

## Embedding Learning in Everyday Activities

Intentionally including—or “embedding”—learning opportunities in everyday activities at home or in your community is one way you can help your child learn new things.

This means identifying what you want your child to learn, choosing everyday activities that provide opportunities to learn, and using brief teaching sessions to help your child become a more capable participant in daily life.



DEC Recommended Practices: Instruction 1, 2, 4–6

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**ecta** Early Childhood  
Technical Assistance Center

## Planning and Embedding Learning Opportunities

- Pay attention when your child is involved in activities at home or in your community. Notice the things they do, and think about what new behaviors would be useful for doing things without help. Choose things your child could learn that would enhance participation in everyday activities.
- Think about the activities and routines you and your child do at home (for example, playing with toys, looking at books, or eating meals) and in your community (for example, running errands, or going for a walk). Identify the activities that naturally provide opportunities for your child to learn new behaviors. Plan to embed learning opportunities in the activities that of interest to your child.
- Give your child plenty of opportunities to be involved in activities. Arrange toys, materials, and other things in the activities in ways that encourage them to try new behaviors. For example, putting a favorite toy within your sight and slightly out of reach encourages them do something to request the toy.
- Help your child stay involved by joining in and taking turns. When they show interest in an object or action, help them know to use the new behavior. Use cues, gestures and words to encourage desired behaviors (for example, pointing to a picture in a book and naming the object in the picture).
- Help your child be successful doing the new behavior. Show them how to do it, or physically help them do it. Draw attention to what you want them to do by pointing to or tapping on objects or materials. Give your child time to try doing the new behavior, helping only as much as they need. As your child learns the behavior, decrease the amount of help you provide.
- When your child tries new behaviors, respond positively to their attempts. Praise them, give them a toy or material that is interesting to them, or encourage for continued participation. Give your child plenty of opportunities in different activities throughout the day to repeat the new behavior.

## A Quick Peek

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Nadya had watched her son, Martin, in different activities and had noticed that he would look at something he wanted. Nadya knew that this behavior meant that Martin wanted the object, but others often didn't know.

Nadya thought Martin would have an easier time interacting in activities if he could point to an object to indicate that he wanted it. She identified activities Martin liked, and during which he could point to request something he wanted.

During finger painting (one of Martin's favorite activities) Nadya placed extra colors of paint on a paper in front of him.

When Nadya noticed Martin looking at the extra colors, she smiled and asked, "What do you want, Martin?"

Martin looked at his mother, and she pointed to the paint and asked, "More paint?"

She held Martin's hand, helped him point to the paint, and said "More paint." Then she put more paint on his paper.

Over time, Nadya needed only to show him what to do, and then just tell him what to do. Soon, Martin pointed without help to request paint during finger painting, and used pointing during many other activities, as well.

## Signs of Success

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- Your child stays involved for longer periods of time in activities at home and in the community
- Your child does new things while involved in home and community activities
- Your child is more able to do things without help while participating in activities at home and in the community



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