IMPLEMENTING A CURRICULUM RESPONSIVELY: BUILDING ON INDIVIDUAL CHILDREN'S INTERESTS

PRESENTER NOTES

This guide walks you through presenting the *Implementing a Curriculum Responsively: Building on Individual Children's Interests* in-service suite. This suite includes PowerPoint slides and supporting materials for teachers and family child care providers. An additional suite is available for use with home visitors. Learning activities, tip sheets, and activity sheets are labeled for their intended audiences.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Projector and audio equipment
- Flip chart or similar large paper
- Markers

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- This presentation describes how teachers and family child care providers can implement their program's curriculum to respond to individual children's interests.
- There is also a version of this presentation that focuses on implementing a curriculum responsively with families and children in a home-based program. See *Implementing a Curriculum Responsively: Building on Individual Children's Interests (HV)*.
- If the participants include center-based teachers, family child care providers, and home visitors, you may choose to include materials from both versions of the suite. The presentation outline in the presenter notes of the education staff version of the suite lists both sets of materials.
- In the presentation, you will help participants learn to notice children's interests; explore what curricula offer; and consider using a curriculum's resources to implement learning environments, learning experiences, and interactions that are responsive to children's interests.
- The presentation may include video clips that illustrate teachers intentionally using their curriculum to build on children's interests. Although most of the videos include classroom teachers, home visitors can watch the strategies and encourage families to replicate them.
- Learning activities offer participants opportunities to understand the process of learning about children's interests and using this information to tailor a curriculum's guidance to build on children's interests.
- You may want to revisit the <u>Implementing a Curriculum with Fidelity: Questions and Answers</u> resource. That document provides important information about implementing a curriculum with fidelity while being responsive to children and families. Another useful resource that focuses on implementing curriculum with fidelity is the <u>Head Start Curriculum Fidelity iPDF.</u>
- Adaptation boxes are labeled throughout the presentation to individualize this training for your specific training group.

LIST OF AVAILABLE CONTENT

HANDOUTS

- Tips for Education Staff: Observing and Learning About Children's Interests
- Tips for Families: Observing and Learning About Your Child's Interests
- Tips for Education Staff: Learning from Families
- Tips for Families: Talking About Children's Interests



- Tips for Education Staff: Learning Environments that Respond to Children's Interests
- Tips for Education Staff: Learning Experiences and Interactions that Respond to Children's Interests
- Learning Activity for Education Staff: Teacher Sara Builds on Toddlers' Personal Interests
- Learning Activity for Education Staff: Teacher Jessica Follows Preschoolers' Situational Interests
- Helpful Resources: Observing and Building on Children's Interests
- Tools for Center-Based Supervisors: Reflection and Planning for Children's Interests
- Tools for Center-Based Supervisors: Using Curriculum Guidance to Build on Children's Interests

OPTIONAL SLIDES

- Optional Slide 1: Reflect on Your Learning
- Optional Slide 2: Planning to Build on Children's Interests

OPTIONAL HANDOUTS

- Head Start Program Performance Standards Support Children's Interests
- Optional Learning Activity: Planning to Build on Individual Children's Interests

PRESENTATION OUTLINE

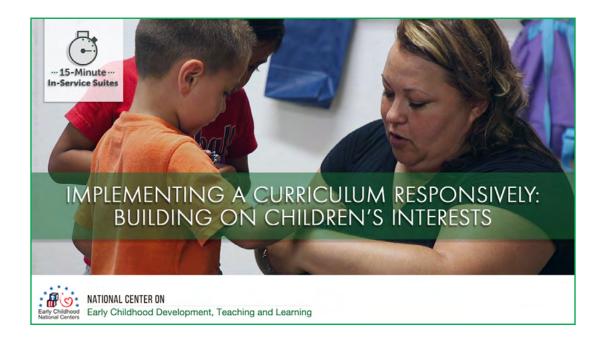
SLIDE		HANDOUTS NEEDED	OPTIONAL SLIDES	OPTIONAL HANDOUTS
1.	Title Slide and Introduction			
2.	Connections to the ELOF			
3.	House Framework for Effective Teaching Practices			HSPPS Supports Children's Interests
4.	House Framework for Effective Teaching Practices- Foundation			
5.	Objectives		Optional Slide 1: Reflect on your Learning	
6.	Why care about children's Interests?			
7.	Relationships: The Heart of Responsiveness			
8.	Implementing a Curriculum Responsively			
9.	Observing and Learning about Children's Interests	 Tips for ES: Observing and Learning about Children's Interests Tips for Families: Observing and Learning About your Child's Interests 		

10. Learning about Children's Interests: Personal Interests			
11. Learning about Children's Interests: Situational Interests	 Tips for ES: Learning from Families Tips for Families: Talking About Children's Interests 		
12. Curricula Offer Guidance On:			
13. Learning Environments	Tips for ES: Learning Environments that Respond to Children's Interests		
14. Learning Experiences	Tips for ES: Learning Experiences and Interactions that Respond to Children's Interests		
15. Activity: Teacher Sara Builds on Toddlers' Personal Interests	 Learning Activity for ES: Teacher Sara Builds on Toddlers' Personal Interests 		
16. Activity: Teacher Jessica Follows Children's Situational Interests	 Learning Activity for ES: Teacher Jessica Follows Preschoolers' Situational Interests 	Optional Slide 2	 Optional Learning Activity: Planning to Build on Children's Interests
17. Review	 Helpful Resources Tools for CB Supervisors: Supporting Staff to Implement a Curriculum Responsively Tools for CB Supervisors: Building on Individual Children's Interests 		

ES: Indicates tips/activity sheet for education staff

HV: Indicates tips/activity sheet for home visitors

F: Indicates tips/activity sheet for families



SLIDE 1:

INTRODUCTIONS:

Begin the training by giving participants background information about yourself.

Provide an opportunity for participants to introduce themselves.

INTRODUCE THE TOPIC:

A curriculum provides guidance and materials for teachers and family childcare providers to use to support young children's development and learning. A curriculum typically focuses on a particular age group, such as infants and toddlers or preschoolers. It offers guidance on learning environments, learning experiences, and adult-child interactions.

Early educators individualize the guidance curricula in ways that are responsive to children's interests. They also implement the curriculum in ways that are responsive to children's development, strengths, needs, temperaments, and cultural and linguistic experiences. Implementing a curriculum based on children's interests allows education staff to engage children in meaningful learning experiences. This engagement helps children develop the skills, behaviors, and concepts described in the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework—ELOF for short.

For additional guidance on how to implement a curriculum responsively, visit the following resources available on the ECLKC:

- 15-Minute In-Service Suite on Implementing a Curriculum Responsively: Supporting Individual Children's Development and Learning
- 15-Minute In-Service Suite on a Culturally Responsive Approach to Implementing a Curriculum
- 15-Minute In-Service Suite on Highly Individualized Teaching and Learning

DISCUSSION:

Have participants share which curriculum they use. Ask them how they think it supports responsiveness to children's interests. Participants' comments will give you an idea of how they think about responsiveness to children's interests.



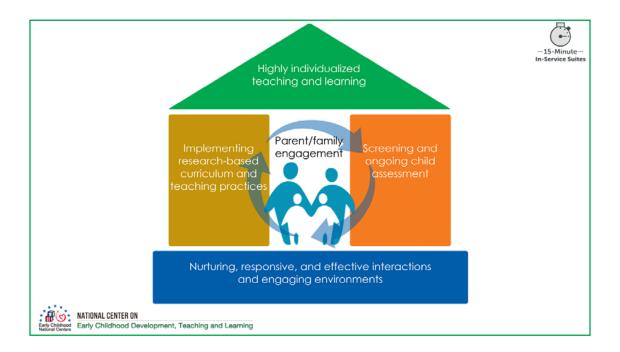
		o the EL	<u> </u>	_				
	CENTRAL DOMAINS							
	APPROACHES TO LEARNING	SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT	LANGUAGE AND LITERACY	COGNITION	PERCEPTUAL, MOTOR, AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT			
▲ INFANT/ TODDLER DOMAINS	Approaches to Learning	Social and Emotional Development	Language and Communication	Cognition	Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development			
PRESCHOOLER	Approaches to	Social and Emotional	Language and Communication	Mathematics Development	Perceptual,			
DOMAINS	Learning	Development	Literacy	Scientific Reasoning	Motor, and Physical Development			

SLIDE 2:

Why provide learning experiences based on children's interests?

Building on children's interests supports children's learning and development across the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF) domains. When children are interested in learning materials and learning experiences:

- They engage more fully in exploration and learning for longer periods of time. Their engagement leads to more robust development in all domains.
- Their curiosity increases related to the objects, materials, people, or events they are exploring, extending their focus and deepening learning.
- They strengthen their executive function skills. Research shows that children focus, sustain attention, and persist in actions and behaviors for longer periods of time when they are interested in the topic or task (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2018). These are key skills in the ELOF Approaches to Learning domain.
- They develop a sense of identity as learners and confidence in their own abilities. They connect to their home life and family culture.



SLIDE 3:

The Framework for Effective Teaching Practices is known as the House. The House represents five integral components of quality teaching and learning:

- The foundation: Nurturing, responsive, and effective interactions and engaging environments.
- The first pillar: Implementing research-based curricula and teaching practices.
- The second pillar: Screening and ongoing child assessment.
- The roof: Highly individualized teaching and learning.
- The center: Parent and family engagement.

When connected with one another, they form a single structure—the House Framework—that surrounds the family in the center. As we implement each component of the house—in partnership with parents and families—we foster children's learning and development.

OPTIONAL MATERIALS:

Handout: Head Start Program Performance Standards Support Children's Interests



SLIDE 4:

This suite focuses primarily on the left pillar of the House Framework: implementing research-based curriculum and teaching practices. This topic is relevant to all parts of the framework. For example, understanding children's interests stems from both parent/family engagement (center of the house) as well as ongoing child assessment (right pillar).

Objectives



- Discuss the importance of learning about children's interests.
- Explore ways curricula provide guidance on the learning environment, learning experiences, and adult-child interactions.
- Consider ways to implement a curriculum responsively by building on children's interests.



SLIDE 5:

REVIEW THE OBJECTIVES FOR THE SESSION.

- Discuss the importance of learning about children's interests.
- Explore ways curricula provide guidance on the learning environment, learning experiences, and adultchild interactions.
- Consider ways to implement a curriculum responsively and build children's interests.

Ask if anyone has further suggestions for what they would like to be able to do at the end of this session.

OPTIONAL MATERIALS:

■ Insert Optional Slide 1: Reflect on Your Learning



SLIDE 6:

Children play an active role in their own learning. Learning and development take place when children engage in hands-on exploration, inquiry, and thinking. They also learn when they communicate with others about the focus of their exploration.

In this video, we see how preschooler Rodrigo engages intensely and persists in his exploration of marbles. He makes them spin in the dump truck, observing how they fall from the truck. Then he investigates how the marbles move through various sized PVC pipes placed at different angles.

Children are more likely to be motivated and engaged in learning experiences that build on their interests. This means that learning experiences that build on children's interests support their learning across the ELOF domains. For example, Rodrigo's teacher might ask him open-ended, thought-provoking questions that expand his scientific and mathematical thinking. She may also support his language and literacy development by encouraging him to record his experiences by drawing pictures or dictating a story.



SLIDE 7:

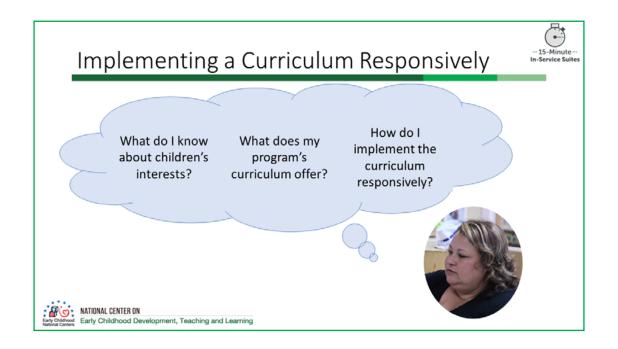
"Healthy development depends on the quality and reliability of a young child's relationships with the important people in his or her life, both within and outside the family" (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004, p. 1). In order to respond to children's individual needs, we need to develop relationships with children and their families.

Building positive, nurturing relationships with children creates the foundation for children to develop knowledge, skills, and concepts across the ELOF domains. For example, positive adult-child relationships are related to children's confidence in their own abilities, emotional regulation, and academic performance (Jones, Bub, & Raver, 2013).

To develop positive, nurturing relationships with young children, learn about and understand children's cultures, backgrounds, preferences, and experiences. Individualized interactions during daily routines or planned learning experiences provide opportunities to observe and respond to children's individual interests.

Families know their children best. Build close connections with families to understand children's cultures, backgrounds, experiences, strengths, and needs.

Relationships with children and their families are at the heart of responsiveness.



SLIDE 8:

Early childhood curricula offer guidance on building relationships with children, providing learning environments and learning experiences, and engaging in interactions.

DISCUSSION:

While education staff are required to implement their curriculum with fidelity, they play an active role in intentionally using the curriculum's resources to plan learning environments, experiences, and interactions that are responsive to children's interests.

In order to do this, education staff should ask themselves:

- What do I know about individual children's interests?
- What does my curriculum offer to support their interests?
- How do I implement my curriculum responsively, based on what I know about the children's interests?

When planning the learning experience we saw in the video, teacher Roberta was aware of the children's interests in manipulating objects and exploring motion. She built on her curriculum's unit about "exploring how things move," providing materials for the children to explore this concept, thereby extending their learning experiences.



SLIDE 9:

How do young children show us what they find interesting?

Observe children. Notice and document their interests. Even the youngest infants pay attention to what is interesting and new. Even though they may not use words to share their interests, they communicate in different ways. For example, they may turn their heads, looking and listening, in the direction of what interests them. They may reach for, touch, grasp, and even chew on interesting objects. As infants become more mobile, they may roll, push, or crawl toward interesting objects and people. Once the object is within their reach, they may explore it for longer periods of time. If an object is not within children's reach, older infants and toddlers may point to communicate their interest.

Toddlers and preschoolers might express their interest verbally. For example, they might say "that," "I want," or "Can I have...?" Children who are dual language learners (DLLs) may express their interests in their home language or in English. Children are likely to show excitement, curiosity, and enthusiasm. They're eager to talk about these things throughout the day. When children want to repeat the same learning experience, hear the same story, or talk about the same topics, they are also revealing their interests.

Children with disabilities, suspected delays, or other special needs may communicate their interests in different ways. Pay attention to their non-verbal and verbal cues.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Tips for Education Staff: Observing and Learning About Children's Interests
- Tips for Families: Observing and Learning About Your Child's Interests



SLIDE 10:

There are two types of interests—personal and situational—on which we can build.

Personal interests are preferences, attractions, or passions. They tend to be stable over time. For example, a child may have a deep interest in animals, things that light up, or music.

How do you learn about children's personal interests?

You can gather and use data from ongoing observations (e.g., anecdotal records) to learn about children's personal interests. Reflect on the following types of questions:

- What are the child's personal interests?
- What objects and materials does the child prefer to use?
- What books does the child want to read over and over?
- What ideas or topics does the child enjoy talking about or exploring?
- What activities does the child prefer?
- How do the child's interests relate to their strengths and needs? For example, what knowledge, skills, and concepts do they have that help them sustain interests. What knowledge, skills, and concepts are they developing through their explorations?
- Discuss families' observations of their children's interests at home. These discussions may also reveal
 information about the families' cultures, including cultural practices and values that play a role in the
 development of the children's interests. This information can help interpret findings from ongoing
 observations.

For further information about incorporating individual children's interests, use the following resources available on the ECLKC:

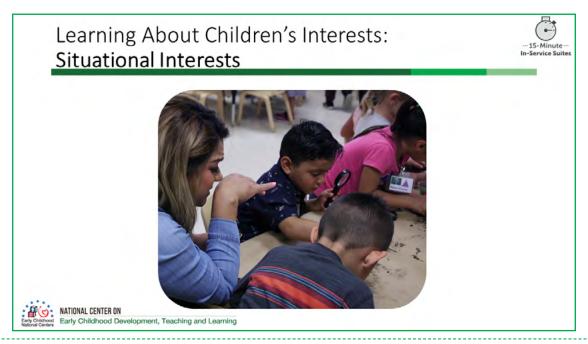
Teacher Time: The Kids are in Charge: Children Guiding the Curriculum (Infant/Toddler and Preschool versions)

DISCUSSION:

How do you learn about children's personal interests?

• Teacher Time: The Kids are in Charge: Children Guiding the Curriculum (Infant/Toddler and Preschool versions)





SLIDE 11:

Situational interests pertain to the immediate situation. They may be temporary, or they may lead to new personal interests. For example, during outdoor play, preschoolers in Jessica's classroom found several pill bugs in the yard. Many children came to observe the pill bugs. The next day, during circle time, Sebastian said, "I wonder if we will see more pill bugs today." Again, the children went in search of pill bugs. Jessica had not planned for children to locate pill bugs in the yard. However, the children's discovery was a situational interest that sparked an ongoing investigation of pill bugs.

Learn about children's situational interests by noticing situations, events, or phenomena that capture children's attention. Often, some unplanned activities that resulted in children's sustained attention, focus, and engagement lead to a situational interest. For example, one morning a fire truck raced by the family child care home, with lights on and sirens blaring. Throughout the day the children talked about the fire truck. The 16-month-old toddler made the sound of the siren over and over, found a small fire truck in the block area, and carried it around for the rest of the day. In the block area, a small group of 2- and 3-year-olds built a fire station. The family child care provider noticed that children continued to integrate fire engines and firefighters in their play throughout the week.

Activities or happenings at home, planned or unplanned, may also influence children's interests. For example, when families get new pets, their children may become interested in that kind of animal, people who work with animals, or taking care of animals.

It's also important to remember that children develop interests within the context of their cultures. Specific culturally-based skills, behaviors, and concepts may influence their interests. For example, a child whose extended family gathers weekly for Sunday supper may develop an interest in the foods served at Sunday supper or the process of preparing for Sunday supper.

Children's experiences and development influence their situational and personal interests. As children get older, they are exposed to a wider range of topics, materials, and activities. In addition, they develop new knowledge, skills, and concepts. These changes impact children's interests.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Tips for Education Staff: Learning from Families
- Tips for Families: Talking about Children's Interests





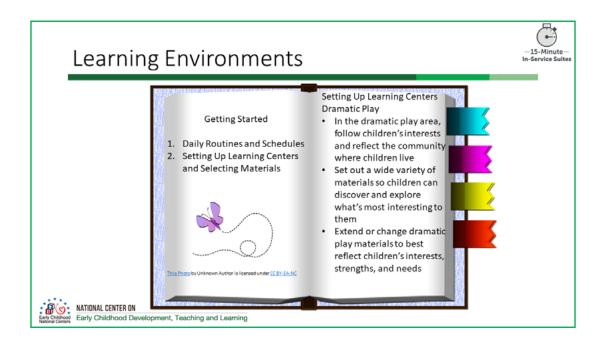
SLIDE 12:

The curriculum offers guidance about:

- Learning environments
- Learning experiences
- Interactions

Use the curriculum's guidance to build on children's interests and be responsive to their strengths and needs.

The following slides provide examples of what your curriculum's guidance and resources may look like. Each slide represents only one example of the many diverse ways a curriculum may approach learning environments, learning experiences, and interactions.



SLIDE 13:

Some curricula provide guidance on how to set up the learning environment. The sections on the learning environment may help you:

- Set up the physical space and layout
- Organize learning centers or interest areas
- Suggest learning materials
- Set schedules, including daily routines

DISCUSSION:

Take a moment to think about your curriculum. What guidance does it offer on the learning environment?

Here are some ways to use a curriculum's guidance and resources about the learning environment responsively based on children's interests:

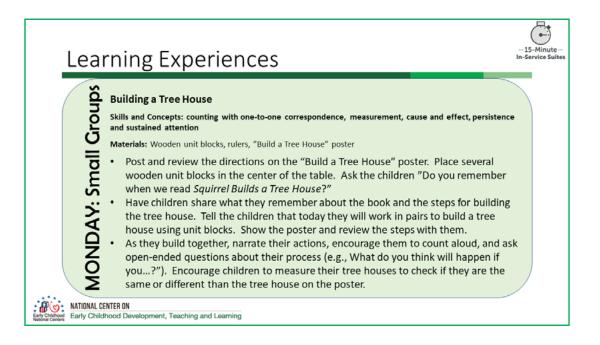
- Provide opportunities for choice, play, exploration, and experimentation—both indoors and outdoors—as part of the daily routine
- Select and adapt learning materials and equipment to reflect children's interests, home cultures, and languages
- Use the curriculum's suggested learning centers or choice time to build on children's interests
- Use scheduled time for small groups, large groups (for preschool-aged children), and individualized interactions to learn and build on children's interests

In this example, one curriculum manual explains how to set up a dramatic play area. The curriculum suggests that staff choose themes based on children's interests and reflective of the community where children live. The guidance suggests that education staff provide a wide array of materials, so children can discover, choose, and explore materials that are most interesting to them. In addition, the curriculum invites education staff to extend or change the themes based on what they notice about children's interests, strengths, and needs.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

Tips for Education Staff: Learning Environments that Respond to Children's Interests





SLIDE 14:

Curricula approach learning experiences in a variety of ways.

Some curricula offer a structured sequence of learning experiences, with specific activities for each day or week. In this example, teachers implement specific learning experiences during scheduled time blocks (e.g., circle time, small group). The curriculum describes the learning materials, learning experiences, and teacher-child interactions. Other curricula may provide teaching strategies organized by domains of learning and development and ideas for daily interactions and routines. These curricula may include activities without a specific sequence for education staff.

Whether a curriculum has a structured sequence of learning experiences or a curriculum allows for greater flexibility, it is important to plan and implement learning experiences that reflect children's interests. Implementing a curriculum with fidelity does not mean always using the learning activities exactly as described in the curriculum. When implementing a curriculum with fidelity, as required by the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS), intentionally follow the curriculum's approach and guidance. But they use your knowledge of children's interests to make the curriculum's activities or teaching practices more meaningful and engaging. You may alter the context and materials to build on the children's interests if you promote the same skills or concepts promoted in the curriculum's activities.

In the learning experience we see on the slide, the curriculum provides a poster with directions for building a treehouse with wooden unit blocks and rulers. It also provides guidance for interactions while the children are building.

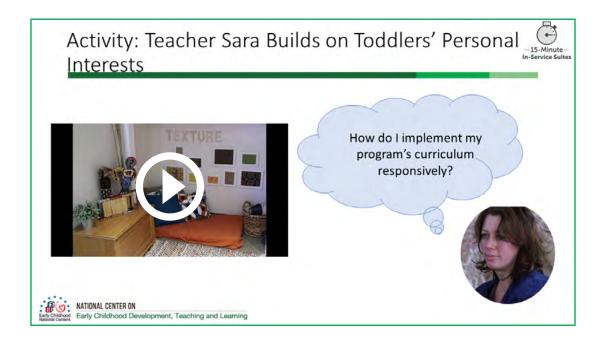
DISCUSSION:

Take a moment to think about the children you work with. Would tree houses be part of their everyday world, or would they be interested in using the same skills and knowledge to build something that may connect more closely to their lives (e.g., a fire station, doghouse, market)? What do you know about their interests? How might you adapt this learning experience to build on their interests while promoting the same learning goals?

Remember, children are continuously developing new skills, behaviors, and concepts that may influence their interests. New materials, ideas, or events may expand their interests. It is important to be attentive to children's interests over time and adapt learning experiences to build on their current and developing interests.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

• Tips for Education Staff: Learning Experiences and Interactions that Respond to Children's Interests



SLIDE 15:

- In this video, you will hear infant and toddler teacher, Sara, discussing how she incorporates children's interests into her setting.
- Sara's infant and toddler curriculum provides a learning experience in which toddlers explore cause and effect. It suggests teachers offer materials that children can insert into an object and take out. The curriculum also encourages teachers to narrate children's actions based on the ways they use the materials—focusing on vocabulary words such as "in" and "out."
- As you watch the video, notice how Sara uses her curriculum's guidance in a way that is responsive to the personal interests of the children in her care.

PLAY VIDEO

- Use the video guide to record what you hear about the ways Sara is responsive to the personal interests of the children in her care.
- Play the video a second time, if participants need to gather more information.

TABLE OR PARTNER DISCUSSION:

- After watching the video, discuss with a partner or in table groups how Sara used what she knew about her children's personal interests to implement her curriculum responsively.
- What materials and activities are Sara's children interested in?
- What ELOF skills, behaviors, and concepts are promoted through this activity?
- What range of skills, behaviors, and concepts do the children demonstrate?
- What skills, behaviors, and concepts do children need to have already to participate? What, if any, individual differences are evident?
- How do you think Sara used her curriculum's guidance about the learning environment, learning experiences, and interactions responsively?
- Record what you discuss on the Learning Activity for Education Staff: Teacher Sara Builds on Toddlers' Interests handout.



LARGE GROUP SHARE OUT:

• Invite participants to share their observations and discussions.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

• Learning Activity for Education Staff: Teacher Sara Builds on Toddlers' Personal Interests



SLIDE 16:

- In this video, you will hear preschool teacher, Jessica, discuss how she incorporates children's situational interest in pill bugs into the learning experiences she offers.
- Jessica's preschool curriculum provides a unit on spring. As part of the unit, the curriculum suggests teachers take children outside to notice the leaves and flowers. In the teacher manual, the curriculum encourages teachers to ask open-ended, thought-provoking questions about what children are doing.
- As you watch the video, notice how Jessica uses her curriculum guidance in a way that is responsive to the situational interests of the children in her classroom.

PLAY VIDEO:

- Use the video guide to write down what you hear about the ways Jessica is responsive to the situational interests of the children in her classroom.
- Play the video a second time if participants need to gather more information.

TABLE OR PARTNER DISCUSSION:

- After watching the video, with a partner or in table groups, think about how Jessica used what she knew about her children's situational interests to implement her curriculum responsively.
- From what situation did the children's interest emerge?
- What ELOF skills, behaviors, and concepts so the activities promote? What range of skills, behaviors, and concepts do the children demonstrate? What, if any, individual differences are evident?
- How do you think Jessica used her curriculum's guidance on the learning environment, learning experiences, and interactions responsively? How does this activity support children's learning across the ELOF domains?
- Record what you discuss on the Teacher Jessica Follows Children's Situational Interests handout.

LARGE GROUP SHARE OUT:

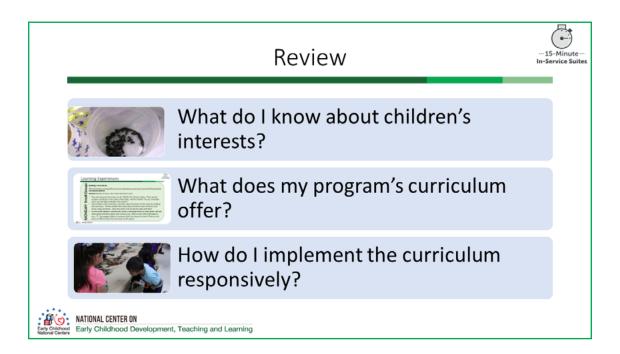
• Invite participants to share their observations and discussions.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

Learning Activity for Education Staff: Teacher Jessica Follows Preschoolers' Situational Interest

OPTIONAL MATERIALS:

- Optional Slide 2
- Optional Learning Activity: Planning to Build on Children's Interests



SLIDE 17:

REVIEW THE MAIN POINTS OF THE PRESENTATION.

Implementing curricula in a way that is responsive to children's interests is an ongoing process. Children are learning and developing rapidly during the first years of life. Especially with infants and toddlers, ongoing observation increases awareness of children's moment-by-moment changing interests.

Take time to notice children's interests and have discussions with families to identify children's personal and situational interests. It's also important to remember that children develop interests within the context of families and culture, and a child's specific culturally-based skills, behaviors, and concepts may influence their interests.

Be aware of children's development and their emerging personal and situational interests. Use this information to provide meaningful and engaging learning experiences that enhance children's skills and concepts across all domains.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Helpful Resources
- Tools for Center-Based Supervisors: Reflection and Planning for Children's Interests
- Tools for Center-Based Supervisors: Using Curriculum Guidance to Build on Children's Interests