



KIT

"Keeping In Touch"

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Resource Article

In this month's article "Gathering and Giving Information With Families," authors Woods and Lindeman describe five strategies that early intervention providers can implement to facilitate a reciprocal approach that promotes bi-directional information sharing and learning. The strategies described can be applied singularly or in combination and can be implemented throughout the intervention process from initial contacts through ongoing intervention and transition.



Setting the stage, the authors remind readers that coming to early intervention is often a brand new experience for families. Each family has unique expectations and perspectives based upon their past experiences, available information, and understanding of early intervention including terms such as natural environments, primary service provider, and family-centered services. It is therefore essential for early intervention providers to understand and respect each family's unique frame of reference while helping them understand the valuable role they play as an equal partner in the process. Providers must use concrete examples to acquaint families with key early intervention principles and practices as part of information sharing. This includes explaining why we ask the questions we ask and why and how the information is important for ensuring meaningful intervention in the family's day-to-day life.

The five strategies for reciprocal information sharing include using conversations, questionnaires, mapping, problem solving, and environmental scanning. Included in the article

is a table describing when to use each strategy in the early intervention process and what information can be gathered and shared using the particular strategy. Each strategy is briefly discussed below.

Engaging caregivers in conversations provides a wonderful opportunity to gather and share information. For example, as a provider and caregiver discuss activities that are particularly interesting for the child the provider can explain the many different things the child is learning by just participating in those activities. Thereby reinforcing the benefits of natural learning opportunities as well as the value of interest based learning.

Questionnaires come in a variety of forms including checklists, published questionnaires, even elements of an actual IFSP. When using questionnaires providers should always review the material with the caregiver to ensure their understanding and use of the information.

Community mapping is another strategy that teams can use to identify natural learning opportunities within a particular community. It provides a concrete listing or illustration of options a family might like to explore. This can be especially informative for families new to a community.

Problem solving includes introducing discussions such as "what happens when...?" It also stems from commenting on something observed, for example, "I see he really fusses when his shoes are put on." It may also build from something the family said, for example "using toys to keep him in his car seat is just not working." Providers must be attune to what they see and hear and use those opportunities to apply joint problem solving.

Environmental scanning as a strategy to promote giving and gathering of information involves the provider and/or caregiver looking about the

environment for potential learning opportunities or ways to enhance already existing opportunities.

Application of these strategies can promote reciprocity by involving and engaging caregivers in intervention and respecting their unique and dynamic concerns, priorities, ideas and situations.

Woods, J. J., & Lindeman, D. P. (2008). Gathering and giving information with families. *Infants and Young Children*, 21(4), 272-284.

On the WWW

The web resource this month is "Parents Reaching Out."

<http://www.parentsreachingout.org/index.php>

While the focus of this network of programs is on New Mexico families, the site includes useful bits of information that parents and early intervention providers outside of New Mexico might also find useful.

The "publications" section of this site includes links to a series of "fact sheets" about various topics including:

- [Child's First Advocate](#)
- [Natural Environments & Daily Routines](#)
- [Keys to Help Your Families and Children with Transition](#)
- [Tips for Service Providers—A Family Perspective](#)
- [Teachable Moments](#)
- [The Trouble with Perfect](#)
- [Bedtime Battles](#)
- [Biting Ouch](#)
- [Learning to Use Words](#)

What Do the Data Say?

Do more boys or girls receive early intervention services?

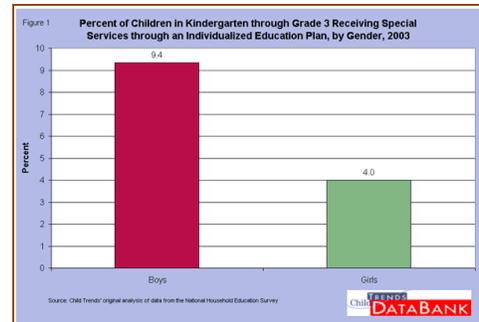


To examine this question we go to page 5-1 and 5-2 of the January 2007 Final Report of the National Early Intervention Longitudinal Study (NEILS), available online at

http://www.sri.com/neils/pdfs/NEILS_Report_02_07_Final2.pdf

The data reported in the NEILS represent nearly 3,500 children entering early intervention from September 1997 and November 1998. Results of this study found that 61% of children receiving early intervention were boys.

Looking beyond the early intervention population to school age children (KN through 3rd grade) data from the National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES) revealed that more than twice as many boys received special education compared to girls.



(Retrieved May 20, 2009 from <http://www.childtrendsdatabank.org/figures/98-Figure-1.gif>)

Consultation Corner

From March through July 2009 the consultation corner topic is:



Best Practices in Early Intervention Home/Community Based Support and Services

Lee Ann Jung, PhD from the University of Kentucky is the consultation corner specialist sharing her knowledge and expertise on providing early intervention in home and community settings.

Dealing with Distractions...

What can I do if the other siblings are very distracting? What can I do if the TV is on? What can I do with the household that is messy, with multiple pets, and it is difficult to get the parents attention during the home visit?

Every early intervention provider has no doubt experienced the challenge of arriving for a home

visit with great ideas for the session, only to watch those well-laid plans go down the drain because of distractions. Many of the distractions we encounter can be awkward to discuss, and I'm sure every one of us has had thoughts about the television or pets or disheveled living rooms and never brought it up because we didn't know how. And we have probably all tried to simply ignore the distractions, proceed with the agenda for the visit, and left the home completely frustrated at the end.

As we discussed in the last Consultation Corner, sometimes in order to answer these practical questions we have to ask other questions before we can decide what to do. In the case of distractions, before we can ask questions about *what do we do* about distractions in the home, we need to ask *how should intervention look* for this family. That is, we need to consider not only what intervention is needed for the child, but how does that intervention need to look so that it works for the family.

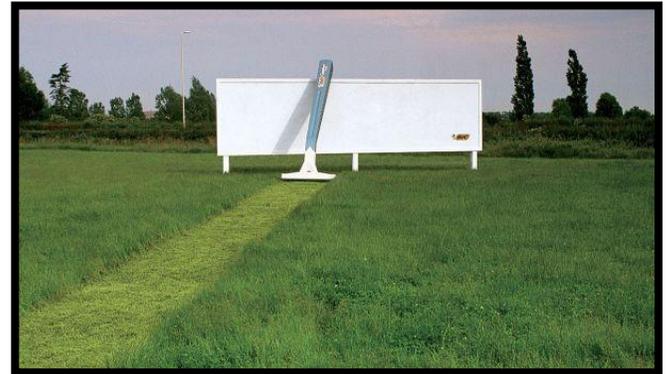
Carl Dunst in many of his writings (e.g., Dunst, 2000; Dunst et al., 2001) talks about finding and making use of "natural learning opportunities." He talks about the many different activity settings and learning opportunities available to every child. Yes, an abundance of learning opportunities is available to children in poverty, to those with many pets, with many siblings, and to those who live in homes that may be less than tidy. It is our job to help families seek out those opportunities! In their work, Carl Dunst and his colleagues (e.g., Dunst, Bruder, & Trivette, 2006) discuss the difference between putting intervention into a family's context versus using the context as a source for learning. This is a very important distinction! As I thought about how to explain that to my students in Kentucky, I came across a series of photographs that I think illustrate this difference well. Consider this sign:



(Retrieved May 15, 2009 from http://www.scottrekdal.com/wordpress/images/billboard_theory1.jpg)

This is a regular billboard sign. It sends a message in the usual way, by placing it in a prominent spot in the environment. This is akin to putting an intervention *into* a routine. If we decide that a particular strategy is needed and suggest that a family does it every day and suggest three times or routines during the day in which it should be used, we are putting the intervention into the routine. No doubt there are times when this might be necessary, but this is not the only approach.

Consider these signs:



(Retrieved May 15, 2009 from <http://www.allgraphicdesign.com/graphicsblog/2008/08/26/best-cool-clever-unique-billboards-and-outdoor-advertising/>)

These aren't regular advertisements at all! These signs make use of the environment as a source for the advertisement. These are akin to finding intervention opportunities from the family's context. In other words, instead of determining a

strategy and asking where in the daily routines and activities it might fit, we ask what does this family do and how does their environment look. The answer to that question *generates the strategies*. If you look at the karate advertisement you'll see my favorite metaphor in this discussion. That add takes something that otherwise would be seen as a problem, or as something less than perfect. Not only does this add not cover up the imperfection, it uses it as a source for delivering its message. Similarly, we can find opportunities for learning everywhere. And there are no fewer opportunities for learning in a messy living room than there are in a neat and tidy living room.

So do I have an easy answer for how to remove the distractions from a home visit? I'm afraid I don't. After all, if the early intervention provider is having difficulty implementing the intervention because of certain "distractions," you can bet that the family experiences the same, and maybe more so. The pets, siblings, television, and even the mess are a part of the family's context. For this reason, to attempt to send these distractions away so that intervention can be implemented without them during the home visit offers little useful information to families.

Families do not need to see how intervention can look separate from their lives, but rather *within* their lives.

Below is a sample conversation starter for how can we might take some of what we might have seen as "distractions" and make great use of them. Let's consider siblings.

Sample Conversation Starter:

"Each week when we talk about and try out ways to work on _____ with Jackson, it seems that Jackson's older brothers really want to be a part of that, and that's great! Really, having them leave the room doesn't help you at all in knowing how you can use this strategy when I'm not here. Let's think together about some creative ways that the other boys might have a role in this. I'm thinking back to our conversation about your routines, and it seems like the boys all really enjoy _____ together."

The question, then, is not how do we remove distractions, because the goal is not to make the context fit our textbook interventions. Instead, the question for us is how can we take a look at the

context and find opportunities for intervention. Choosing an intervention to encourage the development of a skill is the easy part of designing a plan for intervention with families. Taking a look at a family's life (siblings, pets, and all), and finding the many wonderful natural opportunities for intervention is the more difficult, but equally important part of the design.

Dunst, C.J. (2000). Everyday children's learning opportunities: Characteristics and consequences. Children's Learning Opportunities Report, Vol. 2, No. 1. <http://www.puckett.org>

Dunst, C.J., Bruder, M.B., Trivette, C.M. & Hamby, D.W. (2006). Everyday activity settings, natural learning environments, and early intervention practices. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities*, 3(1), 3-10.

Dunst, C.J., Bruder, M.B., Trivette, C.M., Raab, M., & McLean, M. (2001). Natural learning opportunities for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. *Young Exceptional Children*, 4(3), 18-25.

Continuing Education for KIT Readers



The Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) is offering a continuing education opportunity for EDIS KIT readers.

In line with the focus on Early Intervention Home/Community Based Support and Services, readers are invited to receive continuing education contact hours for reading the monthly KIT publications (March – July 2009) and completing a multiple choice exam about the content covered in these KITs.

If you are interested, complete the exam online at www.edis.army.mil and upon successful completion, you will receive a certificate of non-discipline specific continuing education contact hours.

Please send your Consultation Corner questions and KIT ideas via email to ediscspd@amedd.army.mil