

Ohio Department of Job and Family Services  
**CURRICULUM SELECTION PROCESS FOR STEP UP TO QUALITY (SUTQ)**

Program Name	License Number
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*Programs are required to complete this form as part of the process of identifying a written, research based, comprehensive curriculum aligned with the Early Learning and Development Standards and/or Ohio’s K-12 Standards (appropriate to the age group served), and that is developmentally appropriate. All sections of this form must be completed by programs who have not yet obtained a curriculum, and who are seeking, or who have obtained a One-Star Rating.*

**Names of individuals participating in the selection process:**

Name	Title/Position

**Section One:** *Review the definitions below to ensure an understanding of the elements and criteria that guide your work in selecting a curriculum which meets the Step Up To Quality program standard requirements.*

**Curriculum** - A comprehensive curriculum is a written set of sequenced learning objectives and activities that provides a framework to guide decisions adults make about experiences provided for children. It must include goals and objectives for children’s development and learning experiences through which they will achieve these goals, what staff and families do to help children achieve goals, and the materials needed to support the implementation of curriculum. Curriculum addresses a broad range of developmental and learning outcomes across all domains and subject matter areas.

**Written, Research Based** – A published or self-created curriculum that utilizes research as a basis for making decisions about experiences provided for children. The curriculum must articulate a theoretical and/or research-base for the approach and clearly demonstrate how the curriculum utilizes the theory and/or research as a basis for making decisions about experiences provided for children.

**Comprehensive** – The following elements are found in a comprehensive curriculum:

- Addresses all domains of learning and development – social and emotional, approaches toward learning, physical well-being and motor development, cognitive development and general knowledge (including mathematics, science

and social studies), language and literacy development

- Includes a balance of experiences that address all areas of children’s development and learning
- Is age and developmentally appropriate and culturally and linguistically responsive
- Includes goals and objectives for children’s learning and development
- Includes opportunities for experiences that will support diverse learners and support each child’s progress towards the goals and objectives. This includes modifications/adaptations as appropriate, including English Language Learners.
- Provides opportunities for family involvement, including two way communication and shared decision making
- Includes on-going methods to determine progress towards the curriculum’s stated goals and objectives for children’s learning and development

Aligned – The curriculum must be aligned to the appropriate standards: Early Learning and Development Standards and/or Ohio’s K-12 Standards.

**Section Two:** *In choosing a curriculum framework, approaches and resources, decision-makers must first consider the unique features and requirements of the program. To begin the selection process, reflect on and respond to the following questions.*

1. What is the program’s vision/mission?

The Gee Whiz curriculum is based on the belief that children learn best through hands-on experiences and explorations. The curriculum is specifically designed to be used in family child care settings with mixed-age groups.

2. What are the program’s philosophical beliefs (e.g., about how children learn, the relationship between teaching and learning, the role of families as partners in children’s development and learning, particular guiding principles)?

The Gee Whiz curriculum, as stated above, is based on the belief that children learn best by doing. The philosophies upon which the curriculum is based include Piaget, Erikson, Smilansky and Vygotsky. The research behind the curriculum can be found in the Gee Whiz User’s Guide. The list is extensive and includes research projects designed to determine best practices for family child care.

3. What are the knowledge and experience levels of the teachers and staff (e.g. their ability to implement meaningful curriculum, training needs, etc.)?

The curriculum is easy to implement for teachers of all experience levels. Each activity utilizes picture codes to help teachers identify the areas of development they will be addressing. Additionally, the first bullet point of each activity explains the goals and objectives clearly. Gee Whiz also has the Gee Whiz Cohort which is free to join and provides monthly training on the curriculum as well as topics such as language development, adapting experiences for different developmental levels, engaging parents/guardians and much more.

4. How much time can be allocated for staff development (e.g. time for teachers to meet, share what they know about the children and plan together)?

5. Identify available resources to support the implementation of the selected curriculum (e.g., materials, professional development, funding).

The Gee Whiz website contains a wealth of materials to help users with implementation. The Gee Whiz User's Guide is extensive and provides all of the background information about the curriculum. The Gee Whiz cohort supplies on-going training as well as support. Additionally, Gee Whiz records all webinars and posts them on both their website and their YouTube channel. This way, users can go back and watch a webinar they may have missed or want to review.

**Section Three:** *Listed below are required components of a comprehensive curriculum. To aid programs in the selection of a curriculum, the following components should be assessed by completing the questions below including examples.*

**Research-Based** – relies on research to show the relationship between the curriculum goals and how children learn and

1. Identify the theory or research base of this curriculum.

The philosophies upon which the curriculum is based are those of Jean Piaget, Sara Smilansky, Erik Erikson and Len Vygotsky. The research papers and studies upon which the curriculum is based are included in the Gee Whiz User's Guide. See Section 4: Philosophy, Research & More.

2. Describe how the theory and/or research informs decision making about experiences for children.

The research and philosophies upon which the curriculum are based are considered by the writers of Gee Whiz as they plan and create each teaching unit. Additionally, the Gee Whiz curriculum is written specifically for family child care. So the unique needs of family child care providers (e.g., mixed-age group) are kept in mind when planning experiences.

**Planning Process** – guides adults in making decisions about experiences provided for children.

1. Describe the on-going process for observing and documenting information related to individual children's level of development, current skills and interest.

The Gee Whiz curriculum contains numerous tools to help in this area. First, there is an entire section in the Gee Whiz User's Guide (Section 2: Individualization & Authentic Assessment) that covers exactly how the curriculum helps in this area. There is a great amount of detail about gathering anecdotal notes, doing reflections and planning experiences based on those notes/reflections. Additionally, each unit includes an Individualization Web which is a tool that we can use to adapt each Gee Whiz unit to meet the needs of individual children. Samples of the Observe & Reflect Grid and the Individualization Web can be found in the Gee Whiz User's Guide.

2. Identify the types of experiences and activities suggested in the curriculum. (e.g. large group, small group, individual, child and teacher initiated, etc.)

Each daily lesson plan in the Gee Whiz curriculum includes an Exploring Together experience (full group), 2 small group experiences and even an Infant activity. Plus, there are 6 school-age experiences per unit as well. The activities are very hands-on and the majority of the small group activities are child-directed. Additionally, the curriculum includes an Add & Enhance chart for each unit that includes suggested materials to add to learning centers to enhance the unit. These materials encourage child-initiated experiences.

3. Describe how the activities are engaging and incorporate concepts that are concrete and relevant to children's everyday experiences.

The Gee Whiz curriculum includes experiences that encourage children to explore! For instance, when studying a unit about insects, the curriculum might suggest taking unbreakable magnifiers outdoors to go on an Insect Hunt. Another example might be putting out baking sheets and toy cars when exploring wheels and how wheels help do work. The Gee Whiz curriculum also incorporates concepts like colors and shapes into experiences in a meaningful way. For instance, during a unit on water, the children might mix colored waters to discover new colors. This opens the door to talk about colors in a real way.

4. Identify ways the curriculum meets the needs of individual children's interests/needs/abilities.

There is an Individualization Web included with each unit that is used to help adapt the unit to each child's individual needs and interests. Additionally, the Gee Whiz curriculum includes "leveled" experiences to help meet the needs of a mixed-age group. For instance, a small group activity might include 2 different ways of doing the same activity so it can meet the needs of children of different developmental levels.

### **Domains of Children's Development and Learning – must include a balance of experiences that address all developmental domains**

1. Describe experiences that address Physical Development.

Building, and then moving through, an obstacle course. Playing a game where the children must keep a ball in the air on a parachute or blanket. Pretending to be frogs and hopping around while singing a song. Moving along a path that features paper plates with feeling faces drawn on them.

2. Describe experiences that address Social and Emotional Development.

Any of the experiences that invite children to interact with each other and adults. Listening to the story, "The Little Red Hen" and then talking about fairness. Moving along a path with feeling faces and talking about feelings. Chasing bubbles and reinforcing the importance of personal space. Practicing self-regulation during water play.

3. Describe experiences that address Approaches Toward Learning.

Lacing pieces of ribbon in and out of the sides of a clothesbasket. Making a "Friend Train" and moving together as a group around the outdoor play space. Helping to prepare a new food and then not being afraid to taste it. Working with lotto and/or memory games with other children.

4. Describe experiences that address Language & Communication.

All of the experiences in the curriculum help children build both expressive and receptive language skills. Additionally, the Gee Whiz curriculum includes open-ended questions to ask children to get the conversation going. It also reminds the user to describe the actions and materials children utilize during experiences. This is especially important for nonverbal children. Singing songs, reading books, reciting rhymes, active chants, etc. are all a part of the Gee Whiz curriculum.

5. Describe experiences that address Cognitive Development (including math, social studies and science.)

An exploration of numerals and counting is built into many of the experiences in the curriculum in a meaningful way. For instance, the curriculum might suggest I use plastic water bottles to make a bowling game. Then, when the children roll the ball to knock them over, we would count how many fell down and how many were left standing. There are also many simple experiments built into the curriculum such as rolling toy cars down a baking sheet or putting a bowl of ice out in the sun to see what happens. The Gee Whiz outline for the year details the many different science, social studies and math concepts included in the curriculum. On the outline there is even a STEM concept for each unit.

**Role of the Teacher** – The teacher's role is an essential component in the process of curriculum development and implementation. Throughout the on-going process the teacher will be engaged in the observation of children, the planning of activities and experiences, and the assessment of children's progress. The teacher will utilize multiple instructional strategies to guide children's learning and to make adjustments as needed to continue to support optimal development and progress in meeting established goals and outcomes.

1. Identify the guidance provided on how to use curriculum resources including goals, learning progressions, and assessment tools.

The Gee Whiz curriculum uses picture codes in the lesson plans that link to the 10 developmental areas included in the curriculum. For instance, the hand symbol means that the experience addresses Physical Development & Health. There is also a chart in the back of each Teaching Guide that details which Learning Indicators (specific skills) each activity addresses. The curriculum is written so that I can choose any formal assessment tool I want to go along with it. Because the curriculum is so comprehensive and covers all 10 developmental areas, I can choose an assessment tool that I think will work best for my group.

2. Describe the guidance provided on how to set up the learning environment.

The Gee Whiz curriculum contains a booklet titled, "The Environment & Gee Whiz" that is free and available on their website. It helps me better understand how I can assure the learning environment in my program is the best it can be. It also explains my role in the learning environment. There is also a component each month called the Add & Enhance. This is a list of materials I can add to my learning centers that enhances the unit.

3. Describe the guidance provided on how to interact with children.

The Gee Whiz curriculum provides a lot of guidance on interacting with children. This is in, "The Environment & Gee Whiz" booklet, the Gee Whiz User's Guide and also in each unit's Teaching Guide. In fact, the lesson plans not only tell me how to do the experience but also give me suggested open-ended questions to ask. This is important because it helps me to get a conversation going with the children.

**Scheduling and Routines** – must be age and developmentally appropriate, predictable but flexible, and responsive to the individual needs of children.

1. Describe how the daily schedule includes an appropriate balance of teacher/caregiver initiated and child initiated experiences.

Gee Whiz has a sample daily schedule posted on their website. It is under the "FCC Tools" tab. The schedule has a good blend of interactions and also includes routines and outside play time. I can use this as a basis for my own personal daily schedule so that I make sure I have a good balance in my program.

2. Describe how the daily schedule includes large blocks of time for play and exploration with appropriate facilitation from an adult.

Please see the sample daily schedule on the Gee Whiz website under "FCC Tools."

3. Describe how routines are included as an integral part of the children's experiences and are age appropriate (i.e. such as feeding and toileting).

Again, please see the sample daily schedule on the Gee Whiz website under "FCC Tools." Additionally, the Gee Whiz curriculum includes a Health & Safety Tip, a Teaching Tip and a Transition Idea every day. These often address routine times. The transition tip is really helpful because it gives me an idea of how I can move the children from one activity to the other easily.

**Physical Learning Environment – must provide appropriate guidance for teachers and caregivers on the physical**

1. How does the curriculum promote each child's development and learning in both indoor and outdoor settings?

Each unit includes opportunities for experiences to be done both indoors and outside. Those experiences that can be done outdoors have a sunshine symbol. This means that you can, or should, do them outdoors.

2. How does the curriculum encourage the use of age appropriate materials, furnishing and equipment?

The Gee Whiz curriculum always includes cautions when using materials that should be supervised closely or not used with children under the age of 3. Additionally, the experiences contain adaptations so I can do one activity but in different ways with different children based on their level of development. For instance, during water play, more advanced children might "catch" sponges with kitchen tongs while children that are still developing fine motor skills might use their fingers.

3. Describe how the curriculum supports children in making choices, exploring and demonstrating independence.

Many of the Gee Whiz experiences can get set up as free choice activities. The art activities are very open-ended so children can make choices about what materials they use and how they do the activity. Even within the activities themselves there is a lot of opportunity for children to make choices. Everybody does not need to do many of the activities the same way.

**Diversity - free from bias, culturally and linguistically responsive and provides for development and learning from a variety of diverse backgrounds.**

1. What guidance is provided on how to incorporate children's interests and preferences?

Section 2: Individualization & Authentic Assessment in the User's Guide addresses this perfectly. The Individualization Web is a tool I can use to help integrate each child's interests or needs with the unit. Also, in the lesson plans, they give me ideas of different materials to put out so children can make choices based on their preferences. Like the activity might suggest putting out chalk, markers, and paint and then the children can choose what they want to use.

2. Describe how it has been determined that the curriculum is free of individual, cultural or language biases.

When I look at all the the activities and the artwork included in the curriculum, it is very obvious that it is not biased in any way. Also, particularly the family/home unit, invites children to share their cultural backgrounds. The lesson plans frequently remind me to do this as well. Plus, I have the Family Letters, Digital Family Notes and All About My Week Reports available in both Spanish and English. If the Make It! Sheets have words on them, they provide these in both Spanish and English as well.

3. How does the curriculum explicitly address ways adults can provide experiences that are culturally relevant and sensitive to children and families who reflect a variety of cultures, languages, socio-economic status, and structures?

Any time there is an experience related to families in the curriculum, the lesson plans remind me to be concisous of cultural differences and to incorporate them into the activity. Even when we did a unit on community helpers, the lesson plans encouraged me to incorporate the jobs of family members and to be sensitive to any families that had anyone who is currently unemployed. Gee Whiz is very sensitive to the fact that all families are not the same and different cultures should be celebrated.

**Family Involvement** - respects families as their children's first teachers, and addresses collaboration with families in a shared decision-making process, communicating and individualizing experiences.

1. Describe the plan in the curriculum for how teachers will collaborate with families in a shared decision-making process.

The Gee Whiz curriculum encourages me to reach out to families frequently to gather information about the children in my program. After all, they are their child's first teacher.

2. How does the curriculum promote two-way communication between teachers and families?

The Gee Whiz curriculum includes a Family Letter with each unit. Additionally, there are these things called Digital Family Notes which are simple activities families can do at home to reinforce the unit I am doing in my program. These are cool because I can text them to families and then they can text back. There is also a report I can send home at the end of the week called an All About My Week Report. This lets families know what their child has been doing during the week. I like to give it to families on Friday so we can talk about it.

3. Describe how the curriculum includes families in planning individualized experiences for their own children.

Because the curriculum is so open-ended, I feel like I can easily incorporate individualized experiences into it. I can also use the Individualization Web to do this and can get parents input for each unit.

**Inclusion of Children with Diverse Developmental/Ability Levels** – should include guidance on providing modifications/adaptations for children of all development/ability levels.

1. Describe the curriculum's suggested strategies for appropriate modifications/adaptations for children with varying developmental/ability levels including children with disabilities.

Within the lesson plans, the small group experiences contain adapations for different developmental levels. This helps me to choose the level I think will work best with each child. But Gee Whiz makes it great because I only need to do one experience but can adapt it to do it different ways with different children. I can also use these adaptations for children with disabilities.

2. Describe the curriculum's suggested strategies for appropriate modifications/adaptations for children with varying developmental/ability levels including children with advanced skills.

I think I just answered that in the question above but here is how Gee Whiz addresses advanced skills. First, many of the small group experiences have adaptations for "advanced preschoolers." There is also a full page of activities in the back of each Teaching Guide for children who are more advanced. They now also have a Letters & Literacy booklet with ideas on how I can expose those children who are ready to letters names, letter sounds, writing, etc. in a meaningful, hands-on way.

3. Describe the strategies suggested for appropriate modifications/adaptations for children who speak languages other than English.

Because the Gee Whiz curriculum is so strong in the areas of both expressive and receptive language skills, it is great for exposing children who may not be native speakers to English. Like I said before, the parent/family components are all available in both English and Spanish as well. Any of the activities in the Teaching Guide could easily be done in a different language if needed. The provider would just need to be bilingual so he or she could read the lesson plan in English but then conduct it in a different language.

**Support for Implementation** - offers a variety of ways to support professional development and resources to ensure that teachers implement the curriculum as it was intended to help children meet goals for development and learning.

1. Describe the references, print materials or other resources available to support teachers using the curriculum.

The Gee Whiz User's Guide, the "Gee Whiz & the Learning Environment" booklet, the recorded webinars on both the Gee Whiz website and their YouTube channel, the numerous support materials that are free under the "FCC Tools" tab on their website (including developmental checklists).

2. What training or other professional development is available to support the implementation of the curriculum (e.g., workshops, seminars, webinars or other on-line training opportunities)?

Gee Whiz just started the Gee Whiz Cohort which will meet via webinar once per month. It is free to join the webinar and join the cohort. All of the webinars are recorded so you can watch them if you could not attend live. Plus, the webinars are in the evening which makes them easy for me to attend. During the webinar, they review the next month's units but also talk about a topic related to early childhood like language development, or adapting activities for different developmental levels, or even parent involvement.

3. Describe how the resources and/or professional development includes guidance on how to set up the environment, how to plan individualized and group instruction, how to implement activities, and how to interact with children.

I think I answered this before. The Individualization Web, the Gee Whiz Cohort, the "Gee Whiz & the Learning Environment" booklet and the Gee Whiz User's Guide. Plus there is a lot of information in each Teaching Guide that helps you implement the experiences.

4. Identify the resources or tools that help teachers assess the extent to which they are implementing the curriculum as it is designed available.

At the end of each Gee Whiz Cohort webinar, there is an assessment to make sure I learned what I needed to from the webinar. There is also a Monthly Provider Review sheet I can complete that makes me reflect back on how the unit went and what I would do differently if I did it again.

**Assessment** – allows for decisions to be made by gathering information about children from several forms of evidence and organizing and interpreting that information.

1. How does the curriculum provide guidance on how to use the on-going assessment results to guide planning and instruction?

The Observe & Reflect Grid along with Section 2 in the User's Guide provides a lot of detail about how to use the information I gather during anecdotal notes to plan and adapt experiences. Plus, because I can use any formal assessment tool I want, I can then use the data I gather from that to also adapt Gee Whiz to my children.

2. Identify the tools provided to assess children in multiple ways.

The Individualization Web helps me incorporate each child's needs and interests into the monthly units. The Observe & Reflect Grids help me record anecdotal notes, reflect on them and then plan activities. Plus, there are developmental checklists designed by the CDC on the Gee Whiz website under the "FCC Tools" tab I can use to evaluate my children as well. These are available in both Spanish & English.

3. Identify the ways suggested to gather information from families as well as share information with families related to children's development and learning?

I think I answered this earlier. The Family Letters, Digital Family Notes and All About My Week Reports help me share information with families. Then, I use these as a way to get the conversation going with parents/guardians when we go over them together. The All About My Week Report is particularly helpful for this

*This is a prescribed form which must be used to meet the requirements of Chapter 5101:2-17 of the Ohio Administrative Code.*

## References

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North Carolina Approved Early Childhood Curricula 2011

[http://ncchildcare.dhhs.state.nc.us/pdf\\_forms/nc\\_approved\\_early\\_childhood\\_curricula.pdf](http://ncchildcare.dhhs.state.nc.us/pdf_forms/nc_approved_early_childhood_curricula.pdf)