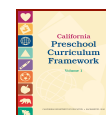




Unit 7 – California Preschool Curriculum Framework as a Resource for Planning and Integrating Curriculum

Key Topic 1: Three Lenses for Viewing Curriculum



Focus Statement

Students explore three “lenses” through which the curriculum framework can provide guidance for planning curriculum for young children. These are the eight overarching principles, the curriculum planning process, and the breadth of the curriculum framework across domains.

Students are also asked to consider cognitive development, which is not developed as a domain in either the foundations or the framework.

Before You Start

The *California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 1* (PCF, V1) is “grounded in evidence-based practices that have evolved in the field over decades” (PCF, V1, p. 24). It has been developed to provide “guidance on planning learning environments and experiences for young children” (PCF, V1, p. 3).

One way to make use of this guidance is to use the framework as a series of lenses through which to view off-the-shelf curricula or curriculum developed within one’s program. The framework provides three lenses or three ways in particular to do this.

- The first is to use the eight overarching principles (PCF, V1, pp. 5-8) as a way to reflect on curricula.
- The second is to use the curriculum-planning process (PCF, V1, pp. 19-24) as a way to review curriculum planning and curriculum decisions.
- The third is to use the breadth of the PCF, V1 across domains to ensure that curriculum serves each child as an individual and each child as a whole child. Volume 1 of the framework provides four domains to consider, but the completed system will consist of nine domains.

The thrust of this key topic is to provide questions that can be used to look through these lenses and then to suggest some ways that students can apply this approach. The eight overarching principles are explored in Key Topic 2 of Unit 1 of this instructional guide. Opportunities to practice using the curriculum-planning



process are provided in Key Topic 2 in this unit, and Key Topic 3 in this unit provides opportunities to look at English-language development across domains.

There is also a short exercise in this key topic for students to consider cognitive development, which is not developed as a domain in either the foundations or the framework.

If you have not used the exercise that introduces Unit 1 of this instructional guide, “Getting Ready for the Unit and Connecting to Experience,” you might find that useful here. That exercise helps students develop a working definition of a framework and considers the eight overarching principles, the curriculum process, and environments and materials and interactions and strategies in that context.

Students will be using questions relating to three key features of the PCF, V1 to review curriculum. This will mean that they must have available copies of curricula for early childhood that are available commercially or that they will be exploring programs to find these features in existing programs. This work might be done best as an out of class assignment and in pairs. Also, depending on the educational level and experience of students, you may need to provide some explanation and demonstration in class before assigning students to do their reviews out of class. It is recommended that students engage with this key topic after they have become familiar with what is in the domains of the PCF, V1 because this key topic will require some critical thinking and reflection on the part of students.

Information Delivery

There are three subtopics in this key topic, and important page numbers and information are embedded in each subtopic.

Active Learning

Subtopic 1: Using the Eight Overarching Principles as a Lens for Viewing Curricula



Slide 2

Getting it started

Be sure that students have read pages 5-8 in the PCF, V1 that describe the eight overarching principles. If you wish a fuller introduction to the principles, Key Topic 2 in Unit 1 will help students explore the eight overarching principles.

Explain to students that these eight overarching principles have been developed to emphasize curriculum for young children that is individually, culturally, and linguistically responsive. Using these overarching principles to review curricula can provide a way to see how a commercial curriculum or one that has been developed within a program puts these principles into practice.



There is a set of questions that follows which can be used for reviewing curricula. Each overarching principle is addressed through a key question and one or two follow-up questions that might clarify and/or expand the inquiry.

Keeping it going

These questions can be used as they are, or time could be spent in class expanding or clarifying them.

As they go through these questions, suggest that students keep in mind this question: In reviewing curriculum—either a published curriculum or one developed in my program—do I find ways in which these eight overarching principles are put into practice?



Slides 3-4

1. **How in the curriculum are relationships built, supported, and maintained?** Between whom—children, teachers, families? Is there space that would support relationships? Is there time that would support teachers knowing children and families?
2. **Do opportunities for learning occur in the context of play?** Are there times, materials, and spaces specifically for play?
3. **Are routines, spaces, materials, and interactions designed to address integrated learning across domains?** Are social-emotional development, language and literacy development, and mathematical development addressed together across many activities, and is English-language development supported across all elements of the curriculum?
4. **Is there intentional teaching in both planned learning experiences and attention to moment-to-moment teaching opportunities?** Are systems of assessment, documentation, reflection, and planning in place so that teachers work purposefully to guide children's developmental progress and learning?
5. **How are family and community partnerships developed and maintained?** Are there both informal and systematic ways to exchange information with families? What connections to community groups exist?

6. **How do teachers recognize and adapt to individual children?** Are there specific teaching strategies or professional supports that ensure this?
7. **How are children's cultures and languages respected?** Do learning materials and environments reflect home languages and cultures? How does regular communication between families and teachers happen?
8. **Is there specific time allotted to the curriculum-planning process, so that teaching is enhanced through reflection and discussion?** Are there specific procedures and times for professionals to maintain the products of documentation, engage in individual reflection, and plan curriculum as a team?

Putting it together

Students can investigate these questions in a number of ways.

- They could interview a program director or teacher.
- A panel of directors or teachers from different programs could be invited to a class session, and students could record the panelists' responses to these questions.
- The questions could be used for an observational assignment, with students recording concrete examples or descriptions of how each overarching principle is played out in practice.

Taking it further

Ask students who may be currently working as teachers or as administrators how they could incorporate this principle-based review into their program planning and curriculum development.

Also ask students how they could communicate these overarching principles to families. To deepen the work regarding families and the eight principles, ask students to plan a family night to acquaint families with the principles.



Subtopic 2: Using the Curriculum-Planning Process as a Lens for Viewing Curricula

Getting it started

Before introducing students to a way to use the curriculum-planning process to review curricula, it will be important that students have read pages 19-24 in the *California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 1* (PCF, V1). It might also be helpful to develop some agreed upon descriptions of the key parts of the process.

Information on these key parts can be found on the following pages in the PCF, V1:

- Observation (p. 20)
- Documentation (p.21)
- Reflection, discussion, and planning (p. 21)
- Implementation (p. 22)

Once they have a clear idea of how these are described in the PCF, V1, ask students to consider the following questions as they review curricula. Again, you might want to spend some time going through these questions with students and asking if there are additional clarifying or expanding questions they might want to ask.

Keeping it going

As students consider the following questions, suggest that they keep in mind this question: How are the parts of the curriculum-planning process seen in the curriculum I am reviewing?



Slides 5-6

- How is observation supported? Are there times available for teachers to carefully watch and listen?
- How is documentation supported? What processes are in place to develop documentation for each child? Are multiple means of documentation available and used? How are time and materials provided for maintaining documentation? How is family input gathered and included in documentation?
- What planned opportunities are in place for teachers to reflect, discuss their observations, and review their

documentation? How is documentation shared with families?

- Is planning done based on reflection and discussion? Is documentation consulted when planning is done? How are family culture and language included in the planning process?

Putting it together

Students can explore the above questions in a number of ways.

- They could interview a program director or teacher.
- A panel of directors or teachers from different programs could be invited to a class session, and students could record the panelists' responses to these questions.
- The questions could be used for an observational assignment, with students recording concrete examples or descriptions of where they see these parts of the planning cycle played out in practice.

Note to faculty: Be sure that students are not viewing documentation on individual children without family permission. Additionally, suggest that students look at what the planning cycle procedures and systems are, not necessarily how they look for any individual child.

Subtopic 3: Using the Domains of the PCF, V1 as a Lens to View Integration Across Domains in Curricula

The PCF, V1 addresses the learning and development domains of social-emotional development, language and literacy, English-language development, and mathematics. Many of the environments and materials and interactions and strategies in all these domains provide examples where students can see that they support development across domains. As one way to begin this subtopic, you might go back to the domains in the PCF, V1 and ask students to look specifically for environments and materials and interactions and strategies that would support learning and development in more than one domain. Because there are many of these, you might want to focus on social-



emotional development, language and literacy, or mathematics. (English-language development is addressed in a separate key topic in this unit.) This could be done as a quick review or as an extended exploration.

As students review other curricula, ask them to consider these questions:



Slides 7-10

- Where is the need for integrated curriculum specifically addressed?
- How is English-language development addressed? As a way to get to know all children, what is available to be used in the planning process to gauge each child's current comprehension and use of English?
- Are there environments and materials designed to address multiple developmental domains? For example, are there books and writing materials in all areas? Are there opportunities to sort or count in many areas? How do environments and materials reflect children's language, culture, and family life?
- Do environments and materials designed for specific domains show evidence that other domains are considered also? For example, does a book area contain books on feelings and number? Are there books in the home language(s) of children in the program?
- Are interactions and strategies used that cut across domains? For example, is writing used in many areas to make lists or notes? Are counting rhymes and songs used throughout the day?

The preceding questions might be hard to deal with in a published curriculum, and exploring these questions might be more fruitful as an observational assignment, with students recording concrete examples or descriptions of where they see integrated curriculum played out in practice.

Note to faculty: Integrated curriculum might also be seen on video that is available.



Reflection



Slide 11

The following questions can be addressed as a journaling exercise or as a class discussion:

- What stood out for you in this key topic?
- What new insights do you have?
- How will this influence your work with young children now or in the future?

Deeper Understanding

Integrating Cognitive Development Across the Domains

Cognitive development is a developmental domain that is considered important in many curricula for young children.

The foundations and curriculum framework are organized by content that maps onto the California K-12 curriculum frameworks and educational standards, where there is no separate area of cognitive development. Therefore, it is not a separate domain in either the foundations or the curriculum framework. However, there are many developmental and learning processes that cut across domains in early childhood and are considered important to overall cognitive development.

Ask students to address this issue by developing their own version of what a cognitive domain might look like in the curriculum framework. To do this, they will have to develop a list of what is considered cognitive development in other curricula and early childhood documents, including texts on child development.

Then ask them to review the substrands in the PCF, V1 and decide which might fit into a cognitive domain. Depending on their level of education and experience, students might go deeper into the challenge and look for environments and materials or interactions and strategies that could apply directly to cognitive development.