

Curriculum Implementation Fidelity

What is curriculum fidelity implementation?

Implementing a curriculum or intervention the way it was intended to be implemented by the developers is referred to as implementation fidelity.

There are three main aspects of implementation fidelity:

- Program differentiation – the extent to which critical features that distinguish the program are present;
- Program adherence – the extent to which program components are delivered as prescribed in administration manuals;
- Quality of program delivery – the extent to which program implementers are supportive and prepared (Pence, Justice & Wiggins, 2008).

Why is it important to implement a curriculum exactly as described?

It is critical that instructional strategies are implemented with sufficient fidelity, consistency, frequency and intensity to ensure a child's mastery of a skill (Wolery, 2005). Children tend to make more gains when teachers faithfully implement the teaching strategies or curriculum (Hamre et al., 2010; Wasik, Bond, & Hindman, 2006).



If a child is not progressing as planned, it can be helpful to examine exactly how teaching was implemented in order to improve the effectiveness of instruction (Luze & Peterson, 2004). Using a systematic approach to monitoring implementation can also facilitate collaboration, problem solving and planning among teaching team members within a classroom but also program wide as child

development services teams meet to think through curriculum implementation issues

What are important things to look for?

There are two main aspects to look for to assure that staff are implementing a curriculum with fidelity:

- **Global fidelity** provides information on how consistently and regularly staff implement the key elements of a curriculum over time. Observations should take place at least 3–6 times during the school year).
 - Do staff consistently follow key principles and teaching practices of the curriculum?

- Do staff adhere to the curriculum scope and sequence?
 - Is the curriculum implemented with sufficient frequency?
 - How familiar are staff with activities and teaching practices?
 - How well do staff collect ongoing assessment information?
- **Individual lesson or activity fidelity**
 - Do staff focus on the specific goals identified in the lesson plans?
 - Do staff use the recommended teaching strategies?
 - Do staff use all recommended materials?
 - Do staff follow all the steps or activities suggested in the lesson plans?
 - Do staff make adaptations as specified in the activity?

What if my curriculum doesn't have accompanying curriculum fidelity resources?

Some curriculum publishers include fidelity supports such as fidelity checklists or observation protocol. But even if your chosen curriculum does not provide these supports, you can still support fidelity by ensuring teaching teams have time and resources to devote to curriculum implementation. Here are some things teams can do to monitor how well they are implementing the curriculum.

- Teams identify learning goals of the curriculum.
- Teams identify recommended teaching strategies.
- Teams identify all recommended materials.
 - Teams identify all the steps or activities suggested in the lesson plans.
 - Teams agree how to monitor implementation fidelity: Who? How often?
 - Teams establish a process to evaluate implementation and provide support to teachers as needed.
 - Teams develop an implementation checklist.



Refer to the Preschool Curriculum Consumer Report

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/practice/docs/curriculum-consumer-report.pdf>

And to the Choosing a Preschool Curriculum

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/practice/curricula/docs/curriculum-choosing.pdf>

for more information about specific curriculum components.

References

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