



# Unit 1 – Introduction to the Framework: Key Topic 3: Getting to Know the Curriculum-Planning Cycle

Introduction to the Framework:  
Key Topic 3 - Getting to Know the Curriculum-Planning Cycle

## Focus of Unit 1 – Key Topic 3

Students become acquainted with the curriculum-planning cycle and its components as described in Chapter 1 of the *California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 2*.

## Curriculum Alignment Project (CAP) Student Learning Outcomes

The Curriculum Alignment Project's (CAP) lower division eight courses and student learning outcomes are mapped onto each instructional guide key topic. See Appendix A for the specific student learning outcomes, objectives, and examples of course content and topics for the courses listed below.

- Child, Growth, and Development
- Introduction to Curriculum
- Principles and Practices of Teaching Young Children
- Teaching in a Diverse Society
- Practicum-Field Experience

## Instructional Methodologies

- Pairs work and discussion in pairs
- Small group work
- Class discussion
- Panel
- Reflection—individual
- Short paper

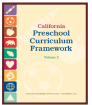
## California Early Childhood Educator Competency Areas to Consider

The Faculty Initiative Project will be undertaking a comprehensive process in the future to map the content of the instructional guides to the California Department of Education, Child Development Division's California Early



Childhood Educator Competencies. The “Competency Areas to Consider” below are listed in this instructional guide as a preliminary exploration of how particular competency areas might be addressed through these key topics.

- Child Development and Learning
- Culture, Diversity, and Equity
- Family and Community Engagement
- Dual-Language Development
- Observation, Screening, Assessment, and Documentation
- Learning Environments and Curriculum
- Health, Safety, and Nutrition
- Leadership in Early Childhood Education
- Professionalism
- Administration and Supervision



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## Before You Start

This key topic is designed to acquaint students with the curriculum-planning cycle as described in Chapter 1 of the *California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 2* on pages 27–34. It is intended to support students in furthering their understanding of the components of the cycle: observe, document, plan, and implement. Reflection is the link that ties the steps of the cycle together. The importance of partnering with families throughout this cycle is also emphasized.

This key topic addresses the practices of observation, assessment, and curriculum planning, but is not intended to be a more than an introduction to these practices. It will be important, as students work through the *California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 2*, that they understand the recommended planning cycle that is presented in the framework. Further use of the curriculum-planning cycle is described in Unit 5 of this instructional guide as a way to integrate curriculum planning across developmental domains and into daily schedules and routines.

Before asking students to begin the active learning exercises, it is recommended that faculty become familiar with the graphic, located on page 27 of the *California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 2*, or on slide 2 of the accompanying PowerPoint for this key topic. It is suggested that this graphic be reproduced on chart paper or projected upon either paper or a whiteboard. Students will interact with the graphic by attaching definitions that they develop.

The first part of this exercise, “Getting it started,” could be done by students individually online or as an out-of-class writing exercise and then brought to class for the remainder of the work.

This exercise can be done with students working in pairs or small groups. Since there are a limited number of topics to be assigned, there will likely be more than one pair or group working on the same topic. This can yield varying responses, but there should be room for discussion and guidance with those responses.

## Information Delivery

The following key concepts are suggested for this topic. It will be helpful to introduce these concepts before doing the active learning exercise and to return to them frequently.

- The curriculum-planning cycle is a recurring cycle; there is always some part of the cycle engaged for individual



Slides 2-4, 6

children, for small groups, and for large groups.

- The graphic on page 27 of the *California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 2* illustrates the cycle as a recurring cycle.
- Reflection is the “glue” that connects the various components of the cycle.
- The components of the cycle are implemented repeatedly in daily routines and activities and across environments, materials, and interactions.
- Documentation is a process as well as a product.

## Active Learning



Slide 5

### Getting it started

Students could work in pairs or small groups, using the text on pages 27–31 in the framework to develop definitions—not examples—for the following components of the curriculum-planning cycle:

- Observing
- Documenting
- Planning
- Implementing

Some students find it difficult to distinguish between definitions and examples, so it might take some discussion to clarify this. Also, some of these components have readily available definitions while others do not, so developing definitions might require some extra effort for some groups. Make sure each group has read through the text because some of these terms have more than one potential definition.

### Online Options

Students individually develop definitions for the four components of the planning cycle outside of class and post them online. Upon instructor’s recommendation, students could review their classmates’ definitions to prepare for a class discussion to come to consensus on a definition for each component.

When the students have their definitions, go through the components one by one and ask for the definitions for each. If more than one group is working on the same definition, try to come to agreement on one definition.



## Slide 7

**Keeping it going**

When you have agreed upon one definition for each component, ask someone to write it out on a sheet that is large enough for all to see. If using an LCD projector, it is still recommended to have these definitions on large sheets of paper.

Reproduce a large version of the graphic that is on page 27 of the *California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 2* on a large sheet of paper on the wall or project the graphic onto the paper or an interactive whiteboard. Attach or include the definitions for observing, documenting, planning, and implementing onto this larger graphic. Review this expanded image of the planning cycle by reading through it with students.

Now ask students, still working in their groups, to find examples of reflection in pages 27–31. If time permits, ask students to find as many examples as they can.

Next, ask students to discuss how reflection—and discussion based on reflection—can be helpful as they move through the cycle. For example, how is reflection helpful in going from documenting to planning or from observing to documenting? What does it add to the process?

**Online Options**

After agreement has been reached on the definitions, students could continue to work out-of-class by posting examples of reflection and describe how reflection is helpful in moving from one phase of the cycle to the next.



## Slide 8

**Taking it further**

Now ask students to read about partnering with families and making connections to families and communities on pages 31–34 of the *California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 2*. Ask them to think about each component of the cycle and how they could partner with families in each component. Ask

students to work in their groups to generate three examples for each component. Add these to the graphic that has been developed.

**Online Options**

Students could post their ideas for partnering with families in each phase of the planning cycle.

If possible, make copies of the expanded graphic for students so that they can have it available as

they go through the *California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 2*.



## Slide 9

**Putting it together**

Depending on the focus of your particular course or students, continue the work on this key topic by asking a few practicing professionals to take part in a panel discussion. The discussion could center on how this cycle functions in an ongoing program. It would be helpful to ask participants to bring any planning forms that they use regularly in their programs.

Students can generate questions for the panelists in advance, but try to keep the questions focused on the curriculum-planning cycle as it is described in the *California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 2*. Here are some possible questions:

- How are observations recorded?
- How is reflection supported and facilitated?
- What are your systems for documentation?
- How and when does planning occur? Who is involved?
- How does planning account for individual work, small group activities, and teacher-directed activities?
- How do observations and reflection influence daily routines?
- How are families involved in the planning cycle?

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**Reflection**

## Slide 10

The following questions can be used to support reflection on this key topic. These can be done as a journaling exercise or as a class discussion.

- Were there any new insights in this key topic?
  - How did this new information surprise you?
  - What was familiar?
  - How can you use this in your work now or in the future?
  - What additional information would you like to know that relates to this key topic?
  - How could you get that information?
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## Deeper Understanding



Slide 11

Students can have deeper experience with the curriculum-planning cycle across domains in Unit 5 of this instructional guide in Key Topics 1 and 2. The following exercise can be used for students as a way to look ahead to Unit 5.

There are several frequently used early care and education curricula that also suggest a curriculum-planning cycle. Ask students to find one or two of these. If students are currently working in an early care and education program, be sure they include the planning cycle they use, either from a commercial curriculum they use or from what has been developed within their program. Ask them to compare the curriculum-planning cycle in the *California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 2* to the cycle in each of these other curricula. The following questions could be used in the comparison:

- Are the components the same?
- Is the cycle the same?
- Where are there differences?
- What do these similarities and differences say about the curriculum-planning cycle in early care and education?

### Online Options

Students could post descriptions of planning cycles found in different curricula. After reviewing the different descriptions, students then write a short paper responding to the following four questions.