

FACETS

Effective Strategies for Increasing Response Opportunities

There are many effective strategies for increasing response opportunities in both individual and group activities. When working in a natural setting, it is important not only for the early intervention specialist to know when, how, and how often to apply these strategies but also to demonstrate and explain to other careproviders how these strategies can be used. While most strategies appear to be "common sense," the early interventionist must be cautious regarding the overuse or misuse by individuals not specifically trained in instructional methods.

Set-up and clean-up: An easy but frequently overlooked strategy for increasing response opportunities is to provide opportunities for children to participate in the set-up and clean-up for a routine. For example, during set-up children may assist in gathering and moving materials to a specified work area. Social goals might include taking turns and interacting and cooperating with peers. Communication targets such as following directions and asking and answering questions can be included. At home, careproviders can easily include the child too (e.g., J. P. can get his own diaper and wipe). Clean-up offers similar response opportunities along with practice of self-help skills.

Repetition: Children acquire new skills through repetitive practice. Practice play occurs, for example, when children drop and retrieve items, pull to stand and fall purposefully, climb stairs, exercise sensorimotor schemes (e.g. bang blocks), and vocalize repeatedly. Repetition is easily incorporated in routines with infants and toddlers simply because they enjoy it! Adding a variation to peek-a-boo such as blowing a kiss or making a "raspberry" when saying boo adds a novelty to maintain interest and allows the interaction to be repeated again and again. Adding materials also supports repetition in activities.

Activity: As a team, discuss how you would teach a careprovider to use each of these strategies within routines to practice the child's targeted outcomes.

Activity: Using snack time as an intervention routine, how could the team increase opportunities to embed J. P.'s outcomes during set-up and clean-up?

Activity: Using block play as an intervention activity, how could the team increase opportunities to embed J. P.'s outcomes through repetition?

Imitation and role play: Children engage in imitation and role play when they pretend to be another person or imitate the actions of another person. For example, a toddler can play the role of a parents by assisting a doll in hand washing, imitating dad stirring pudding, or driving the car like mom. Role playing permits children opportunities to initiate and maintain interactive play, practice communication, develop problem-solving skills, and sequence actions. Use of common objects (e.g. dishes, combs, hats) facilitates role play.

Activity: J. P. always chooses the household center at child care. How could the team increase opportunities to embed J. P.'s outcomes through imitation or role play?

1. Using interesting materials: Young children are most likely to initiate learning about the things that interest them, thus increasing opportunities for practice. Materials should be developmentally appropriate, interesting to the child, and relevant to the routine.

How would you demonstrate this to a family member or careprovider?

Examples?

Cautions?

2. Place materials out of reach: Placing some desirable materials within view but out of reach may encourage children to make requests in order to secure the materials. The effectiveness of this strategy may be enhanced by showing the child materials, naming the materials, and then waiting attentively for the child to make a request. Careproviders may choose to use this strategy with a favorite toy or an afternoon snack.

How would you demonstrate this to a family member or careprovider?

Examples?

Cautions?

3. Give inadequate portions: Providing small or inadequate portions of preferred materials such as blocks, crayons, or crackers is another strategy used to promote interaction. During an activity the children enjoy, careproviders can control the amount of materials available so that the children have only some of the parts needed to complete the activity. When the children use the materials initially provided, they are likely to request more from the careprovider or other children.

How would you demonstrate this to a family member or careprovider?

Examples?

Cautions?



4. Provide choice making: There are many occasions when two or more options for activities or materials can be presented to children. Children may be most encouraged to make a choice when one of the items is preferred. For example, the careprovider may hold up two different toys (e.g. a big red tractor and a small green car) and wait for the child to indicate his/her preference.

How would you demonstrate this to a family member or careprovider?

Examples?

Cautions?

5. Encourage some need for assistance: Creating a situation in which children are likely to need assistance increases opportunities for interaction with careproviders or peers. A wind up toy, a swing that a child needs help getting into, or an unopened bottle of bubbles are all examples of materials that can facilitate interaction.

How would you demonstrate this to a family member or careprovider?

Examples?

Cautions?

6. Create silly situations: Absurd or silly situations that violate the child's expectations can be useful to increase communication, social interaction, and problem solving. For example, an adult who playfully attempts to put a child's shoe on his/her own foot, or who tries to comb his/her hair with a block, or reads a washcloth may encourage the child to comment on the absurd situation.

How would you demonstrate this to a family member or careprovider?

Examples?

Cautions?

7. Be forgetful: "Forgetting" can occur when the careprovider fails to provide the necessary equipment or materials or overlooks a familiar or important component of a routine or activity. Examples include not having any water in the tub at bath time, no cups or plates on the table for snack time, playing kick ball without a ball, or by not having books for story time.

How would you demonstrate this to a family member or careprovider?

Examples?

Cautions?

8. Insert novelty: Introducing materials, and events into an existing activity often facilitates child engagement, renews interest and increased opportunities for initiations. For example, allowing a child to add food coloring to his ice cream during snack, bubbles to his bath water, or plastic plates, cups, and spoons in the sand box, may evoke attention or questions from the child, provide a context for conversation, or increase the amount of time the child is actively engaged in play and learning.

How would you demonstrate this to a family member or careprovider?

Examples?

Cautions?