

Selilah Kalev

University of Kansas

Reflection C&T 709 Philosophy of Curriculum Final Paper

Dr. Sean Smith

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The question of how to shape play-based education is close to my heart. Of all the classes I have taken, the History of Curriculum Design course held the content I was most familiar with. While it certainly covered a broader range of depth than my previous history of education courses, it also covered a wider breadth, pulling in important content like multicultural considerations. This response paper relates to my considerations as the Founding Director of a Play-Based Preschool.

Unlike most of my early childhood colleagues, I have always been inclined to seek insight from various theorists rather than align myself with any one particular movement. This program has provided valuable content to enrich this conversation. Our current “curriculum” is inspired by Jewish values, celebrations, and stories, which we will continue to uphold. However, we must be more intentional in our approach to inclusion, behavior management, language, social studies, and math development.

I entered this program to grow my knowledge and skills, reflect on our model, and identify target areas for my staff’s Professional Development. This will allow us to engage in a rich discussion and design of who we want to be as educators and what we want to be as a school.

### **Connecting Theory to Practice**

Explore Diverse Theoretical Perspectives:

Drawing from the varied insights of theorists such as Montessori and Dewey, we can design workshops that encourage educators to reflect on the unique strengths of independent learning alongside the social nature of classroom experiences. This dual approach respects each child’s natural curiosity and fosters a collaborative learning environment.

### Enhance Inclusive Curriculum Design:

With our curriculum already steeped in the rich traditions of our Jewish values and cultural narratives, we will intentionally broaden our content to include multicultural perspectives. This means developing lesson plans highlighting diversity and creating a space where every child sees themselves reflected in the learning materials. For example, while celebrating Shabbat or reading Jewish folktales, we can also integrate stories and activities from other cultures, highlighting universal themes like kindness, perseverance, and family. By doing so, we help children honor their identity and appreciate the experiences of others. This approach mirrors Dewey's emphasis on community and lived experiences while aligning with Montessori's child-centered respect for individual growth. Through intentional curricular design, we can address the needs of children from diverse backgrounds, including those with disabilities, by differentiating materials, creating accessible visual aids, and promoting cross-cultural awareness through play.

### Focus on Holistic Child Development:

Intentional strategies in behavior management, language development, and social studies are paramount. I plan to initiate reflective sessions where teachers share practical experiences, troubleshoot challenges, and collaboratively refine strategies to support our children's academic and social-emotional growth. For instance, we are working on embedding social-emotional vocabulary into our daily routines using techniques learned in this and other courses—such as visual emotion charts and role-playing scenarios based on classroom conflicts. From behavior modeling rooted in positive discipline frameworks to emergent curriculum planning based on observed interests, we're incorporating a variety of approaches to ensure we meet children where

they are. These strategies—drawn from our studies on developmental theory and curriculum history—build a more adaptive and nurturing environment for every learner.

Looking Forward:

By deeply engaging with the History of Curriculum Design content, I am better prepared to guide my team in transforming our play-based preschool into a model of intentional, inclusive, and adaptive education. Our ongoing dialogue and professional growth will ensure that we preserve our cherished cultural values while expanding our approach to meet the diverse needs of every child.

## References:

Flinders, D. J. & Thornton, S. J. (2022). *The Curriculum Studies Reader* (6<sup>th</sup> edition). New York, NY: Routledge.