

Natural Learning Opportunities:

Facilitating active caregiver
participation in early intervention

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A child learns best when he/she is engaged in an activity of interest.

* Play

Play is a child's work.

-Raymond (2000)

* Natural Learning Opportunities in a child's typical daily activities and routines



"Natural environments are not simply locations, but the numerous kinds of activities taking place in various settings."

Dunst & Bruder (1999)



Dunst (2000) suggests asking families questions to gain information about child interests and abilities:

- ★ What makes the child laugh?
- ★ What makes the child feel good?
- ★ What are the child's favorite things?
- ★ What is enjoyable to the child?
- ★ What does the child work hard at doing?
- ★ What gets and keeps the child's attention?
- ★ What is the child good at doing?
- ★ What "brings out the best" in the child?
- ★ What does the child like to do a lot?
- ★ What gets the child to try new things?



Create an “interest profile”

Dunst, Herter, & Shields (2000)



How to create an interest profile:

Ask questions about a child's interests and identify a child's favorite places, objects, and events.

- *What are your child's favorites?
 - *How can you tell?
 - *Do you know why?

The outcome of the interest assessment is an interest profile.



Child's interests
and activities
involve
significantly higher
levels of
engagement than
adult-directed
activities.

Odom, Favazza, Brown, & Horn
(2000)

- as cited in Dunst et al.(2000)



Give client a list of the 11 activity categories.

- ★ **Which do they participate in?**
- ★ **With the caregiver, determine what natural learning opportunities occur in each of the selected categories.**
- ★ **Making a list that is individualized for each child and family is called an “*activity profile*.”**

- Dunst & Hamby (1999a)



“Community Mapping”

Gather written information about community activities.

- use yellow pages, community resources, and parks to gather information for specific areas of the community

Compile the information in a family-friendly format and let the families choose which of the activities they would like to try.

- Dunst & Hamby (1999b)



Routine vs. Ritual



- ★ Therapists need to be careful not to disrupt rituals by asking families to practice intervention strategies that are not easily embedded (Schuck & Bucy, 1997)



Discrete number of activities

-Dunst et al. (2000)

Family Activities

- * Family routines
- * Gardening activities
- * Parenting activities
- * Child routines
- * Socialization activities
- * Family rituals
- * Celebrations
- * Physical play
- * Literacy activities
- * Play
- * Entertainment activities

Community Activities

- * Outdoor activities
- * Family excursions
- * Outings
- * Play activities
- * Organizations/Groups
- * Church activities
- * Arts/entertainment activities
- * Children's attractions
- * Community activities
- * Recreation
- * Sports activities



Sources of Learning Pyramid

-Dunst & Bruder (1999)

* Locations

Car

* Activity Settings

Vacation; Ride to: store, school, sports practice, pool, babysitter's, gym, relatives house, etc.

* Natural Learning Opportunities

Labeling objects, identifying colors, naming family and friends, looking at books, turning pages of book one at a time, babble, sing, vocal play, turn taking, imitate, identify self in mirror, fasten fasteners, hold head up, tell family wants and needs, follow directions, take hat off, take shoes off, cause and effect, problem solve



According to Roffwarg and Muzio (1966), if a one-year old child received **2 hours** of intervention without parent participation in a week, that would account for **2%** of the child's waking hours (as cited in Dunst, Trivette, Humphries, Raab, and Roper, 2001).



An early intervention professional who shows a parent the importance of everyday learning opportunities will be able to increase a child's competence much more than an early intervention professional who depends entirely on an hour therapy session per week.

- Roper & Dunst (2003)



The role of the early interventionist

Past Role

The expert expected to work directly with a child to enhance his or her development

Present Role

The professional expected to build a coaching relationship with caregivers



Therapists should only work directly with a child for *assessment* purposes and for *modeling a strategy* for primary caregivers.

- Shelden & Rush (2002)



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