Supporting Staff to Effectively Implement Curricula

Head Start Program Performance Standards §1302.32(a)(2) and §1302.35(d)(2):

Center-based, family child care, and home-based programs must "support staff to effectively implement curricula and at a minimum monitor curriculum implementation and fidelity, and provide support, feedback, and supervision for continuous improvement of its implementation through the system of training and professional development."

What does "support staff to effectively implement curricula" mean?

While an early childhood curriculum provides the foundation for supporting children's learning and development, it must be effectively implemented by education staff who understand how to use it responsively, intentionally, and with fidelity (i.e., as it was designed to be used). Therefore, programs need to develop a system of training and professional development that supports education staff in their efforts to effectively implement their curriculum.

This system of support

- develops education staff's knowledge and skills in implementing the curriculum;
- focuses on developmentally appropriate, and sufficiently rich content and skills that contribute to children's later development across the developmental domains in the *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework* (ELOF);
- for curriculum enhancements, focuses on content and skills that support children's development in a specific domain; and
- monitors curriculum implementation and fidelity by collecting and using data as part of a continuous improvement process.

How can programs support effective curriculum implementation?

Programs support effective curriculum implementation by providing

- training and professional development that includes both introductory and advanced trainings on the curriculum that are aligned with staff needs;

- ongoing feedback to education staff about their use of the curriculum to support children and families (e.g., through practice-based coaching); and

- supervision of education staff to refine their skills in effectively implementing a developmentally appropriate, research-based curriculum that is sufficiently content rich, meaning that it provides broad and varied experiences and activities that promote children's learning and development aligned with the ELOF.

Programs support effective curriculum implementation by

- implementing the curriculum with fidelity;
- individualizing the curriculum to meet the needs of all children and families, including children with disabilities (or those suspected of having delays) and other special needs;
- implementing the curriculum with cultural and linguistic responsiveness for all children and families, including dual or tribal language learners;
- using the curriculum to engage families in their children's learning by incorporating their unique cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds.

How do programs use data to inform and improve their system of curriculum implementation? Programs collect and use many types of data to learn about curriculum implementation.	
Fidelity data	• The extent to which education staff are implementing the curriculum as designed • Which areas of curriculum implementation may require additional training or support
Training and professional development data	• Which education staff had training or professional development related to curriculum implementation • How education staff used what they learned from the training or professional development
Practice-based coaching data	• The percentage of coaching time spent focused on supporting curriculum implementation • Common challenges to effective curriculum implementation • Strategies that support education staff in overcoming common challenges
Feedback from education staff, coaches, and families on their experiences with the curriculum	• Potential strengths or weaknesses in the curriculum and in its implementation • Education staff's feedback on additional types of training or professional development they need to effectively implement curriculum
Child assessment data	• The extent to which children are progressing within the developmental domains addressed by the curriculum content • Developmental areas where children would benefit from an increased focus on curriculum materials and experiences that address domain-specific skills or abilities
Teacher-child interaction data	• How teachers embed the teaching practices outlined in the curriculum in their interactions with children • How these data inform our plans for professional development
Program leaders analyze these various types of data as part of a continuous improvement process. For example, programs analyze fidelity and coaching data to understand whether the curriculum is being implemented as designed. If implemented with fidelity, a developmentally appropriate, research-based curriculum that is sufficiently content rich and aligned with the ELOF should support children's progress toward school readiness goals. If, however, some children are not making progress toward school readiness goals even when this curriculum is being used with fidelity, other options must be considered (including curricular adaptation, enhancement, or replacement).	

Resources to Support Your Work

Data in Head Start and Early Head Start Series. These interactive online learning modules are designed to assist in planning for and implementing effective data use.
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/program-planning/learning-module/data-head-start-early-head-start-creating-culture-embraces-data

Implementation of Curriculum with Fidelity. This webinar explores key features of programs that implement curriculum with fidelity and introduces ways to help education staff meet the Head Start Program Performance Standards related to curriculum fidelity.
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/implementation-curriculum-fidelity

Implementation Guide: Using the ELOF to Inform Curriculum Planning and Implementation. This implementation guide helps programs align a curriculum with the ELOF and effectively plan and implement enhanced program and teaching practices.
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/no-search/elof-03-inform-curriculum-planning-implement.pdf

Dual Language Learners Toolkit. This toolkit provides resources that can be used to support young children who are learning their home languages and English.
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/culture-language/article/dual-language-learners-toolkit

Implementation Guide: Using the ELOF to Inform Professional Development. This implementation guide helps program leaders plan ELOF-related professional development.
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/no-search/elof-05-inform-professional-development.pdf

It's in the Details: Using Practice-Based Coaching to Support Curriculum Fidelity. This webinar explores how practice-based coaching can support curriculum fidelity and identifies teaching practices that support curriculum fidelity.
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/its-details-using-practice-based-coaching-support-curriculum-fidelity

Highly Individualized Teaching and Learning. Explore these 15-minute In-service Suites to learn how to enrich activities for children with specific learning needs.
https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/children-disabilities/article/highly-individualized-teaching-learning