

Family Capacity Building in Early Childhood Intervention

Family capacity-building practices are used to support and strengthen parents and other caregivers' abilities to provide their children everyday learning opportunities. This is accomplished using a number of different strategies for supporting and strengthening parents' use of everyday activities to promote child learning and development.

[Watch a video of this guide](#)

Family-Provided Child Learning Opportunities

- Parents are more likely to use intervention practices with their children if they understand the benefits of everyday child learning opportunities. Begin by explaining both the purpose and goal of the learning opportunities and the specific benefits to young children.
- Illustrate or demonstrate how to engage a child in everyday learning activities. Video vignettes of parents providing their children everyday learning opportunities generally work best. Be sure to point out the key characteristics of the practices.
- Engage the parents in real-life (authentic) activities to provide their children everyday learning opportunities. The more familiar the activities are to parents, the more likely they will feel confident using the activities as sources of child learning opportunities.
- Focus on two important child and parent behaviors as part of everyday child learning opportunities. The first is the importance of **child interests and preferences** as factors increasing child engagement in everyday activities. The second is the role **parents' responsiveness to child behavior** in everyday activities plays in supporting child learning.
- Provide parents supportive guidance and feedback during and after parents' use of everyday learning opportunities with their child. Point out which characteristics of the practice were used by the parents and describe the child benefits of the practices.
- Engage the parents in conversations, discussions, or review of their confidence using the practices. Provide specific, non-judgmental, positive comments, feedback, and suggestions in response to parents' descriptions to reinforce their sense of confidence.
- Jointly identify four or five everyday activities that the parents can use to provide learning opportunities for their child. The best activities are ones that provide the child multiple opportunities to engage in interactions with people, toys, and other materials.
- Identify things you can do to provide the parents regular, ongoing support to encourage their continued use of the practices. It is important to plan to take time together to review and evaluate the learning opportunities to decide which activities should be continued, modified, and added.

A Quick Peek

Felicity is a 3-year-old with multiple disabilities. Her mother, Emma, tells her daughter's speech therapist that Felicity is beginning to show increased interest in looking at other people and is making more sounds than usual. Mom asks the therapist about the best times to work on her daughter's speech. The therapist describes how there are many opportunities throughout the day that can be used to encourage Felicity to use sounds in interactions with mom, dad, and other family members. The therapist uses video she has stored on a tablet computer to show Felicity's mom and dad how other parents have used everyday activities to encourage their young children to make sounds and "talk more." She points out the children's high level of interest in the activities and how the parents' imitation of their children's sounds gets the children to continue making the sounds. At the therapist's next visit, Emma says that Felicity now "talks up a storm" while she plays lap games with her daughter. The therapist asks Emma to show her what this looks like and suggests trying to do the same thing in a few more activities. It isn't long before Emma identifies more than a dozen activities during which she can encourage her daughter to make more sounds.



You'll know the practice is working if...

- Lots of everyday activities are used for child learning
- Parents are responsive to their children's behavior in the activities
- The children are interacting with people and objects in the activities

This practice guide is based upon the following *DEC Recommended Practices*: Family 2, 5, 6, 7
 The DEC Recommended Practices are available at <http://dec-sped.org/recommendedpractices>

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