

Standards, Curriculum and Assessment

Early Learning and Development Standards

Early learning and development standards include what children should know and be able to do. The CT Early Learning and Development Standards (CT ELDS) provide a basis for curriculum and formative assessment. Early care and education programs may have additional learning standards that they wish to incorporate or that are required for specific funding sources. Examples of additional standards include a science based magnet school that includes additional science content standards or a Head Start program that must also address the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework. The CT ELDS were developed to help families, communities and schools work together to support children's early learning and growth. Therefore, all early care and education programs in CT should become familiar with the CT ELDS and their curriculum and formative assessment process should address the skills, behaviors and dispositions outlined in the CT ELDS.

Curriculum

Curriculum is developed and/or adopted based on early learning and development standards and should include plans for learning experiences, interactions, and the environment (including materials and scheduling). There are many different approaches to curriculum which may be effective in achieving positive outcomes for children. When decisions are made about a curriculum approach or tool, it is important to consider many factors. Addressing these considerations will set early care and education programs on a course to implement the planned curriculum or approach as intended.

Based upon the chosen approach to curriculum, planning documents may vary. What is important with any approach is that it is intentional, implemented with fidelity, responsive to the needs of the children and families and that it includes a process for reflection and continuous improvement.

For information about selecting or developing a curriculum, please refer to the OEC Curriculum Self-Assessment Tool found in [Supporting All Children Using the CT ELDS: Building Meaningful Curriculum](#).

Things to Consider when Making Curriculum Decisions

- Alignment to relevant early learning standards
- Research related to curricular approach or specific tools
- Fit with program philosophy
- Administrative supports, including teacher planning time
- Staff competencies needed to achieve professional responsibilities
- Professional learning opportunities to support implementation
- Data on effectiveness of curriculum with enrolled children

Indicators of effective curriculum • Children are active and engaged. • Goals are clear and shared by all. • Curriculum is evidence-based. • Valued content is learned through investigation and focused, intentional teaching. • Curriculum builds on prior learning and experiences. • Curriculum is comprehensive. • Professional standards validate the curriculum's subject-matter content. • The curriculum is likely to benefit children.

From [NAEYC and NAECS/SDE Position Statement](#).

Assessment

There are several **assessment** processes that provide information that are linked to early learning and development standards and inform curriculum and instruction.

- A screening process is used to identify children for whom further evaluation may be needed. Tools used for this purpose may include skills related to instructional goals and may help to determine which children need additional supports; however, screening usually does not yield information that is useful in planning curriculum and instruction.
- A formative assessment process is designed to provide immediate information so adjustments can be made to curriculum and instruction. A formative assessment process is part of children's learning experiences or everyday routines, a practice that is often referred to as *authentic assessment*. It is important that any formative assessment tools are closely tied to early learning and development standards.
- Summarizing progress toward learning goals provides information about the effectiveness of curriculum. Summative information can help in making adjustments to the curricular focus and should be used as a basis for communicating about individual children's progress over time. In many cases, observations from a formative assessment process are documented over time and may be used as a basis for a summary. In some situations, a more formal or standardized assessment tool may be used to document children's skills or abilities at a particular point in time. More formal, standardized tools should be used with caution and the costs and benefits of this approach, as well as the usefulness of the information gathered, should be carefully considered. The National Academies Press offers a discussion of issues related to standardized assessment of young children in the book [Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What, and How](#) (2008).

Things to Consider when Making Assessment Decisions

- Alignment to early learning and development standards
- Intended purpose of the tools selected and available validity evidence
- Fit with program philosophy and curricular approach
- The role of the teacher, the family and the child in the assessment process
- Staff competencies and need for professional development
- The process for reviewing and using the information that is gathered

A coordinated and aligned approach to standards, curriculum and assessment will provide coherence for administrators, educators and families. The graphic on the following page represents a coordinated and aligned implementation of these key aspects of early care and education.

