



A Focus on Emergent Curriculum

Emergent curriculum describes the kind of curriculum that develops when exploring what is “socially relevant, intellectually engaging, and personally meaningful to children.” The basic idea is that organic, whole learning evolves from the interaction of the classroom participants, both children and adults. “As caring adults, we make choices for children that reflect our values; at the same time we need to keep our plans open-ended and responsive to children” (Jones and Nimmo, 1994, p. 3).

In emergent curriculum, both adults and children have initiative and make decisions. **This power to impact curriculum decisions and directions means that sometimes curriculum is also negotiated between what interests children and what adults know is necessary for children’s education and development.** Ideas for curriculum emerge from responding to the interests, questions, and concerns generated within a particular environment, by a particular group of people, at a particular time (Cassady, 1993). **Emergent curriculum is never built on children’s interests alone; teachers and parents also have interests worth bringing into the curriculum.**

The values and concerns of all the adults involved help the classroom culture evolve. The curriculum is called emergent because it evolves, diverging along new paths as choices and connections are made. (Jones and Reynolds, 1992).

Emergent curriculum arises naturally from adult-child interactions and situations that allow for “teachable moments.” It connects learning with experience and prior learning. It includes all interests of children and responds to their interests rather than focusing on a narrow, individual, or calendar-driven topic. It is process rather than product-driven. (<http://www.niu.edu/ccs/curriculum/curriculum.shtml>)

Curriculum Framework

1. Judaism: Jewish traditions, values and practices
2. Early Learning Content Standards: incorporation into daily lessons
3. Emergent Curriculum: through the Reggio principles and constructive play

“For many years, early childhood researchers have studied the role of play in the growth and development of children. They have found that ‘constructive play’, like food, love, care, and hope, is an essential building block for children —a critical part of the foundation children need to lead healthy, happy, and productive lives.”

Reggio Principles we have adopted:

Children...

- will have the opportunity to influence the direction of their learning,
- be able to learn through experiences of touching, moving, listening, seeing and hearing,
- have endless ways and opportunities to express themselves,
- have a relationship with other children and the opportunity to explore material items in the world.

Parents...

- are partners, collaborators and advocates for their children,
- are their child’s first teacher,
- will have the opportunity to be involved in the classroom and curriculum through volunteerism.