Children Study Their World: An Overview

What is *Children Study Their World (CSW)*?

*CSW* is an early childhood curriculum for 4-year-olds, based on principles of **project-based inquiry** and driven by evidence-based practices that build teacher capacity and support successful implementation. It consists of **eight interdisciplinary, content-rich projects** that build upon children’s knowledge and increase in complexity. Each project supports children’s **common understanding** of a topic and **nurtures their innate sense of curiosity** and discovery about their world.

*CSW* was created by the Center for Early Childhood Education and Intervention at the University of Maryland. Funding for *CSW* was provided through a grant from the Maryland State Department of Education.

What makes *CSW* unique?

*CSW* is an electronic curriculum, published in **iBooks** form for use on the iPad. It includes **embedded online resources**, such as videos and songs, as well as links to online resources and ideas that teachers can use to support children’s questions and challenge their thinking. By using an iPad, teachers have **instant access** to Internet resources, can **quickly document children’s work** with photos or video, can access the **Maryland Early Learning Assessment**, and have the **entire curriculum at their fingertips**!

In each project of *CSW*, children ask questions, guide planning, explore and discover, and share their learning. **Teachers** model curiosity, observe children’s level of understanding, and help them represent what they learned in different ways.

How does *CSW* prepare children for kindergarten?

*CSW* is fully aligned with **Maryland’s Early Learning Standards** and **Early Learning Assessment (ELA)**. Formative assessments are provided in each lesson, so that teachers can observe and track children’s development and learning within the seven domains defined by the Maryland Early Learning Standards:

- Science
- Social Studies

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• Social Foundations
• Language and Literacy
• Mathematics
• The Arts
• Physical Well-Being and Motor Development

See the following links for information on:
• Early Learning Assessment and Early Learning Standards used in Whole Group and Small Group Investigations
• Read Aloud Scope and Sequence
• Whole Group Literacy Scope and Sequence
• Small Group Math Scope and Sequence

Does CSW allow for customization?

While CSW contains detailed lesson plans, teachers have the freedom (and are encouraged!) to tailor their instruction to their class. Some examples of curriculum modifications include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Example Content</th>
<th>Possible Modification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Busy Bodies</td>
<td>A health expert, such as a doctor or nurse, is invited to visit the class.</td>
<td>The teacher can invite other guest experts, such as the school’s physical education teacher or school nurse. A child’s parent may be a medical student, nutritionist, or work in a doctor’s office. Instead of an in-person visit, the expert may also “visit” the class via video call.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Showtime</td>
<td>Children create and act out a performance based on the storybook “The Mitten.”</td>
<td>If children have another favorite story, the teacher can adapt the lessons to focus on children’s favorite story.</td>
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<tr>
<td>All Aboard</td>
<td>Children visit a bus station and construct a bus out of a large cardboard box.</td>
<td>The teacher can use his or her local resources and choose to focus on the type of transportation that is available in the community. For example, different communities may have access to light rail, ferries, or an airport.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How can teachers customize CSW to meet the needs of their children?

CSW provides guidance on how to make sure the lessons are accessible to all children, including:

- Reminders to align children’s IEP goals when planning instructional and assessment strategies
- A sample IEP and examples of how its goals can be infused into one lesson
- Descriptions and examples of eight types of lesson modifications:
  - Environmental support
  - Materials adaptation
  - Modifying or simplifying the activity
  - Child preferences
  - Special equipment
  - Adult support
  - Peer support
  - Invisible support
- Universal Design for Learning principles built into each lesson
- Suggested strategies to support English learners
- Options for lesson enrichment
- Suggestions for independent exploration at targeted and related learning centers
- Extensions for moving learning outdoors
- Additional ideas on how to customize lessons that reflect children’s interests and learning needs, as well as the community/environment in which they live
- How to engage family members in supporting their child’s learning

Why is the curriculum housed on the iBooks and iTunes U platforms?

As you will see, the CSW project books are all hosted within iBooks. CECEI chose to use iBooks as the primary vehicle for the CSW curriculum as they offer the following benefits and more:

- Both iBooks and the iPads and iPhones that host them offer consistent and user-friendly interfaces.
• The iBooks platform offers numerous multimedia and customization features that enable CSW to provide features and a simplicity of navigation unavailable in any other medium.
• iBooks offer advantages vs. print books in page/book navigation and portability.
• Using digital books for a widely-distributed curriculum saves paper on a large scale.

The entire CSW curriculum and accompanying resources will be available via the iTunesU app starting in the summer of 2019. iTunes U will provide many benefits for implementation of the curriculum, including the following:

• iTunes U will allow teachers, with permission, to access CSW resources on school-owned or personal Apple iOS devices, including iPads and iPhones.
• The iTunes U platform allows us to create a user-friendly presentation of the curriculum and instructional materials that flows project by project.
• iTunes U allows CSW to quickly disseminate new materials and updates to teachers.