

Criteria for Topic Selection

1. The topic is directly observable in the children's own environments (real world).
2. It is within the experiences of most children in the group.
3. Firsthand direct investigation is feasible and not potentially dangerous.
4. Local resources (field sites and experts) are favorable and readily accessible.
5. It has good potential for representation in a variety of media (e.g., role play, construction, writing, multidimensional graphic organizers).
6. Parental participation and contributions are likely, and parents can become involved.
7. It is sensitive to local culture, as well as culturally appropriate in general.
8. It is potentially interesting to many of the children or represents an interest that adults consider worthy of developing in children.
9. It is related to curriculum goals and standards of the school or district.
10. It provides ample opportunity to apply basic skills (depending on the age of the children).
11. It is optimally specific—not too narrow and not too broad (e.g., a study of the teacher's own dog or "buttons" at the narrow end, and the topic of "music" or "the seasons" at the broad end).
12. It is interesting to the teacher.

Figure 3.1. Criteria for topic selection. (Source: Katz & Chard, 1998.)