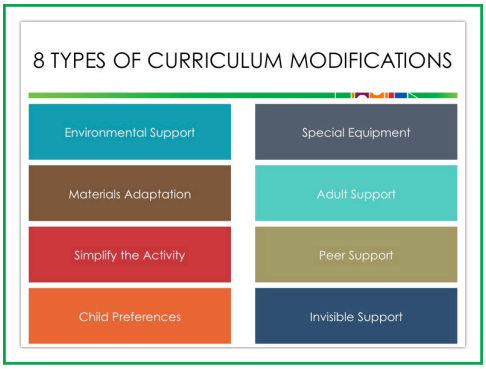
Participants can work individually or with their teams.

HANDOUT

Distribute the learning activity and the *Tools for Teachers* handouts for the *Child Participation Evaluation Form*, and review the directions. Go over the *Example: Child Participation Evaluation Form* on the *Tools for Teachers* handout before asking participants to complete the learning activity. A blank form for classroom use is included.

DISCUSSION

If time allows, ask volunteers to share examples, thoughts, and questions from this activity.



SLIDE 14:
8 TYPES OF CURRICULUM MODIFICATION

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

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

These general categories were established to give teachers a way to organize what can, at first glance, seem like a lot of information. They're not rigid or mutually exclusive. A specific modification or adaptation may fit in more than one category.

Reference for all definitions:

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

NOTE

If this in-service suite will be followed by additional training on curriculum modifications, this slide and the ones that follow can be considered a brief introductory overview of each modification type. If, however, the in-service suite is intended to stand alone (e.g., as a refresher course for participants who are already familiar with the content), you might take more time to discuss each modification and ask for additional examples from the audience (or be prepared to share some of your own).

SLIDE 15:
ENVIRONMENTAL SUPPORT

Alter the physical, social, and temporal environment to promote participation, engagement, and learning.

Photo 1: Physical

A child is not remaining with the group when it is time to line up. The teacher places squares that lead back from the door as a visual cue of where to stand.

Photo 2: Social

For a boy who does not play or interact much with peers, the teacher plans a highly motivating water activity. This small-group activity encourages peers to pass objects to one another.

Photo 3: Temporal

A little girl who is an advanced learner has been very interested in the Lewis and Clark expedition. The schedule is modified to give her some extra time to continue working on a story that she is writing and illustrating about Sacajawea while the rest of the children begin snack.

SLIDE 16:
MATERIALS ADAPTATION

Modify materials so that the child can participate as independently as possible.

Photo 1:

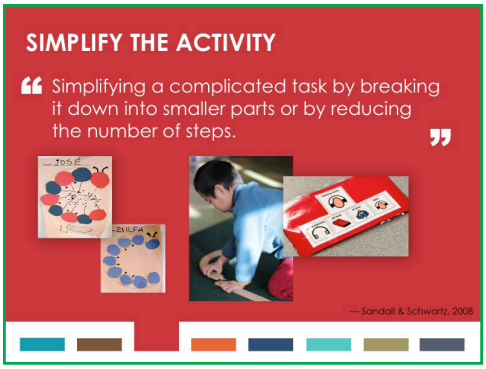
Stickers are placed at the tip of the pencil for a child who is beginning to move from a palm grip to a tripod grasp. This makes finger position more obvious.

Photo 2:

For a child who struggles to turn pages in a book, popsicle sticks are glued to the pages. This makes them easier to turn.

Photo 3:

A child with an IEP goal to improve self-feeding skills is given an adapted bowl at snack time. The suction at the base keeps his bowl in place while he first learns to manage his utensils.



SLIDE 17:
SIMPLIFY THE ACTIVITY

Simplify a complicated task by breaking it down into smaller parts or by reducing the number of steps.

Photo 1:

This activity asks children to make an AB pattern. A child who isn't yet able to make a pattern is only asked to cut and glue the circles into the caterpillar outline. A child who needs more challenge could be asked to make more complex patterns and/or write a story about the caterpillar on the back of the page.

Photo 2:

A child who gets overwhelmed by tasks with many pieces is given a bucket of only ten pieces. The teacher helps the child with the first several pieces. The child is expected to place only the last piece independently. The child will gradually be expected to put more pieces together independently.

Photo 3:

For a child who does not engage appropriately in the listening center, a visual is posted with simple, clearly defined steps:
1. Get headphones, 2. Get book, 3. Sit down, 4. Listen

SLIDE 18:
CHILD PREFERENCES

Identify and integrate the child's preferences.

Photo 1:

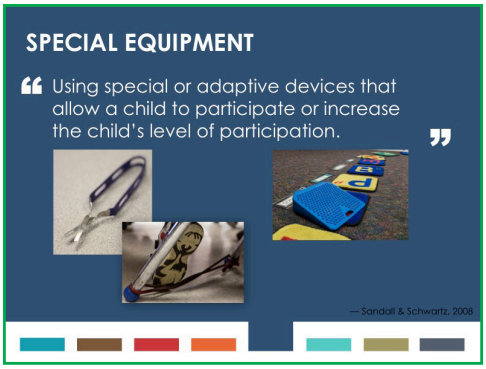
For a child who does not willingly join the group, place a preferred toy on the child's circle time square to motivate a smooth transition. The ball also keeps the child's fidgeting hands occupied, so the child can better attend to circle time activities.

Photo 2:

A transportation theme and access to cars is implemented in dramatic play for a child who is a dual language learner who has become withdrawn. He is highly motivated by vehicles, so this theme is being used to help him feel welcome and to introduce new language.

Photo 3:

A child who is usually very hesitant to play with materials that vary in texture and feel, including the water table outside, is paired with a favorite friend who loves exploring sensory activities.



SLIDE 19:
SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

Use special or adaptive devices that allow a child to participate or increase the child's level of participation.

Photo 1:

A pair of loop scissors are available for a child who struggles with cutting and rarely gets to finish projects that require cutting.

Photo 2:

For a child who does not stay engaged in small group projects and often gets out of his chair, a homemade stretchy band is placed around the legs of his chair to bounce his feet against. This movement is enough to replace his desire to squirm and get out of his chair, but not so distracting that he cannot stay focused on a project.

Photo 3:

A wedge seat cushion allows slight movement and sensory input for a child who does not sit still and struggles to attend during circle time.

SLIDE 20:
ADULT SUPPORT

Have an adult intervene to support the child's participation and learning.

Photo 1:

For a child who tends to stand quietly near the fence during outside time without engaging with peers or participating, a teacher models some fun games.

Photo 2:

A child who does not use many tools in the science corner is shown by an adult how to use the magnifying glass to examine bugs. The adult has also brought materials to the floor to encourage a sit-and-stay position rather than a stand-and-escape position.

Photo 3:

An adult is present to praise a child who independently transitioned to go inside by lining up with her peers—a skill that is just emerging.

SLIDE 21:
PEER SUPPORT

Utilize peers to help children learn important objectives.

Photo 1:

A new child who is a dual language learner and rarely speaks during class is paired with a peer who speaks the child's home language.

Photo 2:

A child who does not attend and follow the rules of circle time, such as raising a hand instead of calling out to share, is seated next to a peer model who is strong in both skills.

Photo 3:

A child who does not know how to start a story activity in the listening center is paired with a peer who can move through the steps.

SLIDE 22:
INVISIBLE SUPPORT

Purposeful arrangement of naturally occurring events within one activity.

Photo 1 & Photo 2 are linked:

At circle time, children are first engaged in a quiet activity. Then, when a couple of children quickly lose interest and engage in inappropriate behaviors, a movement activity is introduced. Alternating stationary and movement activities take place throughout the intentionally shortened circle time.

Photo 3:

When students are making playdough, a child has difficulty manipulating the material because it requires a lot of motor strength. The teacher arranges the students so that the child's turn to knead the playdough takes place after most of the hand kneading has been done and the material has been softened.

LEARNING ACTIVITY: NAME THAT CURRICULUM MODIFICATION

The purpose of this activity is to give participants an opportunity to become more familiar with the types of modifications that can be used in their practice.

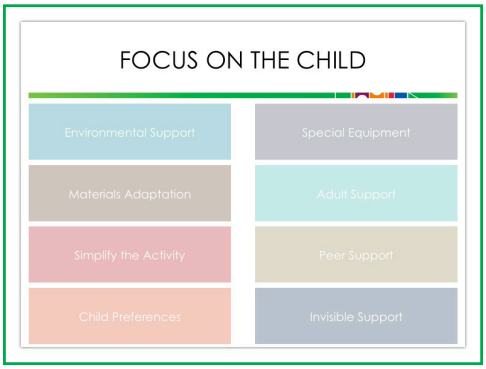
HANDOUT

Distribute the *Name That Modification* learning activity.

Set up the activity:

- Participants can work alone or in a group.
- Have participants look over the list of example scenarios. Have them determine which type of modification was used.
- Remind the participants that they can refer to the list of the eight types of modifications on the *Tips for Teachers* handout.
- Refer to the *Name That Modification: Facilitator Guide* (included with the *Name That Modification* learning activity handout) for the answer key.

Encourage questions and comments that come from the activity.



SLIDE 23: FOCUS ON THE CHILD

The eight modification types are a framework to work from, and are not all mutually exclusive. For example:

- Veronica is struggling during snack time. She is in and out of her chair, has trouble serving herself, often has her hands in others' food, and does not like being in close proximity to others. A plan is made to seat her next to the one friend she enjoys who is also very attentive during snack and models appropriate behavior (stays in her chair at the table, pours her own milk and serves snacks competently, keeps hands to herself).

  This support could be considered more than one type of modification:

  - *Peer support:* Veronica's peer models appropriate behavior.
  - *Child preferences:* Veronica's favorite peer motivates her to come to and stay at the snack table.
  - *Invisible support:* Milk is passed to other children and then to her preferred peer first, so there isn't as much milk in the pitcher. This makes it easier for Veronica to serve herself successfully.

The primary focus is to determine the best strategy to increase a particular child's level of participation.

LEARNING ACTIVITY:
YOU'RE ALREADY DOING IT!

The purpose of this activity is to give the participants additional opportunities to familiarize themselves with the different types of modifications, and to show that they are likely already implementing curriculum modifications in their classrooms.

HANDOUT

Distribute the *Tips for Teachers*. Explain that this is a summary of what curriculum modification is. Participants can refer to the list of eight modifications as needed during this activity.

Set up the activity:

- Refer back to the examples that were shared and written down during the discussion associated with Slide 10.
- Encourage participants to identify and call out what type(s) of modification(s) each one could be.
- Remind participants that they can reference the list of eight modifications on the *Tips for Teachers* handout.
- Remind participants that the definitions are not mutually exclusive, and there may be examples that could be considered more than one type of modification.

If there is time, ask participants if any additional modifications may have come to mind, now that they know what a curriculum modification is and have learned some of the different ways curriculum can be modified and adapted. Ask them to share any additional modifications that they are already implementing in their classes.

SLIDE 24:
REVIEW

What?
Curriculum modification is a change to the ongoing classroom activity or materials in order to enhance a child's participation in planned activities, interactions, and routines.

When?
A curriculum modification is a simple but useful way for a teacher to offer support when a child is interested but unable to fully participate in an activity, interaction, or routine. Planning for modifications or adaptations can increase participation and engagement.

Why?
With just a little bit of planning, modifications and adaptations can increase a child's participation, which opens the door to learning.

NOTE

For more in-depth information about curriculum modification, consider the subsequent curriculum modification products.

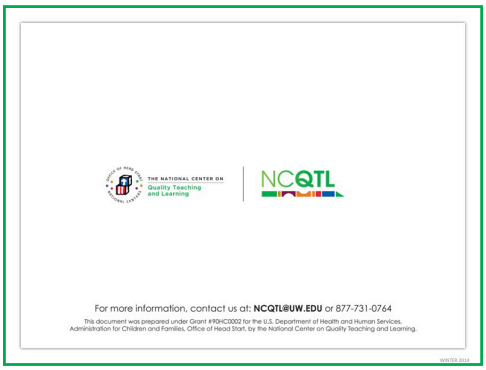
SLIDE 25:
SMALL CHANGE, BIG IMPACT

To sum it all up, a curriculum modification is a small change that can make a big impact on a child's ability to participate in your classroom.

HANDOUT

Based on participant roles:

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



SLIDE 26:
CLOSING

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

NCQTL

For more information, contact us at: **NCQTL@UW.EDU** or **877-731-0764**

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