

EMERGENT CURRICULUM

Fostering creativity through the work of young hands manipulating objects or making art occurs in an environment that reflects the values we want to communicate to children. Moreover, the classroom environment can help shape a child's identity as a powerful player in his or her own life and the lives of others. To foster such an environment, teachers must go deeper than what is merely seen at eye level and develop a deep understanding of the underlying principles of children's thinking, questions, and curiosities.

Children construct their knowledge through a carefully planned curriculum that engages and builds upon the child's current knowledge, recognizing that knowledge cannot merely be provided for the child. The curriculum, often emergent, is based on the interests of the children. When learning is the product of the child's guided construction rather than merely the teacher's transmission and the child's absorption, learning becomes individualized. Most important, teaching becomes a two-way relationship in which the teacher's understanding of the child is just as important as the child's understanding of the teacher. The curriculum, often emergent, is based on the interests of the children.

Emergent curriculum is not a free-for-all. It requires that teachers actively seek out and chase the interests of the children. This kind of teaching environment demands a high degree of trust in the teacher's creative abilities and envisions an image of the child as someone actively seeking knowledge. It is a perspective that turns a structured curriculum, with predetermined outcomes, on its head. A standardized curriculum that is designed to replicate results often eliminates all possibility of spontaneous inquiry, stealing potential moments of learning from students and teachers in a cookie-cutter approach to education in the classroom. Given the diversity of the children we teach, accepting a canned recipe for teaching, evaluation, and assessment is problematic at best. Each child we teach is unique, requiring us to use our judgment, instead of rules, to guide our teaching practice. To teach well, educators must ensure that creativity and innovation are always present. Although good teaching requires organization and routines, it is never inflexible and rarely routine. It dances with surprise. It pursues wonder. It finds joy at every turn. (NAEYC, 2019)