

F A Q : E M E R G E N T C U R R I C U L U M

We utilize Emergent Curriculum at Heights Cooperative Preschool, as we believe it to be the most age-appropriate, student-led form of learning in early childhood. This FAQ will answer some questions about our approach.

What is Emergent Curriculum?

We can describe it as a **collaboration between teacher, parent, and child to guide the child's education based on their interests, strengths, and needs**. Teachers will ask questions and listen to the child's ideas and thoughts, using those answers and input from parents to influence their teaching. This kind of curriculum is **student-focused rather than a one-size-fits-all approach**.

What isn't Emergent Curriculum?

It might sound like a free-for-all, but Emergent Curriculum isn't devoid of the teacher or parents' input or support. Students will still have the **guidance and support of their teachers**, who will plan and direct lessons based on the child's needs, interests, and strengths.

What does Emergent Curriculum look like in action?

In practice, Emergent Curriculum could look like a child expressing an **interest** in space, for example, and the teacher **creating a plan** to learn about space for their science lesson. It could also look like a **change in specific activities** surrounding a lesson if the teacher notices a particular **strength** or **interest**.

Maybe the class was going to draw pictures about the story they read. The teacher sees that the student **tends to favor paint instead of crayons**, so they provide paint as an **option** for that project. An emergent curriculum could also look like recognizing that a child isn't ready to learn a particular skill yet and **returning to it later** when the child is ready.

Why does it matter?

Suppose you've tried to learn something you're not interested in learning. In that case, you might know how boring you find that topic and how difficult it is to pay attention and retain the information. Likewise, **if a teacher is teaching in a way that is hard for you to learn, it can be difficult for you to understand the material.** If you have a particular interest on your mind, it can also be hard to focus and learn the material.

Following a child's lead and teaching with their strengths and needs in mind makes it easier for them to learn the information. This kind of communication and collaboration also helps build **confidence** and interpersonal **communication** skills, encourages **creativity**, and fosters an **interest in learning**.

When a child's interests are heard, they're likely to share them more often and suggest ideas for their class that the teacher might not have considered. Knowing that their wants and needs are heard and respected will create an environment where students know they can communicate with their teacher without fear of rejection. **Children will thrive in a learning environment that feels safe, respected, and welcomed.**

It's tough to learn if you're not involved in the process or if you have wants or needs that aren't being met. **Using a blanket approach to education can inadvertently leave some students out of the learning experience.** It can feel simpler to follow one standard curriculum, but children aren't standardized.

Everyone learns at different paces and in different ways. Being mindful of each child's needs, wants, strengths, weaknesses, and interests will engage them in the learning process and positively influence their experience with learning.