EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION
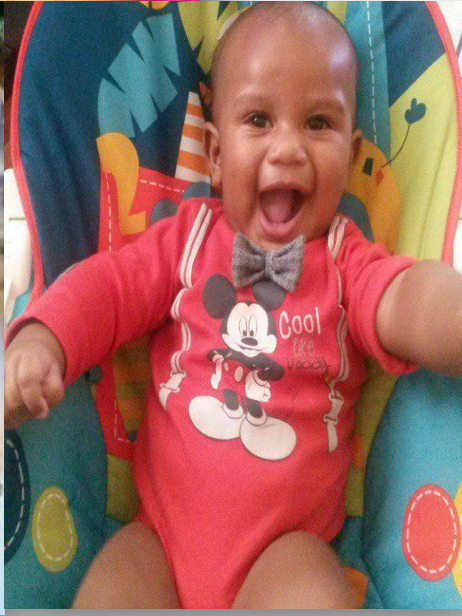# CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

EVERY CHILD MUST SUCCEED
August 2015

This activity is funded by the UNICEF Eastern Caribbean Area Office. The views expressed herein are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the development partner supporting the activity, or of the OECS Commission.

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ACRONYMS

CARICOM: The Caribbean Community

OECS: The Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

GLOSSARY

Assessment: The process of obtaining information about individual children from natural observations, anecdotal records, interviews, portfolios, projects, and other sources, for the purpose of understanding the child's development and of making decisions about curriculum and instruction in order to enhance learning and development.

Curriculum: The sum total of the experiences, activities, and events, whether direct or indirect, which occur within an environment designed to foster children's learning and development.

Curriculum Design: The organizational structure of a curriculum – how the component parts are arranged (e.g. integrated, subject-centered, thematic etc.)

Curriculum Evaluation: The process of gathering data in order to make decisions about the intrinsic value or worth of a curriculum, or its value relative to some other curriculum.

Curriculum Planning: The process of making decisions about the different components of a curriculum.

Curriculum Implementation: The process of putting the documented curriculum into practice.

Developmentally appropriate practice: Curriculum practice that takes into account those aspects of teaching and learning that change with the age and experience of the learner.

Diagnostic Assessment: Assessment carried out to examine children's possible learning difficulties in depth, in order to determine what measures need to be taken to correct the problems.

Dispositions: Tendencies of individuals to react to certain situations in consistent ways (e.g. curiosity – always wanting to find out when confronted with unfamiliar conditions or phenomena).

Higher Mental Functions: Mental functions that are socially acquired, mediated by social meanings, voluntarily controlled and that exist as a link in a broad system of functions rather than as an individual unit.

Knowledge: Facts, concepts, awareness of processes and procedures.

Learning Outcomes: Knowledge, attitudes and skills, demonstrated by the child, and indicative of the child's progress through different stages of development, that the child will exhibit as a result of exposure to the curriculum.

Screening Test: A type of test which is administered to detect indicators that a child might have a developmental problem that needs to be further investigated.

Skill: The ability, acquired over time and through sustained effort, to carry out complex activities or functions. Skills may be physical, cognitive, interpersonal etc.

STRUCTURE OF THE FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT

This document contains four sections:

- **Section I** gives the introduction, describes the context of curriculum planning, and summarises the principles and theoretical bases on which the curriculum was developed.

- **Section II** outlines the strands, goals, and learning outcomes. The outcomes are subdivided into outcomes for the curriculum for children from birth to two years old, and from 3 – 5 years old.

- **Section III** describes suggested approaches to planning the curriculum.

- **Section IV** describes suggested strategies for assessment and evaluation

SECTION 1

SECTION I: THE FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

The OECS Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum Framework is intended to support curriculum planning and enactment in different early childhood settings throughout the OECS countries. These will include child care centres, both public and privately owned, nurseries or creches, home or community based child care, and other family support programmes and early intervention services now available in the different countries of the OECS.

The framework document is designed to complement, rather than to replace, existing curricula, pedagogical approaches, and standards and policies in early childhood settings throughout the OECS. It is also intended to suggest issues to consider, and possible approaches to planning curriculum and instruction in programmes that do not now have a documented curriculum or a consistent approach to child development that is informed by research, a clearly defined philosophy, and articulated goals and outcomes. It presents a continuum of developmental stages, with the skills, knowledge and dispositions that normally characterize these stages, and suggests approaches to supporting and assessing the development of young children as they progress through the stages identified, by means of their interactions with their caregivers and with the physical and social environment.

The document also proposes a shared language for talking about curriculum, pedagogy and assessment for the early years that will support early childhood policy makers, practitioners, and caregivers as they work together across early childhood settings.

Context

This curriculum document is intended to support the harmonisation of programmes and services for young children from birth to entry into primary schools within the OECS. It proposes a common framework that lays out – in a way that is relevant to all early childhood programmes – what and how, young children develop and learn.

It has been developed in collaboration with early childhood officials and practitioners throughout the region. To arrive at this document, the consultant reviewed existing curricula, interviewed early childhood officers, parents, centre administrators and facilitators, as well as home care givers, coordinators of community and home-based programmes, and primary school teachers in reception classes throughout the countries of the OECS. The review process sought to elicit shared beliefs about learning and

development in early childhood; about the needs of young children; about valued outcomes for early childhood education; and about critical curriculum content, as well as stakeholders' perceptions of the strengths and limitations of existing curricula that guide curriculum planning and enactment throughout the different countries of the region.

An initial review of effective early childhood curriculum approaches and models in use both in the Caribbean and internationally, followed by site visits to different OECS countries, and interviews with key stakeholders, led to the identification of curriculum elements and approaches that seemed particularly relevant to the OECS context.

The review analysed curriculum models and approaches that were child-centered, and adopted developmental, political and economic, socio/cultural and human rights perspectives; that were influenced by, or influenced, current understandings about good curriculum practice; that were situated in countries with culturally diverse populations; and that were responsive to the needs of diverse groups, including children at risk because of the financial circumstances in which they lived or their state of health; those with special needs; children whose first language or vernacular was different from the official standard English used in their countries and classrooms; and indigenous populations. It also sought to identify approaches that took into consideration the importance of addressing issues of gender bias within societies.

The review led to the identification of the following as worthy of emphasis in developing any curriculum for young children of the region:

- Recognition that young children pass through clearly defined phases of development, though perhaps at different rates and times;

- An integrated, activity-oriented approach to curriculum, rather than a subject-oriented one that has them passively receiving instruction;

- Allowing children to actively construct their own individual understandings of the world;

- Placing young children at the center of the learning process, acknowledging their right, and empowering them, to be collaborators in that process

- The importance of a carefully prepared physical and social environment in fostering young children's development;

- Partnerships facilitating continuous interpersonal interactions among family, community, and practitioners in all early childhood care and education settings;

- Responsiveness to the realities of different educational settings, as well as to the needs and experiences of stakeholders in different social contexts;

- Assessment as continuous and authentic; and as being primarily *for*, more than *of*, learning

- The importance of preparing children for transitions from one level of the curriculum children to another

The considerations outlined above have informed the contents of this framework.

Finally, the document is informed by the Handbook of Learning Outcomes for Early Childhood Development in the Caribbean (2010); the CARICOM Vision of the Ideal Caribbean Person; the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989); and the Needs of the 21st century Learner.

Foundations of Curriculum

The Foundations upon which this framework was built are:

- A philosophical approach derived from the vision expressed in the OECS Education Sector Strategy (OESS) document; articulated in some early childhood education curricula in the OECS countries; and embodied in the vision of the ideal 21st century Caribbean citizen;

- Developmental principles, and understandings about how learning occurs in early childhood, as identified from the literature, and the review of Caribbean and other international curricula;

- Understandings about the social, cultural and economic contexts in which young children grow up and are cared for, in the Caribbean and internationally;

- Basic concepts, processes, principles, attitudes and social skills taken from core academic subject areas of different primary curricula, and different domains of learning, as well as from understandings of the learning needs of the 21st century learner.

Overarching Philosophy

This document is informed by the belief that every child has the right to develop optimally and succeed in life, and that all children must thus be provided with developmentally and culturally appropriate learning experiences that will allow them to realise their full potential as individuals, and as citizens of their country, the OECS sub-region, CARICOM, and the world. It recognises that early childhood is a time of intense learning, and that children are unique individuals, each of whose distinctive experiences and ways of learning must be incorporated into any plan for their physical, cognitive, emotional and spiritual development.

Children are active constructors of understandings about their world, in collaboration with other adults, and with their peers, whom they encounter in their homes and communities. They must be placed at the center of all learning experiences provided in the curriculum. All experiences provided must seek to integrate, promote and build upon their understandings about the world acquired in the home, the community, the centre, and the physical world around them. Their rights, needs, interests and experiences must inform all decisions and actions. They must be collaborators in their learning processes, initiating as well as responding to activities and ideas presented. Adults, in turn, must respond to their expressed needs and interests in such a way as to facilitate such collaboration in the construction of knowledge about their world.

Finally, the curriculum framework reflects the belief that young children are closely bonded with their caregivers, and embedded within their homes and communities, and that these relationships affect their development. Any curriculum planned for them must, therefore, provide ongoing opportunities for partnerships between, and interactions among, the school, home and community.

Understandings about Learning and Development

The curriculum framework is informed by key ideas from different theories about child development and the nature of children's learning, including the following:

Table 1: Summary of theories of learning and development

THEORIST	THEORY	KEY UNDERSTANDINGS
Dewey	Experiential Learning	- Human beings learn by doing - Education is life itself - The child's interests and activities should be the starting point for all educational experiences - There is learning potential in everyday experiences in the home and community - Continuity of experience is essential to growth
Piaget	Constructivism	- Knowledge is constructed via the child's active exploration of the environment - Children pass through distinct stages of cognitive development, although they may do so at different rates - Play is critical to the young child's learning and development - Interactions with the environment are essential to the construction of knowledge about the world.
Vygotsky	Social Constructivism	- Knowledge is socially constructed, and such social construction of knowledge leads to the emergence of higher mental functions; - Interaction between the child and the social environment is central to all learning; - The importance of mastering tools of the mind and the culture for problem solving, and for living successfully in the world; - The importance of scaffolding learning in the child's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

THEORIST	THEORY	KEY UNDERSTANDINGS
Caine and Caine	Brain based learning	- Each brain is unique; - The brain orchestrates all dimensions of development; - Learning engages the child's entire physiology; - Learning involves both focused and peripheral participation; - The brain processes wholes and parts simultaneously; - Learning involves both conscious and unconscious processes; and - Learning is enhanced by challenges, but is inhibited by threat.
Bronfenbrenner	Ecological	- The role of different ecological systems in the child's development: - The immediate learning environments (early childhood education settings, home, family and community), and relationships among them; - The adults' environment, which affects adults' ability to provide care, and to nurture the child's growth; and - The nation's philosophy governing early childhood care and education.
Erikson	Psychosocial	- The nature of learning to exist in a larger community; - Psychosocial stages of human development; and - The development of human identity.
Gardner	Multiple Intelligences	- Individuals possess multiple intelligences, which must be respected and taken into consideration in planning learning activities

THEORIST	THEORY	KEY UNDERSTANDINGS
Maslow	Human Relations theory, and the Hierarchy of Needs	- Human beings are driven to satisfy certain needs; and - It is necessary to satisfy children's different categories of human needs if each child is to realise his/her optimum potential.
Fowler	The development of spirituality	- Spiritual development entails the maturation of human beings in a process of Self-realization, as well as the integration of this process of self-realization into the everyday life of the individual; - Dimensions of spiritual and faith development; - Different stages through which human beings pass in the development of their spirituality.
Kohlberg	Moral Development	- Human beings develop through well-defined stages of moral development, from the Pre-Conventional to the Post-Conventional.

Critical Dimensions of Context in Curriculum Practice

Common historical and cultural heritage

Citizens of the OECS countries share a common Caribbean history of slavery and colonialism, and an increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse population which was shaped by waves of migration that have taken place over time, and that continue today. They are predominantly Christian in religious belief, and officially English speaking, although these countries also demonstrate some differences in both religion and language.

While the predominant system of belief is Christian, the precepts of different denominations may be more prevalently followed in different countries. In addition, while the common official language of the region is English, the vernacular spoken in

children's homes and communities, is often an English, or in some cases a French, Creole, developed as people speaking different languages met, and interacted for business or pleasure, over a long period of time. Migration has also led, in recent times, to the introduction of other, non-Christian, religions, and the introduction of other languages into the countries of the OECS.

Geographical settings

OECS countries demonstrate diverse geographical features that impact upon curriculum delivery. Mountainous territory and difficult terrain mean that some communities are still fairly isolated, and are somewhat cut off from centers of curriculum decision making. These communities may consequently be very close knit, socially, with strong cultural traditions. Seasonal climatic conditions, like the hurricane seasons, create continuous disturbances in the educational routines of many islands, but also shape the ethos of many countries, demanding resilience, and fostering a strong awareness of the interdependence of human life and the natural environment.

The Information Age

Young children in OECS countries exist in a world where information is now the key currency, and understanding how to assess and use it is critical for survival and success.

Fluctuating Economic Conditions

The global economy is subject to continuous fluctuations, and OECS countries, which are small island developing states, are extremely vulnerable to these fluctuations. The governments of OECS countries must therefore finance curriculum activity with fairly limited financial resources.

It is important for the economies of these countries to develop in ways that will protect them against these shifts, even while their populations must be able to take advantage of new directions for economic growth, and also to be innovative and carve their own entrepreneurial paths, based on the natural physical assets of these countries, and on their cultural heritage, and creative traditions, as well as on advances in science and technology. Education has been identified as a critical factor in preparing citizens of OECS countries for these responsibilities. The curriculum must therefore prepare citizens to survive and thrive in these contexts.

Social Conditions

In their own communities, young children of the OECS face challenges originating in poverty, health issues like HIV/AIDS, unemployment, and crime within the societies to which they belong. All of these can inhibit their development. Education must seek to combat the harmful effects of these conditions. However, many children also benefit from a close knit community life that still constitutes a network of social support, and benefit, as well, from a heritage, rooted in their religious beliefs, that provides emotional and spiritual support.

Family Contexts

In their homes, children experience a range of different types of family structures; approaches to care giving that reflect different levels of warmth and control; and differing economic conditions. Primary caregivers may be present, or may sometimes be largely absent because of changing personal relationships or the demands of work.

The curriculum must therefore seek to develop the attitudes, knowledge and skills, and qualities of resilience and creativity that will enable children to withstand these challenges. It must also provide opportunities for learning experiences that will empower them to solve the problems, and seize the opportunities, that their circumstances present.

Rationale

This document provides a broad framework which can be used by early childhood educators in countries across the OECS to help them plan curricula suited to the needs of their specific contexts. It is one response to the OESS strategic imperative to enhance the quality of early childhood services so as to ensure the optimal development of all children in the region at this stage of their lives and later on, and thus to promote the positive development of the countries of which they are citizens.

The framework is informed by the knowledge that countries of the OECS are at different stages of development of early childhood curricula; that the curriculum must be responsive to different contexts of practice; and that different centres may already be committed to different early childhood curriculum approaches. However, it also reflects the understanding that practitioners have varying levels of experience and expertise. Thus, the curriculum framework focuses primarily on identifying valued outcomes, and establishing common curriculum principles that can promote the positive development of young children. These principles are intended to guide practice by establishing a

frame within which curriculum and instructional planning and evaluation may proceed in all these different contexts, without imposing any one approach on caregivers, educators, and institutions.

However, the framework also presents suggestions - not prescriptions - as to how these principles may be realised, and valued outcomes attained, in all sites where young children are being nurtured and educated. Finally, the document seeks to promote continuity in children's experiences as they move from their homes to early childhood centres, and eventually to primary school. No matter what the setting, it identifies important developmental outcomes for children from 0 to 2 years old, and for children from 3 – 5 years old.

Key Features of the Curriculum Design
The curriculum framework emphasises the following as being critical characteristics of any early childhood curriculum's organisational structure:

Integration: The curriculum should be so organised that each child experiences all learning opportunities provided as integrated with one another, across traditional subject areas, and integrated, too, with the experiences s/he has outside of the center, in the home or community in which s/he lives, or in interacting with the physical environment.

Active learning: The curriculum must be organised to promote hands-on learning, opportunities for learning through play, and children's active cognitive, physical and emotional engagement with concepts and materials presented.

Continuity: The curriculum must provide ongoing opportunities for the child to encounter key concepts and skills repeatedly, across the curriculum, allowing children to come to understand these concepts and skills in greater depth, and with more sophistication, as they progress. It must also make provisions to ease the challenges of transitioning to different levels of the system that children so often experience by creating links between levels.

Curriculum Principles

The following overarching principles must inform the conceptualization of any curriculum for young children:

Relevance: The curriculum must be responsive to the developmental needs and interests of each child, of whatever age, gender, ethnicity, language, cultural experience or ability.

Holistic development: The curriculum must guide and promote the all-round development of each child: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual.

Healthy relationship: The curriculum must embody practices that characterize transparent, responsive and reciprocal relationships with self, peers, adults, members of the wider community and with the physical and social environment; that nourish and support each child's development and well-being; and that teach each child to choose and maintain relationships that do the same.

Empowerment: The curriculum must foster the development of each child's voice; sense of autonomy; resilience; perception of self-efficacy; and willingness to take initiative in a range of different situations.

Respect for Life: The curriculum must promote the development of awareness in children of the importance of human life, as well as the importance of the cultural lives of their communities, and of the physical environment, and of how each sphere supports the others.

Learning to know: The curriculum must enable each child to develop the conceptual bases and the cognitive skills, habits of mind, and dispositions that will enable them to negotiate, critically analyse and select from, the consistent stream of incoming information, as well as from the material tools and technologies that will support lifelong learning.

A Learning Community: The curriculum is embedded in a social context in which all participants – professional caregivers, other centre staff, and parents and community members, as well as children – must collaborate with the common purpose of fostering a culture of learning aimed at increasing knowledge to ensure the effective development of the child.

<u>Authentic Assessment</u>: The curriculum must make provisions for children to be continuously assessed, based on their performance of the kinds of tasks, and using the kinds of materials, that normally characterise their daily activities.

SECTION 2

SECTION II: AIMS, STRANDS, GOALS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

The educational aims, overarching goals and outcomes identified in this curriculum framework have been informed by the following:

A. The vision of the ideal Caribbean citizen:
   The ideal Caribbean person respects human life; is emotionally secure; sees diversity as a source of strength and richness; is aware of the importance of living in harmony with the environment; appreciates family and kinship values, community cohesion and the importance of moral issues; has an informed respect for the cultural heritage; demonstrates multiple literacies, independent and critical thinking, and problem solving; demonstrates a good work ethic; and values and displays the creative imagination in its various forms.

B. CARICOM Learning Outcomes for early childhood development in the Caribbean (2010)

C. The social context in which the curriculum is conceptualized, and within which it will be delivered.

Educational Aims
The curriculum aims to:
- promote the holistic development of young children;
- help them to realise their potential as human beings;
- prepare them for their roles and responsibilities in society; and
- establish a foundation for success in their later academic careers.

Goals
The overarching goals of the early childhood curriculum are that young children will learn to:
- practice lifestyles that will promote their optimal development, physically, emotionally, spiritually and intellectually;
- demonstrate a respect for human life;
- value the diverse cultural and spiritual traditions of the societies to which they belong;
- begin to assume their roles and responsibilities as valued members of their families and communities;

- develop the skills, concepts and dispositions needed to become lifelong learners who can select and apply knowledge to shape their own paths and contribute to the development of their communities; and
- establish and maintain healthy personal relationships

Curriculum Strands

The curriculum framework is organized around five *strands*:

1. Living in Community;
2. Communicating Effectively;
3. Aesthetic Expression;
4. Learning to Learn; and
5. Healthy Living.

The strands identify essential areas of learning and development to be promoted in the early childhood curriculum.

Influences Shaping the Strands

The selection of the curriculum strands has been informed by the curriculum principles identified above; the needs of the 21st century learner; the demands of the OECS social context; and the social roles of the young child, as identified below:

The needs of the 21st century learner

The 21st century learner must master key fields of knowledge, including Language Arts, the Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Civics; Life and Career skills, including flexibility, adaptability, initiative, leadership and self-direction. S/he must also have learning and innovation skills, such as creative and critical thinking and problem solving, communication and collaboration; and Information Literacy, media and technology skills.

The OECS context

OECS citizens must be able to assume their roles and responsibilities as citizens of democratic countries, and as members of their communities. They must value their own heritage and cultural and aesthetic traditions, while being able to appreciate and take advantage of life in the global village, and the technologies of the 21st century. They must have the cultural sensitivity, linguistic skills and the communicative competence to be able to interact harmoniously with other OECS and CARICOM citizens on a daily basis.

They must also have a strong awareness of, and appreciation for, the natural environment, and the interdependence of human life and the environment.

The social roles and responsibilities of the young child

Young children must learn the traditions and accepted practices of the secular and faith-based communities to which they belong, and must assume their roles and responsibilities within their families, and those communities. They must also begin to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships and social networks outside the home.

The Strands: An Overview

Living in community – Children develop concepts about community, and learn, value and gradually assume the roles, responsibilities and cultural traditions of the various communities to which they belong. This strand is informed by the curricular principles of *healthy relationship* and *relevance*.

Communicating effectively - Children begin to understand what effective verbal and non-verbal communication entails, and how it is used. They employ different languages and channels of communication for a range of personal purposes. This strand provides the individual with tools necessary for developing *healthy relationships*, and interacting within *learning communities*.

Aesthetic expression – Children value the enjoyment to be derived from various forms of aesthetic expression, and develop their own voice as they express their feelings and perceptions of the world using these forms of creative expression. The strand reflects the principles of *empowerment* and *holistic development*.

Learning to Learn – Children begin to develop the learning dispositions, habits of mind, cognitive and technological tools, and the conceptual knowledge to start them on the path to lifelong learning. The strand is informed by the principles of *learning to know* and *empowerment*.

Healthy living – Children begin to develop concepts, values and practices that contribute to their holistic health and well-being - spiritually, emotionally, physically and intellectually. The strand reflects the principles that the curriculum should facilitate *holistic development* and *respect for life*.

Structuring of the Outcomes

This framework emphasises that children develop at different rates, and that chronological age can be a somewhat misleading way of determining outcomes for different stages. This is especially so since children's development is also dependent on their cultural experiences and social interactions. However, the outcomes for different stages during the early years (0 to 2+), when developmental changes can be rapid, are identified, to ensure that caregivers will be alert to any indication of developmental delays that may require attention.

The goals and associated outcomes for the 0 – 2+ age group are presented in tables, under each strand, listing behaviours, related to identified goals, which each child might be expected to demonstrate at different times in their lives.

Strands: Related Goals and Outcomes

Children 0 – 2+ years old

Strand I: Living in Community

Children develop concepts about community, and learn, value, and gradually assume the roles, responsibilities and cultural traditions of the various communities to which they belong.

Goals:

Children will:

1. develop a sense of community
2. learn the roles, responsibilities, expectations and benefits of living in communities
3. value the experience of living in communities
4. gradually assume their roles in the different communities to which they belong

Learning Outcomes

Levels of Development			
0-6 mths	**6 + - 12 mths**	**12 + - 24 mths**	**24+ - 36 mths**
Show preferences for people and faces they recognise	Respond to their own names	Begin to enjoy playing with/alongside other children	Demonstrate pleasure at being a part of family gatherings

Levels of Development			
0-6 mths	**6 + - 12 mths**	**12 + - 24 mths**	**24+ - 36 mths**
Become aware of themselves as separate from others		Seek to form attachments to special people in their lives	
Distinguish between their primary caregivers and strangers		Demonstrate understanding that other people around them have rights and privileges	

Strand II: Communicating Effectively

Children understand what effective verbal and non-verbal communication entails, and how it is used, employing different languages and channels of communication for a range of purposes.

Goals:

1. Children will use different channels of communication to establish and maintain relationships with other persons
2. Children will choose to communicate for pleasure, as well as to satisfy their own needs
3. Children will show increasing skill in using different genres, styles, channels and technologies of communication available to them.

Learning Outcomes

Levels of Development			
0 – 6 mths	**6+ – 12 mths**	**12+ - 24 mths**	**24+ – 36 mths**
Respond to voices and sounds	Use gestures and facial expressions to make wishes known	Begin to say simple words	Use a wider variety of simple language structures to communicate with others
Make cooing and babbling noises		Put short words together in phrases to express ideas	Use words effectively to express their feelings and wishes

Levels of Development			
0 – 6 mths	**6+ – 12 mths**	**12+ - 24 mths**	**24+ – 36 mths**
Respond when eye contact is made		Combine words and gestures when communicating	
Smile when familiar people approach them		Understand and follow 2-step instructions	
Imitate vocalisation		Enjoy listening to, and joining in reciting, nursery rhymes	
Use different cries for different needs			

Strand III: Aesthetic Expression

Children value the enjoyment to be derived from various forms of aesthetic expression, and express their feelings and perceptions of the world using these forms of creative expression.

Goals:

Children will:

1. appreciate the enjoyment and sense of well- being to be derived from music, dance, narrative, drama, and crafts;
2. develop their own voices, as they communicate their experiences, their feelings, and their perceptions of the world using these forms of creative expression.

Learning Outcomes

Levels of Development			
0-6 mths	**6+ - 12 mths**	**12+ - 24 mths**	**24+ - 36 mths**
Imitate sounds	Enjoy hearing nursery rhymes, music and songs	Like reciting nursery rhymes	Show preference for different colours and textures

Levels of Development			
0-6 mths	**6+ - 12 mths**	**12+ - 24 mths**	**24+ - 36 mths**
	Move when they hear music	Join in singing songs	Participate in creative activities such as finger painting and making things to represent their world
	Enjoy looking at picture books while being read to	Clap in rhythm when they hear songs	
	Respond to and identify pictures and photographs	Join in finger plays	
	Explore a variety of materials	Role play	

Strand IV: Learning to Learn

Children begin to develop the dispositions, habits of mind, cognitive and technological tools and conceptual knowledge to start them on the path to lifelong learning.

Goals

Children will:

1. display the habits of mind and learning dispositions that will support their development as lifelong learners
2. practice critical and creative thinking and problem solving, to start them on the path to lifelong learning
3. develop multiple literacies and concepts about numeracy.

Learning Outcomes

Levels of Development			
0 – 6 mths	**6+ - 12 mths**	**12+ - 24 mths**	**24+ - 36 mths**
Use taste and touch to explore objects	Manipulate objects to determine their properties	Begin to scribble	Begin to ask "Why?"

Levels of Development			
0 – 6 mths	**6+ - 12 mths**	**12+ - 24 mths**	**24+ - 36 mths**
Begin to recognize patterns in daily routines	Begin to understand object persistence – that things continue to exist even when they are out of sight	Develop routines of their own	Begin to observe different characteristics of things and people
Follow unfamiliar sounds with their eyes	Show persistence in learning by trial and error	Do simple puzzles, and water and sand play, as well as interactive play	Sort objects according to characteristics like size
Explore their bodies and objects in the immediate environment	Begin to use symbolic representation by pretending to do certain things (drinking from a pretend cup; using one object to represent another (like using a banana to represent a telephone)	Use a wider variety of simple language structures to express ideas	Use a vocabulary of up to 200 words
Coordinate reflexes as they repeat pleasurable behaviours		Use 3-word sentences	Enjoy predicting events in stories
Observe things from different perspectives		Develop an increasing understanding of spatial relationships as they navigate through play tunnels and other types of play equipment	Demonstrate curiosity about things in their environment

Levels of Development			
0 – 6 mths	6+ - 12 mths	12+ - 24 mths	24+ - 36 mths
Attempt to discover the causes and effects of things they repeatedly observe		Favour one hand over another	Explore and undo things to determine how they function.
		Make marks on paper	
		Use sequences and patterns when playing games (e.g. involving touching fingers and toes)	
		Anticipate sequence when collaborating with adults in performing tasks like getting dressed	
		Understand and follow 2-step instructions	

Strand V: Healthy Living

The curriculum will support the development in young children of concepts and practices that contribute to human beings' spiritual, emotional, physical and mental well-being (including respect for all human life, for the Self, others, and the environment); and to practices that will help them maintain healthy life styles, and relationships with other persons, and with their environment.

Goals
Children will:
1. demonstrate basic knowledge, attitudes and values to support healthy lifestyles
2. act in ways that will support their healthy spiritual, emotional, physical and mental development

3. choose to live in harmony with other human beings, and with their physical environment
4. show respect for human life

Learning Outcomes

Levels of Development			
0 – 6 mths	**6+ - 12 mths**	**12+ - 24 mths**	**24+ - 36 mths**
Eat and sleep well.	Use a cup to feed himself/herself	Walk unaided on different surfaces	Engage in rough and tumble play
Become increasingly mobile	Enjoy participating in physical play	Manipulate, push and pull objects	Persist in engaging in challenging tasks
Attempt to feed themselves, and to otherwise explore what they can do independently, and if given support	Enjoy performing activities with little or no support	Assert wishes (saying No, physically resisting doing what caregivers want)	Become attached to preferred objects (blanket, toy etc.)
Withdraw from frightening stimuli Seek comfort when they are frightened or disturbed	Enjoy watching their image in mirrors	Show awareness of how others view them	
Express their emotions by crying, smiling or laughing	Develop preferences for different types of food	Begin to grasp the concept of delayed gratification	
Respond positively to affection and nurturing	Show enjoyment at bath time	Begin to play with other children	
Begin to trust their caregivers	Show interest in life forms and objects in the natural environment	Begin to identify parts of their bodies	

Levels of Development			
0 – 6 mths	**6+ - 12 mths**	**12+ - 24 mths**	**24+ - 36 mths**
Demonstrate increasing control of gross motor skills (holding up their heads, sitting with assistance, beginning to crawl, walking with assistance etc.)		Exhibit impulse control	
Demonstrate increasing control of fine motor skills (grasping objects, waving etc.)		Enjoy playing and moving around in the natural environment	
Pick up increasingly larger objects			
Enjoy skin-to-skin contact with caregivers			

Children 3 – 4+ years old

Strand I: Living in community

Children develop a sense of community, and will learn, value and gradually assume the roles, responsibilities and cultural traditions of the various communities to which they belong.

Goals

Children will:

1. Develop a sense of community
2. Learn the roles, responsibilities and benefits of living in community with others
3. Value the experience of membership in different communities
4. Gradually assume their roles in the different communities to which they belong

Associated Learning Outcomes

1. Develop a sense of community:
   - Identify the geographical communities of which they form a part
   - Identify members of their families, church groups etc.
   - Describe some things they have in common with other people in their community
   - Begin to identify the national flag and other symbols valued within the national community, as well as within the different secular and religious communities to which they belong
   - Display respect for symbols valued by the secular and religious communities to which they belong

2. Value the experience of membership in different communities:
   - Demonstrate a desire to know more about other places, families, and individuals in their communities
   - Celebrate the traditions and cultural practices of different groups within the secular and religious community/communities to which they belong (e.g. Fisherman's Day in St. Vincent/Christmas Day in all countries)
   - Willingly take part in community events and festivals

3. Learn the roles, responsibilities and benefits of living in community with others:
   - Cooperate with others to complete projects and activities
   - Recall what happened when they worked together
   - Explain the functions played by different people in their community
   - Suggest why those functions are important
   - Describe their own roles at home, and within their communities
   - Identify, and practice, behaviours considered appropriate within the different communities to which they belong

4. Gradually assume their roles in different communities to which they belong:
   - Assume their fair share of responsibility when they work in groups
   - Demonstrate a growing understanding of what is considered appropriate behavior within the communities to which they belong
   - Take different roles when they work in groups
   - Perform simple tasks that contribute to the wellbeing of their homes and communities

Strand II: Communicating Effectively

Children begin to understand what effective verbal and non-verbal communication entails, and how it is used, employing different languages and channels of communication for a range of purposes.

Goals:
1. Children will use different channels of communication to establish and maintain relationships with other persons
2. Children will choose to communicate for pleasure, as well as to satisfy their own needs
3. Children will show increasing skill in using different genres, styles, channels and technologies of communication available to them.

Associated Learning Outcomes:

Goal I: Children will use different channels of communication to establish and maintain relationships with other persons:
- Use body language effectively to express emotions and simple ideas, and to give feedback to other people
- Respond to the verbal and non-verbal communications of others
- Initiate and maintain simple conversations
- Use communication technologies to interact with other people

Goal II: Children will choose to communicate for pleasure, as well as to satisfy their own needs:
- Understand and respond to simple instructions
- Deliver messages from and to people
- Recount events and experiences that are important to them
- Tell stories, jokes and riddles for their own entertainment and that of others
- Give and request information

Goal III: Children will show increasing skill in using different genres, styles, channels and technologies of communication available to them:
- Use articulate speech that is readily understood
- Hear everything that is said to them
- Speak in increasingly complex sentences
- Recount events and experiences, using increasingly complex syntax
- Be aware of differences between formal language and the vernacular of their countries

- Generally use different languages and the vernacular appropriately in different contexts
- Be aware of instances of simple miscommunication, and try to resolve them
- Use a range of communication technologies (e.g. phones, computers, paper and writing tools) with increasing effectiveness

Strand 3: Aesthetic Expression

Children value the enjoyment to be derived from various forms of aesthetic expression, and express their feelings and perceptions of the world using these forms of creative expression.

Goals:

Children will:

1. appreciate the enjoyment and sense of well- being to be derived from music, dance, narrative, drama, and crafts; and
2. develop their own voices, as they communicate their experiences, their feelings, and their perceptions of the world using these forms of creative expression.

Associated Learning Outcomes

Goal I: Appreciate the enjoyment and sense of well- being to be derived from music, dance, narrative, drama, and crafts.

Children will:

- Find pleasure in experiencing and participating in, music, art, craft, dance, and other forms of aesthetic experience
- Listen to, and tell, major oral narratives from the cultural traditions of their country and region
- Demonstrate preferences for different forms of aesthetic experience, including music, dance, stories and rhymes, dramatic play and drawing and painting.

Goal II: Develop their own voices, as they express themselves, their feelings, and their perceptions of the world using these forms of creative expression.

Children will:

- Tell jokes, riddles, and increasingly complex rhymes and stories for their own entertainment and that of others
- Play musical instruments with increasing dexterity and sense of rhythm
- Enjoy fantasy, and express it in their narratives and play

- Use different forms of aesthetic expression to connect with, and to communicate, their experiences and feelings
- Use different forms of aesthetic expression to represent their perception of people and events in the world around them

Strand IV. Learning to Learn

Children begin to develop the dispositions, habits of mind, cognitive and technological tools and conceptual knowledge to start them on the path to lifelong learning.

Goals:

Children will:

1. Display the habits of mind and learning dispositions that will support their development as lifelong learners
2. Practice critical and creative thinking and problem solving, to start them on the path to lifelong learning
3. Develop multiple literacies and concepts about numeracy.

Associated Learning Outcomes

Goal I: Display the habits of mind and learning dispositions that will support their development as lifelong learners.

Children will:

- Remain focused on tasks they find interesting
- Be willing to persist in challenging tasks
- Attempt to solve problems encountered in personal activities
- Be willing to collaborate with others to obtain information that will help them carry out different tasks or activities

Goal II: Practice critical and creative thinking and problem solving, to start them on the path to lifelong learning.

Children will:

- Identify areas of knowledge about the world that they want to pursue
- Explore different ways to obtain desired knowledge
- Classify objects, events and people, using identified criteria
- Request information when needed
- Perform simple analyses of data they have collected
- Make predictions and draw conclusions, based on their existing knowledge

- Compare and contrast attributes of different natural and social phenomena and events
- Use information to find ways to solve problems they encounter
- Participate in making decisions about their own learning and assessment

Goal III: Develop multiple types of literacy, and concepts about numeracy:

Literacy
- Understand language
- Express ideas clearly
- Begin to express important concepts in the different languages of the OECS countries, as relevant to their needs
- Use an increasing variety of words and phrases in the official languages of their countries
- Begin to recognize differences between their own vernaculars and standard forms of official languages
- Follow simple oral instructions
- Demonstrate knowledge of environmental print and books
- Identify letters by name and sound
- Recognize sight words
- Discriminate sounds in words
- Interact with books for pleasure, and to acquire knowledge
- Use both sides of the body simultaneously to make the gross motor movements necessary for reading and writing
- Demonstrate the fine motor skills and coordination needed for reading and writing
- Begin to use age-appropriate forms of writing to produce different types of texts for different purposes

Numeracy
- Recognize and use numbers
- Count objects
- Identify, describe and design patterns
- Identify, describe and reproduce shapes
- Describe objects and people in relation to each other
- Measure objects
- Compare objects and people using size, shape, colour etc. as criteria
- Arrange objects, words, events etc. in sequence
- Use appropriate language, or other means of representation, to communicate concepts of space (behind, in front, next to etc.)
- Begin to analyse data

Social Studies
- Differentiate between events and phenomena as existing in the past, present, or future

- Use appropriate language, or other means of representation, to communicate concepts of time (early, late, today, yesterday, Monday, last week etc.)
- Recognize features and places in their environment
- Describe different cultural practices of people in the different communities to which they belong
- Begin to organize themselves to collaborate when performing different tasks or activities.

Science
- Investigate phenomena they want to find out about
- Make plans to obtain needed information
- Explore and experiment with natural phenomena they encounter in their daily lives
- Classify materials, events and natural phenomena
- Share information they have acquired with members of their school community and other communities of which they are members

Information Literacy
- Identify sources of useful information
- Begin to develop criteria for classifying information as more or less reliable
- Begin to use available tools and technologies for their own information and entertainment

Strand V: Healthy Living
The curriculum will support the development in young children of concepts and practices that contribute to human beings' spiritual, emotional, physical and mental wellbeing (including respect for all human life, for the Self, others, and the environment); and to practices that will help them maintain healthy life styles, and relationships with other persons, and with their environment.

Goals
Children will:
1. Demonstrate basic knowledge, attitudes and values to support healthy lifestyles
2. Act in ways that will support their healthy spiritual, emotional, physical and mental development

3. Choose to live in harmony with other human beings, and with their physical environment
4. Show respect for human life

<u>Associated Learning Outcomes</u>
Goal I: Demonstrate basic knowledge, attitudes and values to support healthy lifestyles:
Children will:
- Identify their own negative and positive feelings and emotions
- Know the parts of their bodies
- Identify features that distinguish them and others as being male or female
- Describe basic good health, nutrition, and safety practices
- Explain why it is important to attend to matters involving their physical fitness, good nutrition and safety
- Explain why it is important to keep their environment clean and healthy
- Identify some behaviours that can harm the environment
- Describe some criteria for recognizing people, events and situations as safe or dangerous
- Show concern for others
- Initiate friendships with other children

Goal II: Act in ways that will support their healthy spiritual, emotional, physical and mental development:
Children will:
Act in ways that support spiritual well being
- Demonstrate trust in their caregivers and others close to them in their homes and communities
- Begin to demonstrate awareness of a divine element in nature, and in human beings
- Begin to differentiate between right and wrong
- Be willing to experience moments of quietness
- Respond to the beauty in features of their natural environments
- Express their sense of being connected to a force greater than themselves, or the material world
- Ask others about the nature of the connection they experience with such a greater Being
- Make connections between experiences described in religious stories that they hear and their own experiences

Act in ways that support their emotional well being

- Be willing to express their own thoughts, feelings, interests and desires
- Continue developing a sense of Self
- Begin to develop strategies for dealing with stress
- Demonstrate a sense of self worth
- Enjoy their personal accomplishments
- Find pleasure in daily activities
- Begin to expand their social network beyond the family
- Begin to make friends

Act in ways that support their physical well being
- Choose to practice positive health, nutrition and safety behaviours
- Practice good hygiene
- Choose to avoid situations and behaviours that they recognize as dangerous
- Enjoy participating in physical activities
- Use all of their senses as appropriate for different activities
- Demonstrate increasing mastery of their muscles
- Display an increasing range of locomotor skills in carrying out daily activities
- Exhibit increasing endurance, together with sustained periods of expended energy, when participating in physical activities

Act in ways that support their mental well being
- Demonstrate increasing independence in caring for themselves
- Are willing to take risks
- Are willing to accept challenges
- Attempt to find solutions to problems they encounter
- Choose to persist in finding ways to deal with challenging situations

Goal III: Choose to live in harmony with other human beings, and with their physical environment:
Children will:
- Demonstrate respect for human life
- Respect the elders in their community
- Show that they are aware of the feelings and emotions of their peers
- Be willing to acknowledge the feelings and emotions of other people
- Choose to be helpful to others
- Choose to share valued belongings with others
- Describe some of the benefits we get from our natural surroundings

- Choose to clean up their environments after participating in different activities
- Encourage others to keep their surroundings clean

SECTION 3

SECTION III: CURRICULUM PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

This framework is informed by an understanding of the early childhood curriculum as being continuously enacted during interactions between adults and young children within a prepared environment, such as the centre or home. Adults act as guides and facilitators of learning experiences that are responsive to children's expressed needs and interests. Children increasingly become the initiators of curriculum decisions, planning, implementing and reflecting on their experiences, with adults scaffolding the process whereby children take increasing control over their experiences.

The curriculum, adapting Kolb's model of experiential learning, is activity oriented, yet promotes reflection, and emphasizes authentic, concrete experiences that children have in their homes and communities, or in the centre environment.

The Curriculum Planning Process: An Overview
Figure 1: The Planning Cycle
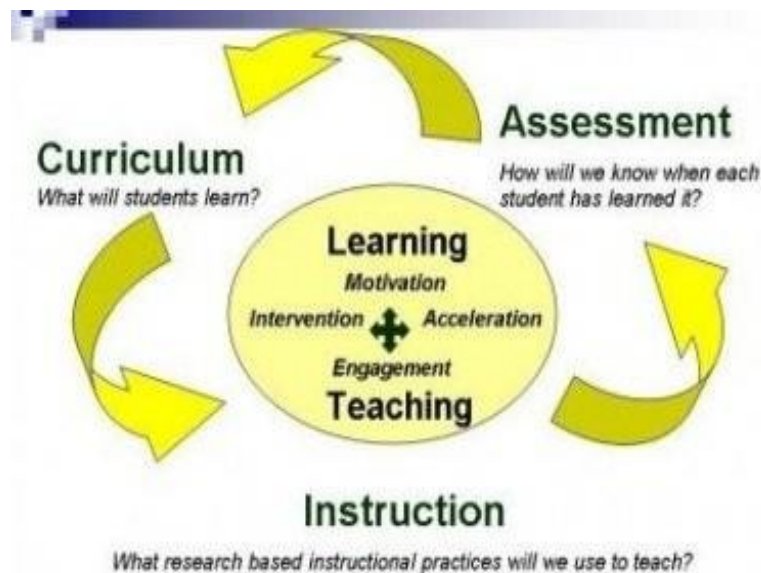
Curriculum planning decisions are continuously being made in early childhood education settings. As the figure above indicates, decisions must be made about the components of the curriculum – what *will students learn?* What concepts and skills must we teach to achieve planned learning outcomes? How will the content be organized? In planning instruction, what motivating and engaging strategies will we use, and how will learning opportunities and content be introduced? How will we intervene to scaffold their

learning? What opportunities will we provide for children who move ahead rapidly to be exposed to more advanced content when needed?

Decisions must also be made about *assessment* – how will we collect, and record, information about children's progress towards attaining identified learning outcomes?

These decisions must be made based on current knowledge about best practice in early childhood education. However, they must also be influenced by our knowledge of the children in our care – their needs and interests, and the experiences and existing knowledge they bring to the learning process.

Choosing a Curriculum Design

The design is the organizational structure of a curriculum. For early childhood it is critical that children experience their curriculum as integrated, making connections across subjects and activities, and between the educational setting and the home and/or community. There are ***many different possibilities*** for integrating the curriculum, and you should explore different approaches before you choose a design for your own curriculum. Two possible designs, *presented simply as examples* of how the curriculum may be organized to achieve integration, are the project approach and the thematic curriculum.

a. Project Approach

The curriculum may be integrated by means of organizing content, learning experiences etc. through projects. Projects are exercises conducted to investigate issues, natural phenomena, etc. that the children have identified as being of interest or importance to them.

Projects may be carried out by small groups, or by an entire class. They allow young children to develop inquiry skills, and provide opportunities for them to think critically about information acquired, to communicate their findings with others, and to reflect on the implications of what they have learned. Thus, in addition to the fact they learn about the issue they have investigated, children develop a number of tools critical for lifelong learning while carrying out a project. They also learn to plan their activities.

Projects can also bring together the center, family and community during the learning experience, since children may need to go into the community or interact with community members in center settings, to find out what they want

to know, and since parents often become involved in helping children to locate information, and so learn their children's ideas about the project topic, and about their plans for completing it.

b. Thematic

The curriculum may also be integrated through the use of themes, which then create focal points around which learning experiences can be organized. Themes may be derived from cultural events, every day activities, the functions performed by different community members, natural phenomena, etc. in which *children have expressed or demonstrated interest*. They may also be organized around literature, using stories the children love as the focal point, to develop children's love of reading and support their emergent literacy skills, and to extend their knowledge about the books they have read or have had read to them.

A *critical challenge* in a thematic curriculum, since themes may be primarily teacher- selected, although collaboratively identified, is to choose themes that will be relevant to the children and will engage their interest. It is also a good idea to have children collaborate with you in planning activities and content that focus on what their interest is in the theme selected, so as to give them more input into the curriculum planning process.

Planning the Physical Environment for Learning

Starting with the Basics

In planning the physical space in center settings, ensure first that all the basic facilities have been provided. Have you provided basic resources like sinks, toilets and baths, and large enough fans, if necessary? Have the doors to the outside been made child proof, to ensure that safety concerns are met? Have you made provision for the space to be well lit, and well ventilated? And do you have enough electrical outlets, placed in safe places, to service different activities? All of these are necessary to ensure that learning can take place without unnecessary interruptions or distractions. *The Caribbean Regional Guidelines for Development of Policy, Regulations and Standards in Early Childhood Development* provides guidelines as to the physical standards that must be maintained in a center, and should be used to guide decisions as to the physical space.

In addition, you should have space set aside to store the children's personal belongings, such as change of clothes, lunch boxes etc. Such spaces should be easily accessible to children, and should be clearly labeled so that children come to know which spaces are

theirs alone. This serves a triple purpose, in giving them a sense of personal space; in introducing them to environmental print; and in giving them different opportunities to recognize their own names in print.

Layout
The physical space should be so arranged that staff and children have room to move about easily. The children should also be able to see all of the room at a glance, so they can make choices among activities. In this way, you too will be able to see all the children at a glance, to note if they need help, or determine how best you can scaffold learning. All resources should also be placed within children's easy reach, except where you intend to motivate children to use language to request different objects so they can move on to their chosen activities.

Spaces for different activities
The curriculum for early childhood should provide children with many opportunities for activities and concrete experiences. Think about the different categories of learning activities and experiences you want the children in your center to have. In planning your physical environment, you should, ideally, create spaces for all these different activities. Your curriculum strands will also give you some idea of what sorts of key areas of development you need to plan spaces for. For example, your activity centers may include centers for listening to music, drawing and painting.

To encourage literacy and numeracy development, you should make provisions for reading and writing activities, as well as for allowing them to manipulate shapes and patterns. You want them to develop large and small motor skills, and your outside space should include areas where they can run and play, and use the larger muscles, as well as areas where they learn increasing control of the fine motor skills - so you can have water areas where they can practice fishing for small objects etc. Ensure that all spaces are clearly labeled, that the labels are in simple language, and that children can see them easily.

You should make sure that each area is clearly defined and set apart from the others by relevant specialized equipment (such as kitchen equipment scaled to size for the 'home' center); by resources and containers; by different types of floor coverings; or by furniture such as shelves. If you have a lot of space, or you are using your own home, you may choose to put different activities in different rooms. This will serve another purpose as well – making sure that activities which may need more quiet time for rest

and reflection take place separately from activities that may be noisier. Thus nap time will take place in quiet rooms in the house, and so will reading, the space for which should also be set apart from, say, the bustle of the play room.

Figure 2: Layout for a Preschool: One example
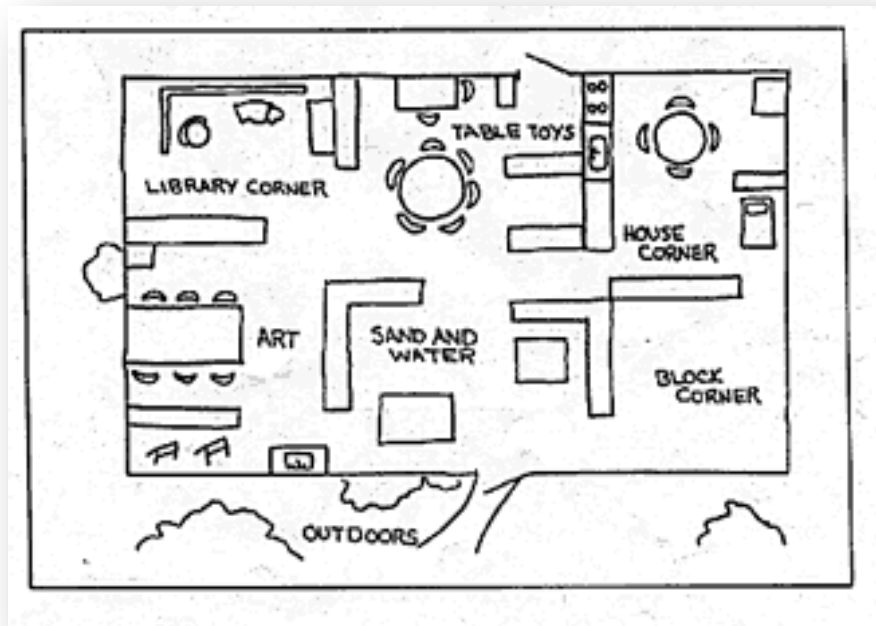
The Aesthetics

Spaces should be beautiful and comfortable as well as serviceable. Therefore, you should try to make children's surroundings inviting and warm, and also interesting in terms of varied colours and textures. These are young children. Provide them with ample objects and materials that are soft and that they can sink into or hold for comfort. Stuffed toys, beanbags, and soft furnishings will provide this dimension. Toys made of natural materials are also more likely to have varied textures that will capture children's interest than plastic.

Finally, choose accent colours that are bright and will catch the eye, but keep the mass of space less busy and more restful and neutral in colour. Colours have been shown to affect mood.

The Social Environment

The *social environment* refers to the *roles* taken by different participants in the learning situation, the quality of the **interactions and relationships** among adults and children, and the interaction of caregivers, other family members, and community members with children and adults in the centre. It also includes the type of communication that exists. Experiences children have within the social environment also form part of their curriculum.

Interactions should be characterized by mutual respect and collaboration. The center constitutes one of the communities of which children are members. It should therefore strive to be the children's model of community – in this case, a learning community, where all members have the common purpose of extending each other's knowledge. Even young children should be partners with their teachers in making decisions about what it will be learned, and how learning can take place. Community members too, should show such respect to each other, and to the child.

Roles

Roles of Adults

Adults should assume roles as *enablers* and *facilitators* of learning. They should provide structures and physical resources to support active, effective - and reflective - learning. They should also intervene where necessary to *scaffold* learning.

Adults must *empower* children by giving them repeated opportunities to explore their environments, make autonomous choices within safe contexts, and to reflect on the consequences of their choices.

Adults should act as *nurturers*. In interactions with children, they should always strive to be warm, and engaging, including each child in discussions and activities. On no account should hostility characterize interactions between adults and children. Thus, adults should take care not to single out individual children for continuous criticism, or to make negative comparisons between them and other children in the classroom.

Finally, adults should be *models* of behaviours they want children to practice, such as critical thinking and respectful relationships.

Roles of Children

Children should be *collaborators* in the learning process. They should be increasingly empowered to *propose* curriculum content and learning activities; *initiate* communication - asking questions, and offering their suggestions and perspectives on issues that arise in classrooms and communities, including issues related to their own assessment.

However, they should also be *good team players*. To assist them, there should be agreed-on ground rules about how interaction takes place within the classroom and with community members, establishing common understandings about the need for shared decision making, respectful communication and fair and considerate behaviour to others.

Roles of Primary Caregivers

Caregivers should be *partners* in the curriculum process, because they are children's first teachers. Therefore they should be provided with ongoing information about issues that affect their children. They should also be encouraged to report to professionals on issues that involve the children and that can have an impact on their development. They should also be given the information they need to allow them to take a positive role in children's learning at home, ensuring that the link between home and center is as seamless as possible.

 Interactions with caregivers should be positive, being characterized by honesty, transparency and mutual respect, even when there are differences of opinion. Attempts should be made to communicate with these partners in curriculum, using many different channels, given that people may have different preferences for how they communicate.

The Role of Communication

Communication should be an integral part of the curriculum process. Adults should provide opportunities for ongoing communication, and should ensure that communication is supportive. Communication with children should continuously seek to elicit and acknowledge their ideas, and affirm the value of their contributions. Positive, specific feedback should be given, as needed.

Communication about classroom policies should be ongoing and transparent. Thus, for example, the daily schedule should be obvious, as soon as children or adults come in to

the center. Rules about behavior should be clearly articulated, and important ones - agreed on in discussion with the children and their caregivers – should also be visible, and should be consistently observed.

Being Inclusive

Practitioners should be careful to behave in ways consistent with an inclusive curriculum. First, care must be taken to conduct screening so as to make early detection of children's needs a reality, because the needs of all must be catered for within the curriculum. Thus, for example, there can be no discrimination against children with HIV and AIDS. Practitioners must avoid *gender bias*, such as calling girls 'bossy', suggesting girls should be more 'ladylike' when they assert themselves, reprimanding boys for crying, or consistently ignoring the efforts and requests of children of either gender in favour of the other. In addition, both boys and girls should be expected to be polite and respectful when they talk to others or offer ideas.

The languages used in the classroom, and the materials provided to support learning should acknowledge and reflect acceptance of all the *languages* and *cultures* of the children enrolled in centers, and of the communities in which children are embedded. In OECS countries, as is the case throughout most of the Caribbean, special care must be taken to ensure that speakers of French and English Creoles are given every opportunity to become proficient in both the Standard English of their country, and the Creole that may be the vernacular, and to know when it is appropriate to use either dialect. The curriculum must explicitly provide opportunities for young children to do so.

Children with *special needs, whether because they are challenged in some way, or gifted,* should always be included in class discussions and activities, and provisions should be made to ensure that the necessary social supports and assistive technologies are provided for them to do so. The layout of the physical space should make it possible to accommodate assistive technologies for children who are differently abled. The curriculum should also be modified to enable them to learn under optimal conditions.

Structuring Instruction – Experiential Learning
Figure 3: The experiential learning cycle (adapted from Kolb)

Active experimentation
Having new experiences; Testing new ideas

Concrete Experience
Engaging directly in real life situations

Recall and Reflection
Recalling what happened; Reflecting on it and remembering how you felt

Application
Applying what was learned in future planning

Concrete Action

Applying and Planning

Monitoring/ Assessment Continuous

Recalling

Reflecting

The curriculum model proposed is experiential. Young children are at the stage of development when learning must be concrete and active if it is to be effective in promoting children's development. Instruction must therefore be highly experiential in nature, and your day should be planned to provide ongoing opportunities for *experiential learning* as described by a number of theorists, including Kolb (1984), for example.

Concrete Experience and Experimentation

As the diagram indicates, opportunities should be continuously provided for children to have concrete experiences, and to explore and experiment with new ideas and ways of being and acting. Thus, infants and toddlers should be given ongoing opportunities to interact with adults, as well as materials and resources for them to touch, taste, smell, and listen to. As they grow older, they must continue to have access to natural as well as man-made objects from their homes and communities, and opportunities to use them, to make different things with them, or to take them apart, and put them together in different ways. They must also be allowed to be physically active, moving in play, or to accomplish different, meaningful tasks.

Recall and Reflection

After their concrete experiences, however, children should be encouraged to reflect on what they have learned.

Thus, they must be provided with opportunities to recall what they did, telling stories or recounting incidents. You can gradually begin to go beyond pure recall to develop habits of reflection, when you encourage children to talk about how they felt about their experiences, and even to identify what they learned, and to say what they want to do next as a result. Remember to be accepting of what children say they learned as they construct their own understandings.

Planning

Finally, children should be given opportunities to take what they have learned forward, applying it to support new learning, as they plan future activities.

Monitoring and assessment of children's thinking and behavior, as well as of what they produce, is ongoing, and takes place at each stage of the cycle.

Characteristics of experiences in effective instruction

In order for successful learning to occur, learning experiences should:
- Engage and capture children's interest
- Be developmentally appropriate
- Keep children active, and allow ample opportunities for sensory exploration
- Be authentic, involving them in real life experiences
- Present opportunities for children to imitate required behaviours that have been modeled for their benefit
- Provide repeated opportunities for them to encounter concepts and practice skills in similar, and different, contexts
- Include positive feedback and encouragement
- Celebrate children's achievements

Planning: The Daily Schedule

Routine is important to give young children a sense of structure, no matter how emergent and child-centred the curriculum may be. The cycle of experiential learning provides a broad framework within which each activity is structured, but in addition, you should have a systematic plan for the daily delivery of the programme.

Scheduling Activities

Planning a schedule requires you to make the following decisions:

- What types of sessions will you have? For example, you will need to have time for different key activities, like Circle Time, Outside Time, Rest Time.
- How long will sessions last? You will need to keep in mind when deciding on length, issues like young children's attention span, and their physical endurance. However, you should also keep in mind that you must allocate enough time every day to ensure that ample opportunity is provided for developing children's skills and grasp of concepts in areas you have identified as being critical, like literacy and numeracy.
- What activities will take place within each session? While children may be encouraged to choose, you should at least have some understanding of the broad structure of these activities.
- What sort of balance will exist between different sorts of activities to encourage children's holistic development?

The examples below provide examples of scheduling to support a preschool programme and a toddler programme:

Sample Montessori Daily Schedule

(http://www.americanmontessori.com/#!preschool-schedule/c56n)

7:00 am - 8:00 am	Breakfast / Puzzles / Computers
8:00 am - 8:30 am	Exercises in Practical Life
8:30 am - 9:00 am	Montessori Sensorial
9:00 am - 9:30 am	Montessori Exercises in Practical Life
9:30 am - 10:00 am	Snack
10:00 am - 10:30 am	Spanish
10:30 am - 11:00 am	Numbers and Letters
11:00 am - 11:30 am	Outside Play
11:30 am - 12:00 pm	Dance/Sing/Music
12:00 pm - 1:00 pm	Lunch
1:00 pm - 3:00 pm	Nap/Rest/Computers
3:00 pm - 3:30 pm	Snack
3:30 pm - 4:00 pm	Art Projects
4:00 pm - 4:30 pm	Outside Play
4:30 pm - 5:00 pm	Manipulatives/Computers
5:00 pm - 5:30 pm	Story Time

Sample Daily Schedule for Toddlers

(Taken from Decker et al., 2005, p. 239)

TIME	ACTIVITY
7:00 am – 8.30 am	Arrival, changing or toileting, dressing babies who are awake, and individual activities
8:30 am – 9 am	Breakfast snack, songs, stories and finger plays
9:00 am – 10 am	Manipulative activities and changing for toileting
10 am – 11 am	Naps, for those who have morning naps, and outside play for others (children go outside as they awaken)
11 am – 11.45 am	Lunch and changing or toileting
11:45 am– 1.00 pm	Naps
1 pm -2 pm	Changing or toileting as children awaken, and manipulative toy activities
2 pm -2:30 pm	Snack, songs, stories and finger plays
2:30 pm - departure	Individual activities

Characteristics of Good Schedules

Good schedules for early childhood programmes have the following characteristics:
- Should begin with friendly informal greeting of children, when staff will make the effort to welcome each child individually. An initial group activity will also help make all children feel welcome.
- The opening session should also help children learn to plan activities
- Should be aligned with the goals of the programme
- Should maintain a balance between physical activity and rest; between indoor and outdoor activities; between group and individual activities.
- Should be flexible, to respond to unexpected circumstances
- Should be easily intelligible to children, and give them a sense of security by helping them understand what they are supposed to be doing, and what they will do next
- Should give children an opportunity to feel a sense of accomplishment about what they've done for the day
- Should end with a farewell.

(Adapted from Decker et al., 2005)

Planning Instruction

You should have a clear plan that should be available to all visitors to your classroom or center, and that will communicate how you intend to go about systematically supporting children in their developmental process.

Components of an instructional plan

A plan should lay out the following information:
- The focus of each activity
- What children are expected to learn
- The organization of children during the activity (whole group/small group etc.)
- The resources that will be needed to support learning
- Plans for adapting the curriculum to meet children's different needs
- How you will gather information about children's progress
- How you will use previously acquired information to support new learning

Infusing Technology in the Curriculum

Technology has been described as the science of the application of knowledge for practical purposes. While many believe that 'technology' refers purely to the kinds of software and hardware used by digital natives today, in fact, technology, in the context of the OECS and the wider Caribbean, can refer to anything from the mortar and pestle still used in some areas to cook, to the most up to date kitchen equipment; from the 'bush medicine' relied on by country people to cure their ailments, to the latest drugs medicine can provide.

Similarly, in early childhood settings the 'technology' in use can also range from simple crayons and pencils to the specialized materials used in some curriculum approaches, to iPads and laptops. It can include home-made toys, assembled from natural objects, or highly advanced technologies, like the computer and the internet. Some forms of technology already exist in all early childhood educational settings. The critical task is to ensure that it is able, and adequate, to serve practitioners' educational purposes.

The decision to integrate any technology into the curriculum, and what type to use, must be informed by the educational purposes for doing so; understanding of what is developmentally appropriate, as well as understanding of what may be culturally relevant. In today's early childhood settings, however, the decision as to whether to infuse one type of technology, ICT, into the curriculum can present its own challenges.

Integrating ICT: Considerations

There has been some debate about whether to integrate ICT into the early childhood curriculum. There are strong arguments in favour of using ICT. For one thing, if the curriculum is to reflect children's authentic cultural experiences, ICT is now a critical part of those experiences. The number and the range of ICTs that have been introduced into the home have massively increased in recent years, and a significant proportion of this new technology has been purchased specifically for use by young children. Parents have higher educational expectations for their children, and one way in which they have been concerned to support their children's early learning has been through ICT. Young children are therefore gaining access to more ICT.

In addition, it is the intention of the OECS countries to prepare children for life as citizens of the world, as well as of the region. The reality is that ICT is now a necessary part of human experience in every corner of the globe.

In spite of this, not everyone sees the growing use of ICT, especially for young children, as a positive development. Many parents, and educators, are concerned about the perceived risks to children's physical, cognitive and emotional and social development. They refer to the potential for repetitive strain injuries; lack of exercise and the consequent risk of obesity; decreased creativity, impaired language and literacy; and poor concentration, social isolation, decreased motivation, and depression as reasons for leaving ICT out of the early childhood classroom.

However, a number of studies have also shown that ICT, when used responsibly, can actually support children's learning by offering children opportunities for more active learning of a wide range of skills, knowledge and competencies.

Benefits have been detected in terms of improvements in the areas of fine motor skills, language and communication, emergent literacy and reading readiness, mathematical thinking, creativity, problem solving, self-esteem and self-confidence, cooperation, motivation, and positive attitudes towards learning. Thus it is reasonable to at least consider the use of ICT in the curriculum,

Using ICT in the Early Childhood Curriculum

ICT may be considered relevant to early childhood education for two quite different reasons:

1. for the purpose of technology education; and

2. for its application in supporting children's learning across the curriculum.

For example, children can use ICT to support their learning as they accomplish different tasks - as props for role playing, for example, or to obtain information for different projects. While they are actively involved in accomplishing those tasks, however, they are also becoming more skilled in the use of the technologies involved – technology education.

In addition, ICT can be used to support teaching and learning across different domains of the curriculum. For example, young children can use the computer to create designs for aesthetic expression.

Important features of ICT

Practitioners must take the following into consideration when infusing ICT into the curriculum:

According to Wortham (2010, p. 185), forms of ICT used in early childhood education should:

- Be age appropriate, appropriate to children's individual needs, and culturally sensitive
- Be used to enhance children's cognitive and social functioning
- Support children's learning
- Eliminate exposure to violence
- Not stereotype any group.

Care should also be taken to teach children safety precautions in using ICT, and netiquette.

Adapting the Curriculum to meet Children's Diverse Needs

The curriculum must be responsive to the needs of all children in a centre. Therefore, administrators and teachers need to adapt the curriculum to suit the range of special needs that children may have. The following strategies may be considered in adapting your curriculum:

1. Adapt the environment:
   Adaptations can be made to the physical environment to support each child's ability to participate in all learning activities.

2. Adjust the time allocated for different activities:
   Children with special needs can be allowed more time to complete certain types of activities, or allowed to move on when ready.

3. Use differentiated instruction so that practitioners can adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of *all* children in the center:
   Differentiating instruction means that you must be constantly monitoring each child's progress, and then modifying instruction to accommodate each child's needs and interests, and to ensure that each continues to progress towards meeting identified goals.

4. Allow gifted children to work at higher levels in areas where they may be gifted, and at other levels in areas where they are not:
   Gifted children are not necessarily gifted in all areas. Every child in your center has his/her own strengths and weaknesses. You must make provisions for both the strengths and weaknesses of each child.

5. Provide modified learning materials:
   Learning materials can be modified to allow children to participate as independently as possible.

6. Provide assistive technologies where needed:
   Assistive technologies allow children with special needs to participate in learning activities from which they might otherwise have been excluded.

7. Simplify activities:
   Break complicated tasks into smaller chunks, or provide step by step directions for completing certain tasks where necessary.

8. Scaffolding:
   Provide adult support as needed, or structure activities and groups to allow children to benefit from peer support.

9. Allow children choices:
   Give children with special needs choices in terms of their actions and activities, to ensure that they have a sense of control over their learning processes.

10. Provide consistent structural support:
    Ensure that your classroom policies are consistent in their approaches to dealing with children. This is especially critical when dealing with children who may demonstrate aggression or other difficult behaviours.

11. Formulate, and make public, a centre policy with regard to equity and inclusion, and monitor continuously to ensure it is being observed by all center staff.

12. Make it clear that you have high expectations for all children enrolled at the center.

13. *Ensure that your adaptations have the ultimate result of enabling all children to participate as fully as possible in the learning opportunities and experiences, while engaging them and providing enough challenge and opportunities for success to propel them on.*

Building and maintaining partnerships

Early childhood centres – and in fact, any setting where early childhood education is provided - cannot be sustained effectively without effective partnerships. In the most mundane terms, parental and community support are necessary just to keep a centre, or any other initiative, going – if parents don't choose to send their children to a nursery or preschool, it cannot continue to exist. And even if the centre's affairs are going well, staff need parents' help to coordinate out-of-school activities like field trips. They can help in fund raising activities, and may be very useful in providing necessary resources that will save a center further expense – always assuming that they see themselves, and know that they are seen, as partners in helping the children to develop and learn.

Above all, however, partnerships with parents and the community are critical, because such partnerships can help educators to address curriculum issues from a much wider perspective. Parental inputs can help the center staff to better understand children's behaviours, and their progress. Moreover, if parents feel they are in a partnership for their child's benefit, they are more likely to demonstrate a sense of shared ownership over the curriculum, instead of leaving it all up to administrators and teachers. Finally,

parents and community members are empowered to make decisions and take actions that support their children's learning and development.

The centre should also maintain a collaborative relationship with Ministry officials, who must be made aware of the needs of different settings, since the state has a vested interest in ensuring that quality early childhood services are provided to all children, for the ultimate good of the society.

Responding to Challenges of Partnership

However, partnerships can be challenging. It is a well-known saying in the Caribbean that a partnership is sometimes a leaky ship. Conflict, or a sense of injustice - may develop. How then can educators act to make the partnership succeed? The following approaches should help:

- All partners should share in the vision for the center, and agree on the goals for children's progress.
- Center administrators should ensure that processes and structures are put in place to allow all partners to contribute ideas or resources as it becomes necessary.

- There should be honest and transparent communication among all partners, so as to establish trust.

- All necessary information should be shared, so that all partners can make informed decisions.

- Center staff should acknowledge what each member of the partnership brings to the table – what resources? What special knowledge?

- It is important to respect diverse opinions, and see the advantages of being required to look at issues from multiple perspectives.

- Be prepared to entertain conflict, if conflict is necessary for progress, but it is necessary to negotiate past the point of conflict as well.

- Be aware of possible issues of power in interactions with partners, and strive to arrive at an equitable distribution of power.

- Evaluate the partnership at reasonable intervals, to ensure that each person is gaining maximum benefits from it, especially the children (who are the focal point of the exercise).

A handbook, or some other document, should be developed for stakeholders, especially parents and other primary caregivers, providing information for them about centre policies, where a centre is the setting for delivery of the curriculum. The handbook should also identify specific ways in which caregivers and other stakeholders can become involved in, and take responsibility for, the development of children in their care.

Different ways must also be found of sharing information with specifically targeted individuals or groups. This can be information about a centre's activities, or about events that have been planned to support the development of the home and community, or even actual facts related to the young child's development. You should ensure that *different media* are used, remembering that not everybody normally gets information from print sources. The telephone, face to face meetings, and the mass media are all ways of disseminating information.

Planning for Transition
Rationale for a Transitional Curriculum
The transition from preschool to primary school is traumatic for many children across the Caribbean. Primary school curricula often continue to be more academic in nature, and teachers often feel under pressure to 'cover' each stage of the primary curriculum, continuously aware that important tests of children's preparation for secondary school must be passed in a few years. Thus young children suddenly find themselves part of a school culture which is quite different from what they may have experienced before. There is less flexibility, time is more highly structured, and learning experiences are often very teacher-centred. They are also suddenly expected to be much more independent in performing the practical tasks required to take care of themselves.

While a successful preschool experience should have prepared children with the fundamental concepts, skills and dispositions required to perform well in primary school, given that children develop at different rates, it is entirely possible that some children will not be as ready as others. Some basic concepts within the different subject fields may not have been fully understood, for example. Motor skills may not yet be adequately developed to permit children to hold pencils for long periods. Children may not yet have developed the physical endurance required to sit in their classes for

protracted periods. Finally, some may have social skills, but a completely new environment inhabited by strangers creates unusual demands on them.

It is therefore necessary to make deliberate preparations for easing the transition, at both the primary school level and the level of the pre-school.

Features of a Proposed Transitional Curriculum
Aim:
To ease the transition from preschool to primary school

Goals:
1. To support young children as they adjust to the new social environment.
2. To encourage children to see themselves as forming part of a different learning community.
3. To help children adjust to the new demands made by the primary school curriculum
4. To scaffold their learning of the content of the new curriculum.

Duration:
The transitional curriculum can be implemented for a period of one term, to allow students time to adjust cognitively and emotionally to the new educational setting and new curriculum content.

Design
Emphasis continues to be on *integration*, through the pursuit of play based education approaches, and projects of interest to children. Projects should continue to introduce "big questions," refine children's skills of inquiry, and develop their command of symbolic representation, encouraging them to report their findings orally and in writing, and using diagrams.

Scope
Academic subjects as defined in the primary curriculum may constitute the cognitive content of the transitional curriculum, and especially areas of content designed to support literacy and numeracy, but modified and reduced in scope, and poised at the level of introduction to content, rather than on mastery.

In addition, children should be taught relevant class and school policies and routines, and should gradually be given opportunities to take on new community responsibilities as members of their class and school.

Continuity

Students will be re-introduced to the basic concepts for different core subject areas from the primary curriculum which they first encountered in the early childhood curriculum, but these will be placed within the context of the formal academic subjects of the primary curriculum. Some repetition of themes or topics from preschool in the transition classes, with extension and enrichment activities might also be possible. Play and project based approaches will facilitate continuity of learning experiences as well as of content.

Partnerships for transition

Consideration should be given to collaborative arrangements between preschool and kindergarten teachers, to allow preschoolers to visit kindergarten classes, before transition, and for primary school teachers to visit preschools to talk to young children about what happens in kindergarten.

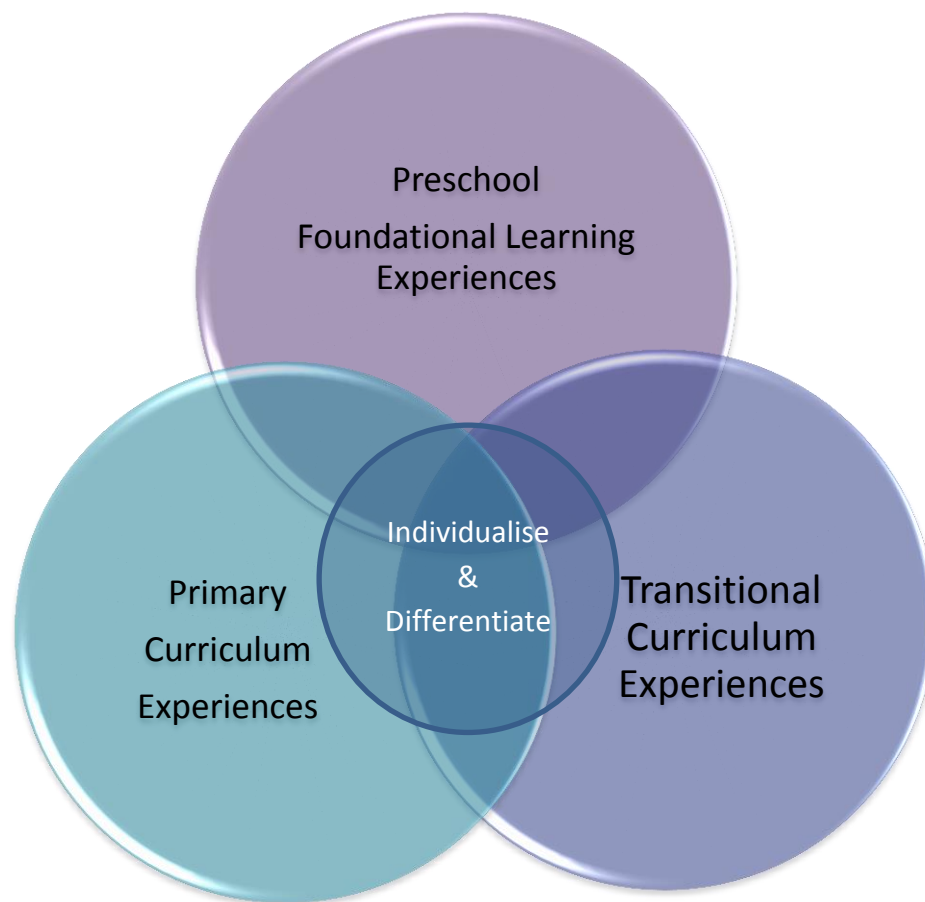**Features of Transitional Learning Experiences**

- Fewer children in transitioning groups, facilitating more individualized and differentiated instruction;
- Strong emphasis maintained on experiential learning, with continuing opportunities for play based learning; growing emphasis on projects as key curriculum experiences;
- Maintenance of familiar features of physical environments, with learning centers and their material resources;
- Maintenance of previously experienced features of social environments, including the continued, though gradually diminishing, presence of parents/primary caregivers; and
- Emphasis on small group work, with opportunities for collaboration with their peers to support learning and also provide emotional support.

Assessment

Performance-based and authentic assessment should be predominantly practiced, to monitor students' development in key areas over the transitional period.

In addition, records from preschool settings should be made available to all teachers of transition classes, in formats that allow them to have a holistic picture of each student's level of development on entry into primary school. An emphasis on portfolio assessment in the final sessions of preschool might be a useful to facilitate this process.

Figure 4: Conceptualising the Transitional Curriculum

Preschool
Foundational Learning
Experiences

Individualise
&
Differentiate

Primary
Curriculum
Experiences

Transitional
Curriculum
Experiences

SECTION 4

SECTION IV: CURRICULUM EVALUATION

Assessment of Students

Assessment is a necessary part of all curriculum planning, as it provides necessary information about students' needs to guide new phases of planning, or to show educators where they might need to make some adjustment to what they have been doing.

Assessment may be defined as the process of obtaining information about individual children for the purpose of understanding the child's development and of making decisions about curriculum and instruction in order to enhance learning and development. Assessment may be used for screening, to identify from an early stage potential problems in development (*this is one critical goal of the CARICOM Regional Framework of Action for Children, 2002 - 2015*) . It may also be diagnostic, to identify areas of strength and need, in order to support development, and instruction. Assessment may also be formative, or summative. *An effective curriculum should make provision for all of these*.

Good Assessment Practices

Assessment is most effective when:
- It is focused on learning outcomes that have been identified as important
- It is an integral part of children's learning experiences, flowing directly from the activities in which they are involved
- It is authentic, tied to children's everyday activities, and documenting their progress while they are engaged in real-life situations and challenges
- It is based on activities that are developmentally appropriate
- It is culturally and linguistically responsive, requiring the children to act in contexts that are consistent with their cultural and linguistic experiences
- It gives a clear picture of what children can do, and how they are progressing
- It gives a holistic picture of children's development
- It includes their caregivers, providing opportunities for their input on the children's behaviours
- It uses materials that are intrinsically engaging and motivating.

Assessment for Learning

The assessment of children used to be primarily focused on assessment *of* their learning. Today, though, the focus is increasingly on assessment *for* learning. This focus emphasizes the reality that assessment and instruction are two sides of the same coin.

Assessment for learning is ongoing. It involves noticing, recognizing and responding to children's learning. It is embedded within learning activities, and must be used to shape learning and teaching.

Assessment for learning can include both formal assessment procedures (such as clinical interviewing) and informal processes. It seeks to obtain feedback and involvement from all stakeholders, including the children themselves, and their parents.

Some Assessment Strategies

Assessment for learning of young children should emphasise performance assessment, happening continuously over time, and focused on children's performance of practical tasks, as they interact with their environment. Strategies include:
- *Observation*: Information about young children's progress is usually obtained primarily by observation. Teachers should be continuously involved in noticing what children do in different situations, what they say, and how they interact with others.
- *Interviews* with the children, to get information about their thought processes and why they make the choices that they do when engaged in different activities
- *Anecdotal records*, based on observations
- *Collecting and analyzing samples of work* they produce at different stages of their development
- *Checklists*

Involving Children in Assessment

Children – even young children – can be involved in their own assessment. Involving children serves the purpose of having children begin to develop skills to assess their own progress, and to reflect on how satisfied they are with what they have produced. This has the advantage, first, of giving them opportunities for critical thinking and reflection. It also helps them to become more independent of their teachers' judgements, which is a necessary characteristic if they are to go on to become lifelong learners.

Children can be included in the assessment of their own work when they are encouraged to help decide what should be assessed, and how assessment might be done. For example, children can suggest what they want to include in their portfolios. They may also be encouraged to reflect on what they consider a 'good' piece of work, and what might be features of a piece of work that can benefit from a little more effort.

Children's progress should also be continuously recorded, using different formats and technologies, from report cards to electronic portfolios, and should be able to provide a clear and holistic picture of each child's development over time, as well as at the end of different time periods in the school year.

School Based Curriculum Evaluation

Evaluation of the curriculum and programmes is often conducted by persons who have no vested interest in the curriculum as implemented in specific contexts, and who are therefore expected to be objective. However, staff in centres must also review their programmes to ensure that they reflect the curriculum's purposes and intentions, and to ensure that the quality of the programme offered to stakeholders is maintained.

Informally, ongoing monitoring of activities can take place as practitioners work together in the same space, and can see what colleagues are doing, offer advice etc.

More formally, centre administrators, or supervisors of practitioners in community and home based programmes, can collect plans for instruction and stimulation, and records of interactions. These can be used to appraise the quality of work done by practitioners, and to provide feedback, and guidance as to possible training needs.

Components of a formal curriculum evaluation

Curriculum evaluation may focus on:
- The curriculum philosophy and goals
- The elements of the curriculum – the content, learning experiences and assessment approaches – to ensure that they are aligned with the curriculum, are developmentally appropriate, and that they reflect the current state of understanding about best practices in early childhood education
- How the curriculum is being delivered, and whether the delivery of the curriculum is well aligned to its philosophy and expressed purposes
- Analysis of curriculum outcomes, to determine how well the curriculum is helping children to develop as intended

Selecting an Evaluation Approach

Administrators must determine what approach to evaluation best suits their needs. The following are three methods that might be considered:

- **Objectives-based evaluation**: The focus here is on outcomes for children. This approach looks at what children know and can do as a result of the programme. The criteria used are determined by the programme's goals and objectives.

- **Standards-based evaluation**: In countries where curriculum standards have been developed, evaluation focuses on the extent to which a programme meets those standards. Standards-based evaluations may be comprehensive, and focus on the overall environment of the programme, or on specific aspects of the curriculum. Annex 4 of the CARICOM regional guidelines for developing policy, regulation and standards in early childhood services (2008) provides an example of this approach http://www.caricom.org/jsp/community_organs/cohsod_education/early_childhood_development_guidelines.pdf .

- **Effectiveness evaluation**: This approach allows you to evaluate the curriculum based on identified indicators of effectiveness, such as priorities evident, long-range planning and decision-making clarity.

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APPENDIX A

Suggested Materials

All materials should be appropriate to support learning of all the main areas covered by the different strands. They should also support the learning of children with different cultural experiences, and with special needs.

Centers should give consideration to making their own materials, where possible, or to obtaining materials from sources like the roving caregivers who make materials to take to communities, or demonstrate to parents and community members how such materials can be made. It is likely that materials originating from such sources will not only be cheaper, and more accessible for children to take apart and put together in exploration, but will also be more likely to reflect children's own cultural experiences.

Materials should include, ***but should not be limited to***:
- A variety of books in different formats (including big books, CDs)
- A variety of types of paper, as well as crayons, easels and pencils for scribbling and writing
- Equipment like microscopes and scales for use when children engage in scientific and mathematical activities
- A drama area, with props such as toys and realia; fabrics and clothing, and toy settings like play houses, farms etc. to promote role play
- Dry and wet sand, and a water tray with equipment for filling, pouring, measuring etc.
- Objects, and containers, to give children opportunities to sort, count, touch and describe
- Indigenous materials of different sizes and textures, gathered from the community in which the centre is based
- Cooking equipment and materials for use by children
- Creative materials like paint, clay, wood and junk materials
- Scissors (child safe)
- Durable, possibly homemade, musical instruments, as well as tapes, CDs and downloaded music
- Artifacts and images that represent both the local and the national community
- Games, puzzles etc.
- Displays of children's work in different media
- Outdoor equipment, including tunnels, slides, climbing and balancing apparatus and wheeled toys
- Raw material for making toys, manipulatives etc.

COSTING

A proposed start-up cost per centre (enrollment of 50) for providing learning materials, as indicated by the Charles (2012) Report on the cost of providing early childhood services in Antigua and Barbuda is US $10000