NMAIMH competencies addressed

Direct Service Skills Area of Expertise
- Observation & listening Skill Areas

Thinking
- Maintaining perspective

When we think of curriculum, we often think of instruction and learning. The CYFD New Mexico Home Visiting Program Standards requires one aspect of a curriculum be a focus on the parent-child relationship. Using the curriculum as one way to focus on the whole family and connecting to daily life is when true learning and competency develop. There is a body of brain research that supports the notion that learning is best accomplished when information is presented in meaningful, connected patterns. So are we using the curriculum, as a way to give information, as a way to promote a discussion or as a way to facilitate parent education? But more importantly, how is the information bridged to one’s experience.

Along with the other resources made available to us, we can use the curriculum as part of our support for parents. Regardless of the approach or model used in a program, curriculum provides a great resource to support our work.

Here is a scenario where the home visitor used the curriculum as a way to support her work:

Julia (home visitor), Antonio (dad) and Rosa (child) are sitting outside enjoying the warm sun during the home visit. Rosa starts playing with the dirt and is sifting the dirt through her fingers and massaging the dirt in her hands. Antonio tells Rosa to put the dirt down, Rosa reluctantly obeys and throws the dirt back on the ground. Julia remembers that Antonio likes Rosa to be clean and not get dirty, but she also understands that Rosa is using her sense of touch to learn about her world. Julia goes back to her office and before the next home visit she reviews the curriculum section about sensory and play. At the next home visit Julia and Antonio talk about how stimulating their senses helps children develop cognitively, linguistically, socially and
emotionally, physically and creatively. They review the hand out from the curriculum together and Antonio is able to have a new understanding of why Rosa likes to play with dirt. This experience also initiated an opportunity to discuss and create a goal around child development.

Julia used the curriculum to help Antonio understand why Rosa was playing with the dirt. The curriculum, *through discussion*, helped to influence a change in thinking. Antonio stopped thinking Rosa was getting dirty and understood she was learning through her sense of touch. Antonio was able to see another perspective, reflect on the experience and learn from the experience. When we have a positive experience we are able to relate that to other situations. Once Antonio understood why Rosa was playing with dirt, he was able to connect other behaviors of Rosa that involve her senses: splashing the soapy dish water, playing with flour when making bread, rubbing and pulling the dogs hair. Not all parents will learn the same way as Antonio, and through the relationship with the parent you assess their needs discovering their learning style. Antonio valued the information Julia presented to understand sensory and play, and naturally a goal around child growth and development was created.

The curriculum doesn’t just exist to support the parents’ goals for their child and family, but also for home visitors so we don’t feel we need to be experts in every topic. It’s a reference material for the home visitor and parent to learn together. Julia may not know about sensory development, but she referred back to the curriculum and felt more confident. Julia can now use what she learned in support with her other families.

**Questions to encourage discussion and reflection…**

- How am I using the curriculum to allow for the use of variety of learning strategies?
- How is the curriculum being used to help parents use information in new situations?
- How can we connect curriculum to the parent-child relationship?
- How are we connecting the curriculum to the goals?