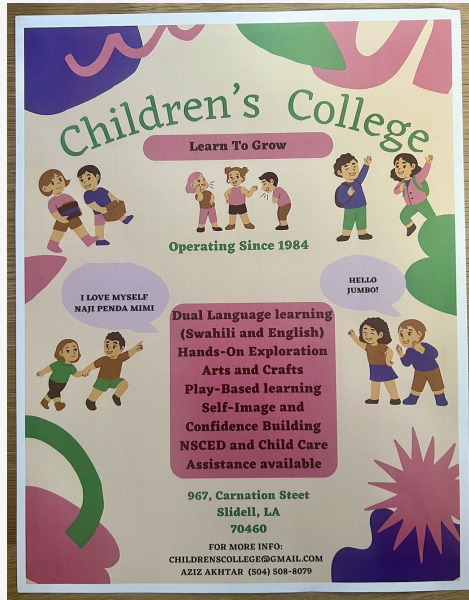




Twiga Tots: A Swahili-English Learning Journey

The Florida International University
Fulbright-Hays Team

About the Project



- 15-week bilingual Swahili-English curriculum designed for 36 year old American students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Fieldwork was completed in Summer 2024 by several members of the development team
- Project highlights the unique contributions of Africa and Africans/African Americans to our world
- Particular focus has been paid to experiential learning
- Materials such as stories and games require children to think, act out, and discuss the themes to help internalize the material
- Funded by a Fulbright-Hays grant through the US Department of Education

Our Team

Interdisciplinary

The team is comprised of students, early childhood educators, and professors

Geographically Diverse

Team members are located in Tanzania and the United States. Many contributed to this project and presentation.





Project Objectives

1. To develop a comprehensive Swahili to English early years curriculum that is culturally responsive, incorporates local practices and supports teachers in effectively delivering and implementing educational content.

2. To use a less commonly taught language as a vehicle to improve understanding of African cultures and languages among students and teachers as well as to improve educational outcomes for students

Desired Outcomes

1. Increase in knowledge and improvement in teacher practice through Swahili-English bilingual education

2. Increase in children's knowledge, skills, and behaviors surrounding the ability to solve issues related to their environment including conflict, low self-esteem, and unhealthy habits

3. Provide children and parents with a broader knowledge of African history, culture, and civilization

4. Incorporate curriculum into early learning programs around the country via open source access

Weekly Themes:

1. Introductions and Greetings
2. Describing the World Around Us: Numbers and Counting
3. Describing the World Around Us: Colors and Shapes
4. My Family, Your Family
5. Nature and the Environment
6. Animals Around Us
7. Plants, Food, and Farms
8. My Body, Health, and Hygiene
9. My Home, My Community
10. Towns, Travel, and Transportation
11. Feelings, Fun, and Creativity
12. Clothing and Textiles
13. Weather, Seasons, and Celebrations
14. Community Roles and Helpers
15. Review and Celebration





Key Virtues and Lessons Integrated Into Materials:

- Responsibility
- Respect and Kindness
- Physical and Mental Health
- Patience
- Self-Love and Autonomy
- Perseverance and Courage
- Sustainability
- Honesty
- Creativity

Curriculum Content

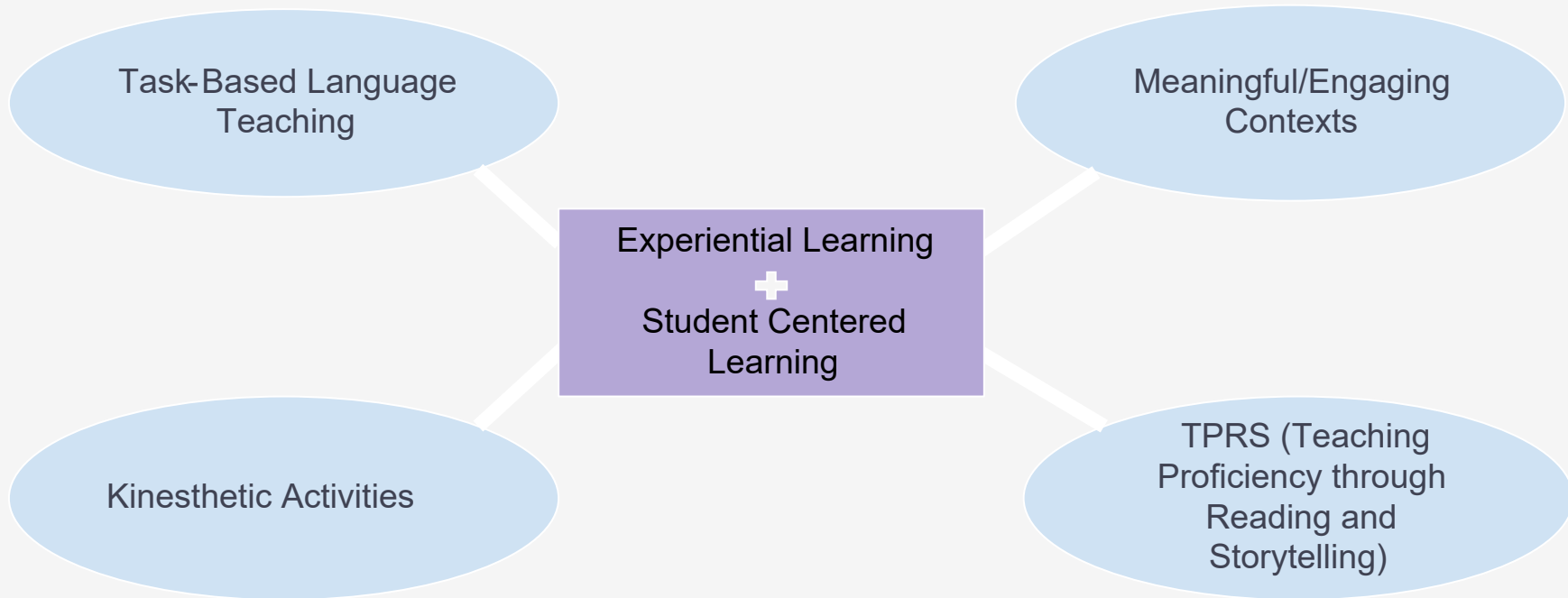
Storybooks

4 Daily Activities

Songs and Videos

Welcome and Closing Circles

Classroom Approaches for Early Childhood Learners





Reaching Developmental Milestones Through Activities

- Teaching self-regulation and emotional intelligence by incorporating tasks centered around mindfulness, health, and identifying feelings
- Neuroplasticity development
- Supporting self worth with songs, story books, and activities that emphasize the unique characteristics of each student and intercultural awareness and respect.
- Developing fine motor skills with writing and alphabet activities
- Increasing students safety and bodily awareness with language activities developed around important tasks such as crossing a busy street.



Challenges

Geographically Dispersed Team

- Being located in many places can create challenges with scheduling and maintaining communication
- Can be advantageous in creating a final product that is culturally, linguistically, and historically accurate

Diverse Needs within 36 Age Range

- Differentiating lessons to meet the developmental and linguistic needs of children at both sides of the spectrum.

No Designated Educator

- Since the curriculum will ultimately be open source, we cannot predict or control who will teach the material
- Teachers may not speak Swahili or be familiar with East African history and culture



Instructor Support

- Guidance for Non-Swahili Speaking Early Childhood Teachers is key, with a strong base of guidance and instructions these materials and lesson plans should be digestible for a teacher at any level of Swahili comprehension.
- Lesson plans include thorough instructions, weekly vocabulary, and clearly defined daily language learning and developmental goals.



Next Steps:

1. Further development of teacher resources and expansion to more communities.
2. Ongoing assessment to ensure curriculum relevance, accessibility, and effectiveness in different settings.
3. Incorporate feedback from educators and adaptation of the curriculum for wider use.
4. Making the curriculum freely available to educators through open-access publication

Children's College

Curriculum in Action

- Introducing Swahili in curriculum prior to the new curriculum
- First Early Childhood Institution in Slidell, Louisiana to teach Swahili
- Practice was not always viewed favorably
- Enhances cultural awareness and diversity





Thank You!

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