

A quality program places a high priority on the continuous development of its instructional program and the documentation that guides that program at each age level. The curriculum plan is a description of what is taught throughout the program, and as such (1) describes the program's instructional program, (2) helps to ensure continuity between age levels and domain areas, and (3) provides a basis for evaluation of the program's instructional program.

It is understood that the plan development process takes time and that it is revisited on a regular basis to keep it effective and applicable. While the initial development of a site-specific curriculum document will take several years, the true value is found in the ongoing revisitation of those documents, the adjustment and revision that keep them current, and the updating in response to new educational research, instructional trends, and emerging content. As a program matures and adjusts its instructional program, the curriculum plan must change as well, reflecting improvements to instruction, changes in supportive materials, and expansion of the program's integrative component.

A well-documented curriculum plan provides guidance to new staff, and it is the basis for revisions to the instructional program, including the selection of the most appropriate resource materials. In this respect, it is a tool to ease the work of the staff. A program's curriculum plan should be a collaborative effort of staff in the same age level as well as those above and below it. Members of the staff at other levels should review the guide for a given level. A curriculum plan must be complete enough to be useful, and it must be organized in a manner that is consistent and practical.

The following list of components for each age level should be included in the curriculum plan. For initial accreditation, these items are required to complete the curriculum plan for the instructional program standard:

1. Foundational statements: your philosophy of education, the mission of the program, the core values of the program, and the statement of faith
2. Philosophy of teaching and learning for young children
3. Expected child outcomes
4. Domains: for each of the domains—spiritual, social, emotional, physical, and cognitive—the following is developed:
  - a. Age group goals
  - b. Scope of learning, sequence of learning
  - c. Instructional strategies: the techniques used by the staff for instruction (e.g., hands-on activities, discussion, experimentation, learning centers, role-playing, drill, and practice) that are adapted to the learning styles of the child

The following items should be added as the program completes the development of its curriculum plans, and progress must be reported in the program's annual report.

1. Resources for learning: the environment includes centers and materials and resources needed for the lesson. The daily schedule affects the context for learning.
2. Assessment toward the age group goals: what types of assessment (observations, portfolios, projects, written and oral, etc.) will be utilized to be sure goals are reached? Assessments must be developmentally appropriate.
3. Goal-oriented lesson plans: each activity connects with a goal and the learning centers involve active learning.
4. State standards alignment: program aligns with local or state instructional standards to ensure continuity for children entering or leaving the program while maintaining connectivity to the instructional context in which the program functions. While most Christian programs are not mandated to follow state or local frameworks, some alignment (or some reference to the frameworks) is beneficial.