

## FINDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT WITHIN YOUR CURRICULUM

Curricula may have different ways to guide teachers in supporting children's concept development. A curriculum may provide strategies to help children develop analytical thinking skills and a deeper understanding of concepts. It may also offer children with opportunities to experiment, brainstorm, and create. Strategies and guidance to support concept development may be found in different parts of the curriculum. This may include the curriculum's user guides, activity cards, lesson plans, and volumes with domain-specific information. This handout provides you with some guiding questions to explore the ways your curriculum helps you foster concept development.

### ANALYSIS AND REASONING: WHERE IN MY CURRICULUM DOES IT GUIDE ME TO ASK THOUGHT-PROVOKING AND OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS?

EXAMPLES OF WHAT THIS MIGHT LOOK LIKE IN THE CURRICULUM:

- Examples of open-ended questions and prompts that teachers can use to encourage children to describe, explain, predict, or brainstorm during learning experiences, transitions, circle time, and other routines
- Vignettes that illustrate how and when to ask open-ended questions that encourage children to describe observable phenomena, compare and categorize, and make predictions (e.g., What do you think will happen if you put another block on there?)
- Specific resources (e.g. teaching cards) provide examples of different types of questions to extend children's thinking and communication
- Guidance for read-alouds includes prediction questions (e.g., What do you think will happen next? Why?)
- Hands-on, open-ended math and science activities include prompts for children to predict, hypothesize, test and reason



### CREATING: WHAT ROUTINES OR LEARNING EXPERIENCES ENGAGE CHILDREN IN PLANNING, BRAINSTORMING, AND GENERATING THEIR OWN IDEAS?

EXAMPLES OF WHAT THIS MIGHT LOOK LIKE IN THE CURRICULUM:

- Guidance on how to establish a daily schedule that allows time for children to make choices and engage in open-ended exploration
- Guidance on how to establish indoor and outdoor environments that promote active exploration
- Lists of suggested open-ended materials that promote hands-on exploration
- Prompts for teachers to encourage children to come up with their own ideas (e.g., What are you going to do with those blocks? How might we use these materials?)
- Opportunities for children to plan how they might investigate a concept and carryout that investigation (e.g., The children are interested in the different styles of buildings they see. Together, you create a web and then plan how to learn more about architecture)

## INTEGRATION: HOW DOES MY CURRICULUM PROVIDE GUIDANCE TO HELP CHILDREN CONNECT NEW INFORMATION TO PRIOR KNOWLEDGE?

EXAMPLES OF WHAT THIS MIGHT LOOK LIKE IN THE CURRICULUM:

- When beginning a new curriculum unit (e.g., houses and homes, insects), the teacher asks children to share what they already know about the topic
- During routines, the teacher asks questions that help children draw connections to past experiences (e.g., during snack time, the teacher asks children to think about another time that they have talked about seeds that people eat)
- During closing circle, teachers ask questions to help children reflect and connect learning that occurred throughout the day
- Throughout the day and over time, the teacher helps children see connections between similar ideas and related learning experiences (e.g., asking children to remember a previous experience they had using different materials; “The pattern you created with blocks is similar to the pattern you made with the beads yesterday.”)



## CONNECTIONS TO THE REAL WORLD: HOW DOES MY CURRICULUM PROVIDE GUIDANCE ON CONNECTING LEARNING EXPERIENCES TO CHILDREN'S LIVES OUTSIDE THE LEARNING SETTING?

EXAMPLES OF WHAT THIS MIGHT LOOK LIKE IN THE CURRICULUM:

- Guidance describes ways teachers can connect themes to the lives of the children in their settings (e.g., in a gardening unit, the curriculum suggests that teachers focus on plants that children have seen in their homes and communities)
- When discussing concepts (e.g., writing), the curriculum guides teachers to help children make connections to their lives outside of the learning setting (e.g., In your home, what are some things people write?)
- During read-alouds, teachers are encouraged to help children make connections between the story and their lives (e.g., When reading a story about traveling, ask children to tell you about a time they went on a trip.)

