Embedded Learning Opportunities: How Children Learn Best!

- Natural learning opportunities
- Everyday routines and activities of children and families
- Within family and community life


Context for Learning: Child Interest and Competence

Interests

Learning Activities

Exploration and Mastery

Competence

Engagement

Defining Engagement

“...amount of time children spend interacting appropriately with their environment.”

Engagement of Children with Disabilities

“Children with disabilities spend more time non-engaged (e.g., wandering around, crying or waiting) than do their typically developing peers.”


Practice for Children with Disabilities

- Research on young children with disabilities tells us they need even more practice: twice as much for 50% delay, etc.

- They need opportunities to learn – in context (walking on rugs and yards and gravel); instruction, coaching and most of all... practice!

Keys to Development

- Child’s opportunities to practice are increased when parents/caregivers/teachers:
  - select everyday activities that are interesting to the child or foster situational learning
  - are responsive to a child’s play
- Without adequate practice to master a fundamental skill, a child cannot move to the next developmental level
- *It takes the time it takes!*


Early Intervention and Education Services

Focus on Successful Participation

- Services should strengthen family and caregivers capacity to use multiple routines and activities as learning opportunities
- Successful participation = learning and practice = *mastery of skills*
- Services should also help families and caregivers figure out how to address challenging activities by improving the child’s skills, making adaptations so s/he can be more successful
Parents and Caregivers Influence Learning

- What happens between intervention visits is most critical for learning.

- The consistent adults in a child’s life have the greatest influence on the child’s learning and development – not providers/teachers.

- All families/caregivers have strengths and capabilities that can be used to help their child develop and learn.

Goals of Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education

For children:

To enable young children to be active and successful participants during the early childhood years and in the future in a variety of settings – in their homes with their families, in child care, preschool or school programs, and in the community.

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES are READY for KINDERGARTEN.

For families:

To enable families to provide care for their child and have the resources they need to participate in their own desired family and community activities.

Moving from Goals to Results: A Focus on the 3 Early Childhood Outcomes

1) Positive social emotional skills (including positive social relationships)

2) Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/communication and for preschool, literacy)

3) Use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs

Embedded Learning Opportunities: Online Early Intervention and Education Resource (Birth – Five)
Purpose of the Embedded Learning Opportunities (ELO) Website

The Embedded Learning Opportunities (ELO) site is designed to integrate learning experiences into daily routines in an effort to enhance children’s development of functional skills and behaviors across the three early childhood outcomes (i.e., developing positive social emotional skills, acquiring and using knowledge and skills, and taking appropriate action to meet needs).

Walkthrough of the ELO Resource

Activity
Continue a consistent bedtime routine with your 2-year-old. During storytime, she will probably enjoy hearing a familiar book to you. As she needs to you, ask her questions about what the people or animals in the book are doing and why or how they are doing it. She is now starting to think beyond pictures and will have true conversations. Show her the front of the book, and point to who the people and author are. Similarly, when you are finished, show her the back of the book.

Crosswalk to Healthy Beginnings
This activity supports development in relation to the following Healthy Beginnings Indicators:
- Personal/Social #1: Language (CQ. Ch. B. 266)
- Emotional #1: A.F. B and #1 (Emotional C1)

These concepts, about print, are all actually elements of early literacy. As you read, have her turn the pages for you. Afterwards, ask her if she
### Embedded Learning Opportunities Activity Matrix

**Child’s Name:** Sascha (14 months)

**Activity:** Give Sascha choices of different foods whenever available. For example, during mealtime, say, “Would you like Cheerios or crackers?” When he prompts instead of answering you with spoken words, say, “OK, you want Cheerios. Yes!” and prompt him to say, “Yes.” When he speaks in words, extend his language. If he says, “More,” you can respond by saying, “You want more Cheerios. You’re hungry!”

**Intervention Strategies/Supports:** When providing choices, have the actual food items available to show Sascha or use photographs/pictures to help him decide which one he wants.

**Tips:** You’ve indicated that Sascha is now eating the same solid foods as the other members of your family. This is great! Just make sure that pieces are sized appropriately to avoid choking. Also, while he’s learning to drink from a sippy cup, he is likely to spill quite a bit. Try not to worry if he makes a mess! This is actually how he learns.

**Activity:** During bath time, Sascha may help fill cups with water and then dump them out. You can show him how to do this first if he hasn’t discovered it on his own yet. Talk about the concepts of “full” and “empty” as you play. Ask him, “Do you want to make the cup full or empty?” If he starts to fill it up, say, “Yes, you want it full!” and prompt him to say, “Full.”

**Intervention Strategies/Supports:** Help Sascha develop spoken vocabulary and early writing skills at the same time by encouraging him to use bubbles or soup creamers to “draw” on the bath tub wall. Try introducing the concepts of “down,” “up,” and “round and round” saying the words and asking him to repeat them and indicate your writing strokes as you model them.

**Tips:** Many toddlers think it’s funny to cut away from their parents just as they get out of the tub. Be mindful of this because Sascha could easily slip when he runs. Use a closely bathmat outside of the tub area so that he has something dry to stand on as he gets out, and try to wrap him up in a towel as quickly as you can to keep him warm. This is a great time to give hugs too as he’s standing or sitting next to you snuggled in a towel.

**Activity:** Sascha continues to read part of his bedtime routine. Help him choose which book he wants to read, but try to limit him to 2-3 choices. He may get overwhelmed with having to choose from a full bookshelf! While reading, ask him to point to various pictures in the book and prompt him to say their names after you. You can also point to pictures yourself and ask him, “What’s that?”

**Intervention Strategies/Supports:** When reading, use specific, clear directions such as, “Show me,” when prompting Sascha to point to the various items in a book.

**Tips:** Sascha should now know using a cup instead of a bottle for his bedtime drinks. Make sure you brush his teeth after he has had his last sip of milk for the night and that he doesn’t go to bed with residue on them. If you’ve already brushed his teeth, but he really seems to need a drink before falling asleep, offer him a couple of sips of water instead.

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### IEP EXAMPLE

**Child’s Name:** Sione (4 months)

**Related IEP Outcome(s):** Sione will identify increased fluency in early math concepts.

**Activity:** Develop placecards together for snack or summertime. You can use construction paper, printer paper, or any paper easily found in your classroom or at home. Punch or cut triangles or rectangles that represent different foods found in your classroom. Sascha can stump the ideas in the middle of the classroom. Follow up by sorting, rectangles or triangles to represent different foods. Sascha can stump the ideas on the shapes, punch or cut to the sides and ask her to find the square.

**Intervention Strategies/Supports:** Make shape recognition begin with acute ones consisting of looking shapes consistency, and look at what “show me” or “tote,” etc. You can encourage Sascha to go on a “shape hunt,” with a different shape each time. She can work independently or with a friend to collect artifacts that represent different shapes found in your classroom. As you share your findings, be sure to reinforce the names of each shape by saying, “Great job! You found this square. Let’s see what other shapes you’re discovering.”

**Tips:** Shapes, both basic and abstract, can be found around the classroom. By essential that you provide ample opportunity for Sione to work with peers on activities, and allow her to develop her shape recognition skills.

**Activity:** Children love to be outside, so weather permitting, take a ball and have a “Shape Hunt.” Promote discussion about the things you find along the way. Sort objects of different sizes into groups of objects, etc. Sione will love this nature walk and will enjoy spending time with you! Talk about how many items you collect and ask her questions such as, “Do you have more pinecones or more rocks?” See if she can tell you how many without actually counting the items.

**Intervention Strategies/Supports:** You can easily embed several early math concepts in an outdoor activity, including shape recognition, color identification, and the concept of more or less. Have several number cards laid out and ask Sione to identify “2” and “5.” After she identifies the numbers, have her first three pinecones and five socks. Work with Sione to identify whom group has more or less by counting each group. An extension of this activity would be to ask Sione to find the same number of leaves as she has in the pile.

**Tips:** Actively engage Sione in developing early math concepts by identifying shapes found around the classroom and/or playground. She can count the number of shapes she takes from the counter to the sandbox, or tell you “how many” boxes are lined up outside.
Think About: How Can You Use the MLL Resources in Your Daily Routines?

For specific questions about the purpose and use of the resources shared please contact:

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