

We Skoolhouse

The Emergent Curriculum



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Emergent curriculum is a foundational approach in progressive early childhood education that **centers on the interests, experiences, and inquiries of young learners.**

Unlike traditional pre-planned curricula, emergent curriculum emphasizes flexibility, responsiveness, and collaboration between educators, children, and families.

Aspect	Emergent Curriculum	Traditional Model
Planning	Based on children's interests, needs, and inquiries	Predetermined lesson plans and curricular goals
Flexibility	Flexible and responsive to children's changing interests and abilities	Rigid structure with limited flexibility
Teacher Role	Facilitator who observes, documents, and guides children's learning	Instructor who delivers pre-planned lessons
Learning Environment	Child-centered, promotes exploration and discovery	Teacher-directed, focuses on instruction and control
Curriculum Development	Emerges from children's interests and experiences	Pre-established by educational standards and guidelines
Individualization	Tailored to each child's unique strengths and needs	Uniform for all children, may not address individual differences
Engagement	Children are actively engaged and motivated by their interests	May lack engagement if content is not relevant or interesting
Social Interaction	Encourages collaboration, communication, and social skills development	Limited opportunities for peer interaction and collaboration
Creativity and Innovation	Fosters creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills	May prioritize rote learning over creative expression
Long-term Outcomes	Promotes lifelong love of learning and self-directed inquiry	Focuses on academic achievement, standardized experiences and assessment

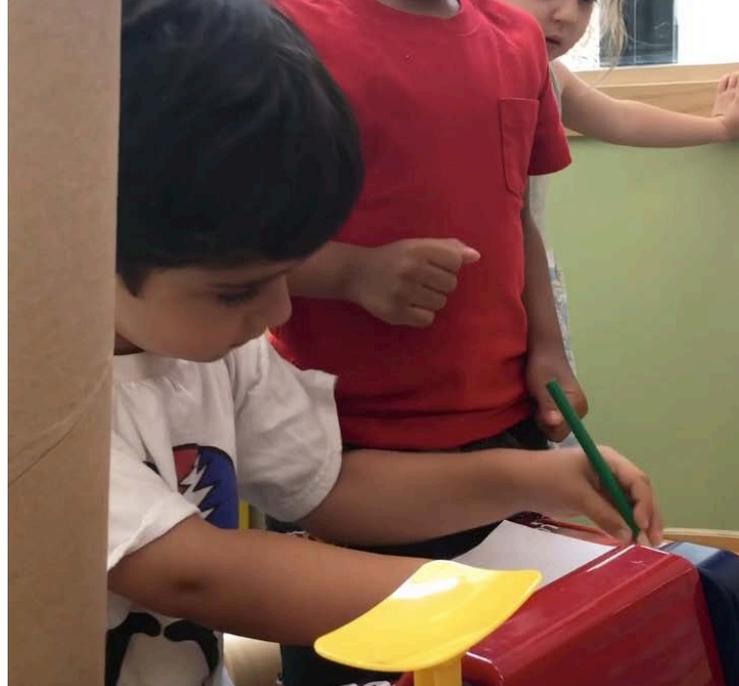


Key Aspects of the Emergent Curriculum

Child-Centered Learning: Emergent curriculum prioritizes children's interests, questions, and ideas as the starting point for learning experiences. Educators observe, listen, and document children's interactions to identify emergent themes and topics for exploration.

Flexibility and Adaptability: Emergent curriculum is responsive to the evolving needs, preferences, and abilities of individual children and the group as a whole. Educators adjust plans and activities based on ongoing observations and feedback from children and families. This allows an investigation to expand and evolve over time, welcoming deep and meaningful comprehension.

Authentic Learning Experiences: Emergent curriculum fosters authentic, meaningful learning experiences that are relevant to children's lives, cultures, and communities. Activities are hands-on, experiential, and grounded in real-world contexts, promoting deeper understanding and engagement.



Integrated Learning Across Domains: Emergent curriculum supports integrated learning across multiple domains, including cognitive, social-emotional, physical, and creative development. Activities and projects address diverse learning goals and promote connections between different areas of knowledge and skills..

Collaborative Inquiry: Emergent curriculum encourages collaborative inquiry and problem-solving among children, educators, and families. Children take an active role in shaping their learning experiences, asking questions, exploring ideas, and working together to find solutions.

Documentation and Reflection: Emergent curriculum relies on documentation and reflection as essential tools for assessment, planning, and evaluation. Educators document children's learning through observations, photographs, videos, and children's work samples, which inform ongoing reflection and program improvement.





Implementation Strategies

Observation and Documentation: Educators regularly observe and document children's interests, interactions, and discoveries. Documentation methods may include written observations, photographs, videos, and children's own reflections or representations.

Responsive Planning: Based on observations and documentation, educators collaboratively plan and adapt learning experiences to build upon children's interests and inquiries. Plans are flexible and open-ended, allowing for spontaneity and exploration.

Provocations and Materials: Educators create provocations (thoughtful arrangement of materials that are meant to provoke curiosity and engagement) and provide a rich environment filled with open-ended materials that invite children to explore, experiment, and create. Materials are carefully selected to stimulate curiosity, creativity, and problem-solving.



Inquiry-Based Projects: Emergent curriculum often involves long-term inquiry-based projects that emerge from children's interests and questions. Educators may lead with open-ended questions such as “what you know about...?” or “what do you wonder about...?” Which is often represented through a KWL Chart. New questions arise from the educators and children throughout the investigation offering opportunities for deep investigation, research, collaboration, and reflection over time.

Family Engagement: Families are valued partners in emergent curriculum, contributing insights, knowledge, and experiences that enrich children's learning. Educators collaborate with families to support children's interests and extend learning beyond the classroom.

Reflection and Documentation Review: Educators regularly reflect on children's learning experiences and review documentation to assess progress, identify emerging themes, and plan future experiences. This documentation is also often displayed on bulletin boards to make learning more visible and reflective for not only educators, but children and families alike. Reflection prompts critical thinking and informs ongoing curriculum development.

Example of Emergent Curriculum



- **Observation and Documentation:**

- Teacher notices children building structures with blocks.
- Children are particularly interested in balancing blocks to create towers.

- **Responsive Planning:**

- Teacher gathers materials related to construction and balance.
- Incorporates the topic into different centers of the classroom to reach various learning styles:
 - Sensory table with sand to explore digging and building.
 - Art center stocked with paper, glue, and recyclable materials for creative expression.
 - Literacy corner with books about construction, building, and famous architects.
 - Dramatic play area transformed into a construction site with toy tools and hard hats.

- **Provocations and Materials:**

- Sets up activity station with materials and pictures of famous structures.
 - Invites children to explore materials and create their own structures.



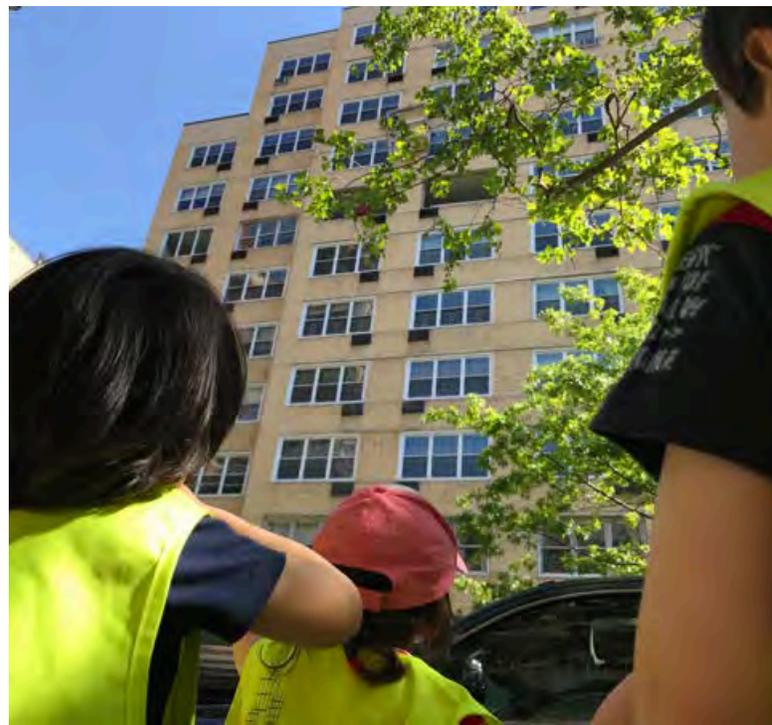


- **Inquiry-Based Projects:**

- Children experiment with different materials and creation techniques.
- Some children build tall towers and create bridges or houses with blocks, while others express their work through art. Collaboration occurs as children are sharing ideas, asking questions, and making predictions as a group, while also working together in their play and creations.

- **Family & Community Engagement:**

- Encourages parents to participate in classroom activities and events related to architecture, construction, engineering, etc.
- Facilitates neighborhood walks where children can explore and sketch the buildings around them, fostering a connection between classroom learning and real-world experiences.





- **Reflection and Documentation Review:**

- Teacher continues to observe and document children's engagement.
- Reviews documentation with children during reflection time.
- The investigation continues and evolves for an unpredictable amount or perhaps naturally seaways into another relative area of focus, e.g.
 - Homes and structures from around the world
 - Deep dive into city life or rural life, etc.
 - Maps, treasure maps, or imaginary adventures

- **Benefits and Outcomes:**

- Supports critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration skills.
- Targets all domains of development and reaches various learning styles as the topic is naturally woven into all areas of the classroom.
- Sticking to a long-term investigation allows children to revisit concepts multiple times, reinforcing learning through repetition and review. This deepens their understanding and provides opportunities for them to make connections over time, leading to more meaningful learning experiences.





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