

## Caregiver-Mediated Everyday Language Learning Practices:

### II. Implementation Methods and Procedures

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This paper includes a description of the methods and procedures for implementing the communication and language intervention model developed at the *Center on Everyday Child Language Learning*. The model and associated practices were developed from research and practice conducted by Puckett Institute researchers and practitioners over the past 15 years. The paper was written for practitioners who use the model and approach to promote parents' and other caregivers' use of everyday family and community activities as the sources of interest-based child language learning opportunities. A companion paper includes information on the research and conceptual foundations of the model (Dunst, Trivette, Raab, & Masiello, 2008).

The methods and procedures for implementing the model are not intended to be prescriptive, but rather are a set of guidelines for practitioners to use to strengthen parents' confidence and competence in providing their children interest-based everyday communication and language learning opportunities. This is accomplished by practitioners using capacity-building intervention strategies (Trivette & Dunst, 2007) to promote parents' and other caregivers' understanding and use of caregiver-mediated everyday communication and language intervention practices.

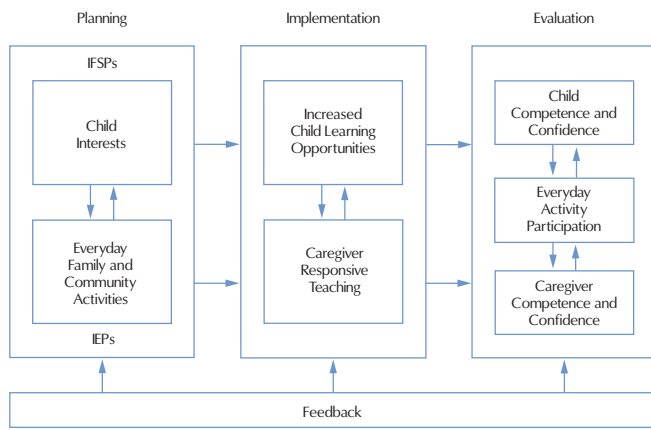
#### Implementing the Everyday Language Intervention Model

Figure 1 shows the language intervention model for increasing the *breadth* and *depth* of interest-based everyday language learning opportunities provided to young children by their caregivers.

This paper includes a description of an approach to intervention that uses child interest-based participation in everyday family and community activities as sources of communication and language learning opportunities. The approach includes methods and procedures for: (a) identifying child interests and everyday family and community activities, (b) selecting and increasing child participation in interest-based everyday activities, (c) using responsive teaching for promoting child communication and language competence in the context of everyday activities, and (d) evaluating the effectiveness of the practices. The paper represents a set of guidelines for practitioners to use to promote parents' use of the model practices.

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**Figure 1. Procedure and process for implementing the Caregiver-Mediated Everyday Language Intervention Model.**

The model is implemented by practitioners and parents using methods and procedures for: (1) identifying a child’s interests and the everyday activities that constitute the makeup of a child’s life, (2) selecting those activities that provide the best opportunities for interest-based communication and language learning, (3) increasing child participation in the interest-based, everyday learning opportunities, (4) using responsive teaching for supporting and encouraging child communication and language competence, exploration, and mastery in the activities, and (5) evaluating the effectiveness of caregiver-mediated everyday child learning opportunities in terms of both child and parent benefits.

The *planning phase* involves either or both the selection of everyday activities that are likely to be interesting to a child or using information about child interests to select everyday activities that can be used as contexts for communication and language development. The *implementation phase* involves intentional efforts to increase the number, variety, and frequency of interest-based everyday child learning opportunities, caregiver responsiveness to child behavior while engaged in interest-based everyday activities, and caregiver efforts to support and encourage child competence, exploration, and mastery. The *evaluation phase* involves assessment of both the child and caregiver benefits of interest-based ev-

eryday child learning. The *feedback phase* involves the use of evaluative information for changing existing or developing new interest-based everyday learning opportunities.

Six checklists can be used by practitioners to promote parents’ use of caregiver-mediated child learning (Table 1). One checklist (*Everyday Child Language Learning*) includes practice indicators for all components of the model shown in Figure 1. There are separate checklists for identifying child interests, identifying everyday activities, increasing child learning opportunities, and responsive teaching, each corresponding to one component of the model. A sixth checklist includes indicators for evaluating the extent to which intervention is consistent with the model practices and has expected consequences. The appendix includes the complete set of checklists. The checklists were developed specifically in terms of what a practitioner can do to promote parents’ and other caregivers’ use of the model practices.

### Planning

The planning phase involves the identification of a child’s interests and the identification of the everyday family and community activities for interest-based learning. Both sets of information are used to select those activities that will provide the best contexts for interest-based everyday child communication and language learning.

*Child interests.* The purpose of this component of the model is to identify a child’s *personal interests* and the people, places, events, etc. that a child finds *situationally interesting*. Child personal interests include, but are not limited to, their likes, preferences, favorites, strengths, etc. that encourage child engagement and interaction with people and things. People, objects, and events that a child might find *situationally interesting* typically include those aspects of social and nonsocial environment that attract child attention, curiosity, and engagement in interactions with people and objects. The *Child Interest Checklist* can be used by a practitioner together with a parent to ensure all kinds of child interests are identified as part of the planning process.

The procedures for assessing the presence of child interests are straightforward and include answers to questions such as: *What does the child like to do? What makes the child*

**Table 1**  
*Checklists for Promoting Use of the Caregiver-Mediated Everyday Child Language Intervention Model Practices*

Checklists	Main Focus
Everyday Child Language Learning	Implementing the key characteristics of each component of the model.
Child Interests	Identifying child personal and situational interests, preferences, etc.
Everyday Family and Community Activities	Identifying the everyday family and community activities as contexts for communication and language development.
Increasing Everyday Learning Opportunities	Increasing the number, frequency, and quality of interest-based learning activities.
Caregiver Responsive Teaching	Methods for supporting and encouraging child communication and language learning in everyday activities.
Evaluation	Measuring the effectiveness of caregiver-mediated child communication and language learning.

*smile and laugh? What captures and maintains the child's attention? What kinds of things does the child prefer to do?* The answers to these questions will produce a profile of a child's interests that in turn are used to select everyday activities that are the best settings for interest-based learning. Interest-based child learning simply includes opportunities to do what a child likes, prefers to do, and enjoys doing, and which are used as the contexts for communication and language learning.

*Everyday communication and language learning activities.* Everyday family and community life is made up of literally hundreds of different kinds of everyday activities that provide infants, toddlers, and preschoolers a rich variety of learning opportunities. The *Everyday Learning Activity Checklist* can be used by practitioners to provide parents with a way to select from all possible kinds of everyday activities those that will provide a child the *variety* and *richness* of communication and language learning opportunities that best match a child's interests. Activities that have those characteristics are especially likely to be contexts for strengthening existing capabilities and promoting the acquisition of new competencies.

The main outcome of the planning phase of the model is the selection of 12 to 15 everyday activities that occur frequently to provide a child a host of different kinds of interest-based communication and language learning opportunities. The 12 to 15 activities will most likely be a mix of everyday family and community activities. We have found for children who are not involved in classroom based programs, that about 75% of the activities are typically family activities and about 25% are typically community activities.

The process for identifying the particular everyday activities that are used as interest-based child learning opportunities is straightforward. Practitioners and parents select from all possible activities those that match a child's interests, that do or could happen often enough to ensure sufficient numbers of learning opportunities, and that provide lots of opportunities to practice existing communication capabilities, learn new language behaviors, and otherwise encourage child exploration. The activities that are selected from all possibilities are then used in the implementation phase of the model.

### **Implementation**

Implementation of the model involves increased child participation in interest-based everyday learning activities and caregivers' use of responsive teaching for supporting and encouraging child communication and language competence in the activities. Efforts to increase a child's participation in everyday activities and use of responsive teaching that is known to strengthen and promote child competence have proven quite easy.

*Increasing child learning opportunities.* In order for caregiver-mediated practices to be optimally effective, the *number*, *variety*, and *frequency* of everyday activities need to be sufficiently increased in order to provide a child *breadth* and *depth* of development-instigating and development-enhancing communication and language learning opportunities. Development-instigating activities are ones that *invite*

and *sustain* child participation and engagement in everyday activities. Development-enhancing activities are ones that provide opportunities to *practice* both existing and emerging competencies and to *learn* new skills and abilities. The *Increasing Everyday Child Learning Opportunities Checklist* can be used by a practitioner to structure the process of a parent providing a child interest-based everyday learning opportunities.

Increasing child participation in interest-based everyday communication and language learning activities is accomplished using any number of "reminders" parents can use to facilitate the provision of everyday learning opportunities. These include, but are not limited to, a daily reminder list of activities (something like a shopping list), a weekly calendar, or an activity schedule that prompts a parent to engage the child in the activities selected in the planning phase. The goal is to increase the *breadth* and *depth* of participation in everyday family and community learning opportunities. We have found that different parents have different preferences for certain kinds of plans.

*Caregiver responsive teaching.* What caregivers do to support and encourage child language learning as part of children's participation in everyday activities is important for a number of reasons. Research indicates that caregiver responsiveness to and support of child behavior in the context of everyday activities is a powerful strategy for supporting and strengthening child competence expression and for promoting child acquisition of new abilities (see e.g., Kassow & Dunst, 2007a, 2007b; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Strategies emphasizing responsiveness to and support of child competence expression are especially effective when children are engaged in interactions with people and objects (e.g., Dunst, Lowe, & Bartholomew, 1990).

The *Caregiver Responsive Teaching Checklist* includes the key indicators of this teaching method that encourage and support interest-based everyday child learning, and which promote the development of child communication and language competence. The checklist includes practices for focusing caregiver attention on child interests, responding promptly to child behavior, encouraging child production of new behavior, and providing the child opportunities to practice existing and use newly learned communication and language behavior. The practices taken together are an *interactional style* that has been found especially effective as a teaching method for supporting and strengthening child competence and confidence as part of participation in interest-based everyday learning activities (Kassow & Dunst, 2007a; Trivette, 2007).

### **Evaluation**

The focus of the evaluation phase of the model is the extent to which: (a) a child has increased opportunities to participate in interest-based everyday activities, (b) child communication and language competence and confidence is strengthened as a result of participation in the activities, and (c) parents' competence and confidence is strengthened as a result of their efforts to provide children with interest-based

everyday learning opportunities. The *Caregiver-Mediated Child Learning Evaluation Checklist* includes indicators for determining the extent to which interventions are effective.

*Child participation in everyday activities.* Increased participation in everyday activities is determined by asking parents (for the activities identified in the planning phase) whether a child's participation in those activities has increased, remained the same, or has decreased. The extent to which participation in the activities is interest-based and the activities have development-enhancing features is determined by asking parents to assess the characteristics of the learning opportunities. This is determined, for example, by asking caregivers to indicate the extent to which the learning activities were interest-based (e.g., "My child got excited while engaged in the activities"), maintained the child's attention (e.g., "My child spent a long time in the activities"), provided opportunities for competence expression (e.g., "My child tried his/her hardest to get my attention during the activities"), and strengthened a child's ability to initiate and sustain interactions in the activities (e.g., "My child tried to start or initiate interactions with me in the activities").

*Child benefits.* Child competence is assessed by observations of child behavior that would be expected to be the consequence of interest-based child learning opportunities. This simply involves, for each everyday activity, noting or recording those communication and language behaviors that the child uses in interactions with others in those settings. Child confidence is assessed in terms of a sense of mastery and accomplishment in achieving desired effects or producing expected consequences. The behavior indicators of confidence include, but are not limited to, social-affective behavior (smiling, laughter, vocalizations) and excitement demonstrated as part of or in response to producing desired or expected consequences.

*Caregiver benefits.* Parenting confidence and competence is measured by the extent to which the caregiver-mediated practices had an effect on parenting behavior or beliefs (e.g., "To what extent has your use of the practice made you feel better about the learning opportunities you have been providing the child?"). Competence is assessed in terms of caregiver capabilities to execute parenting roles (e.g., providing a child increased numbers of interest-based learning opportunities), and confidence is assessed in terms of the sense of accomplishment in having expected or anticipated consequences (e.g., increasing child production of context-specific behavior).

## Feedback

The extent to which parents and other caregivers continue to provide children interest-based everyday learning opportunities and support their children's production of competence in the activities is dependent upon self evaluations of their caregiver-mediated efforts. Two types of caregiver beliefs are likely to influence parents' actions: (1) the extent to which the learning opportunities afforded a child have the expected or desired child consequences and (2) the extent to

which caregivers' decisions and actions strengthen their own confidence and competence in their parenting capabilities.

The information obtained in the evaluation phase is used to engage parents (informally) in reflection and evaluation of their actions as a way of deciding to continue, discontinue, modify, or change the activities afforded their children. The importance of doing so is based on research showing that caregiver beliefs are important mediators of both the experiences afforded children and the benefits and consequences of the experiences. *Parents and other caregivers are more likely to continue providing children interest-based everyday learning opportunities if they judge their efforts successful in increasing child participation in the activities and the participation has benefits for both the child and parent.*

## Conclusion

The caregiver-mediated approach to child communication and language learning described in this paper uses everyday family and community activities as sources of child learning opportunities and child interest-based participation in those activities as a way of encouraging and supporting child competence. The contents of the paper represent as a set of guidelines for practitioners to use to promote caregivers' adoption and use of the practices constituting the focus of the model.

We conclude by noting a difference between traditional intervention practices and those described in this paper. Traditional early childhood intervention typically involves once or twice a week intervention sessions conducted by practitioners themselves. Some simple calculations indicate that twice-a-week hourly intervention or therapy in the absence of parent involvement accounts for only 2% of the total waking hours of a one-year-old child (Roffwarg, Muzio, & Dement, 1966).

In contrast, almost every daily activity (feeding, diaper changing, bathing, parent/child lap games, etc.) making up the fabric of a child's life is experienced at least 2000 times during the first year of a child's life (Ferrier, 1978). Just 20 everyday activities would provide some 40,000 learning opportunities by age one. Research, however, indicates that infants, toddlers, and preschoolers in fact participate, on average, in about 50 different kinds of everyday activity (Dunst & Bruder, 1999). That means, if each activity is experienced at least 2000 times a year, this translates into 100,000 learning opportunities each year of a child's life *not counting the multiple number of learning opportunities that are afforded within any single activity*. Assuming that any one activity provides only 5 learning opportunities, the number of times a child has opportunities to practice existing and learn new skills would be more than 500,000<sup>1</sup>. The fact is that any one activity can and often does include many, many more learning opportunities (e.g., bottle or spoon feeding).

<sup>1</sup>Fifty (50) activities x 2000 times per year x 5 learning opportunities per activity equals 500,000.

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## Appendix

*Everyday Child Language Learning Checklist*

*Child Interests Checklist*

*Everyday Learning Activity Checklist*

*Increasing Everyday Child Learning Opportunities Checklist*

*Caregiver Responsive Teaching Checklist*

*Caregiver-Mediated Child Learning Evaluation Checklist*

## Everyday Child Language Learning Checklist

This checklist includes questions for you to consider for helping a parent provide his or her child interest-based everyday communication and language learning opportunities. The checklist is used to ensure key characteristics of the communication and language learning practices are implemented during your interactions with a parent. Following your interactions with a parent, complete the checklist by indicating if you did (**Yes**) or did not (**No**) have the opportunity to help the parent use the practices.

<i>Did you help the parent...</i>		Yes	No
<b>Child Interests</b>	1. Identify the objects, people, activities, and actions that <i>capture</i> and <i>hold</i> the <i>child's attention</i> ?		
	2. Identify the objects, people, events, and activities that the child <i>prefers</i> , are the child's <i>favorites</i> , and make the child <i>smile and laugh</i> ?		
	3. Identify the actions and behaviors that the child <i>enjoys</i> doing, <i>chooses</i> to do, does <i>most often</i> , or <i>works hard at doing</i> ?		
<b>Everyday Learning Activities</b>	4. Identify the activities, events, and experiences that make up the child's <i>everyday family and community life</i> ?		
	5. Identify which everyday family and community activities provide the child <i>interest-based learning opportunities</i> ?		
	6. <i>Select</i> the interest-based activities that are used to provide the child <i>everyday language learning opportunities</i> ?		
<b>Increasing Learning Opportunities</b>	7. Use a reminder list or other activity schedule to <i>increase how often the child participates</i> in the interest-based language learning activities?		
	8. Increase the <i>number and variety of everyday activities</i> providing interest-based language learning opportunities?		
	9. Increase the <i>number and variety</i> of interest-based language learning opportunities <i>in any one activity</i> ?		
<b>Responsive Teaching</b>	10. <i>Pay attention to when and how</i> the child uses or tries to use language in interactions with people or objects in the everyday activities.		
	11. Respond to the child's language use in ways (e.g., comments, gestures, joint interaction, etc.) that <i>support the child's engagement</i> in the activities?		
	12. Respond to the child's language use in ways that support and encourage the child to use <i>new and increasingly complex language skills</i> ?		
<b>Evaluation</b>	13. Determine whether the child used a <i>greater variety</i> of and <i>more complex</i> language in interactions in the everyday activities?		
	14. Determine what the caregiver did that <i>supported and encouraged</i> the child's language learning?		
	15. Use the evaluation information to <i>continue, modify, or provide new</i> everyday language learning activities?		

## Child Interests Checklist

This checklist includes questions you can use to help a parent identify his or her child's interests. The checklist includes indicators that ensure a broad range of child interests are identified during your interactions with a parent. Following your interactions with a parent, complete the checklist by indicating if you did (**Yes**) or did not (**No**) have the opportunity to help the parent recognize and identify child interests.

<b><i>Did you help the parent...</i></b>	Yes	No
1. Identify the objects, people, activities, and actions that capture and hold the child's attention?		
2. Identify the objects, people, activities, and actions that are the child's favorites?		
3. Identify the objects, people, activities, and actions that make the child smile and laugh?		
4. Identify the objects, people, activities, and actions that are especially exciting to the child?		
5. Identify the child's preferences for different objects, people, activities, and actions?		
6. Identify the objects, people, activities, and actions that the child chooses most often?		
7. Identify the objects, people, activities, and actions that the child spends the most time with or doing?		
8. Identify the objects, people, activities, and actions that the child works hard at doing?		

## Everyday Learning Activity Checklist

<p>This checklist includes questions you can use to help a parent identify and select everyday family and community learning activities that would provide a child interest-based language learning opportunities. The checklist includes indicators for ensuring the most appropriate everyday activities are selected as sources of language learning opportunities. Following your interactions with a parent, complete the checklist by indicating if you did (<b>Yes</b>) or did not (<b>No</b>) have the opportunity to help the parent use the practices.</p>		
<b><i>Did you help the parent...</i></b>	Yes	No
1. Identify the family and community activities that are the child’s everyday life experiences?		
2. Identify those family activities that do or could provide the child interest-based language learning opportunities?		
3. Identify those community activities that do or could provide the child interest-based language learning opportunities?		
4. Select interest-based family and community activities that provide many different kinds of interest-based language learning opportunities?		
5. Select interest-based family and community language learning activities that do or could happen often?		
6. Select interest-based family and community learning activities where each activity provides lots of different language learning opportunities?		
7. Select interest-based family and community learning activities that are especially likely to help the child practice emerging language abilities and develop new ones?		
8. Select interest-based family and community activities that allow the child to try to use language in different ways?		

## Increasing Everyday Child Learning Opportunities Checklist

This checklist includes questions you can use to help a parent increase the *breadth* and *depth* of interest-based everyday child language learning opportunities. The checklist includes indicators for increasing the number, types, and quality of interest-based everyday language learning opportunities. Following your interactions with a parent, complete the checklist by indicating if you did (**Yes**) or did not (**No**) have the opportunity to help the parent use the practices.

<b><i>Did you help the parent...</i></b>	Yes	No
1. Use a reminder list, calendar, or other kind of activity schedule to provide the parent a way of ensuring a child experiences interest-based everyday language learning activities?		
2. Increase <i>how often</i> the child gets to participate in interest-based everyday language learning activities?		
3. Increase the <i>number</i> of interest-based everyday child language learning activities?		
4. Increase the <i>variety</i> of interest-based everyday child language learning activities?		
5. Increase the <i>number</i> of child language learning opportunities <i>in</i> any one family or community activity?		
6. Increase the <i>variety</i> of child language learning opportunities <i>in</i> any one family or community activity?		
7. Increase participation in those activities that occur frequently enough to provide lots of child language learning opportunities?		

## Caregiver Responsive Teaching Checklist

This checklist includes questions you can use to help a parent understand how to use responsive teaching for supporting and encouraging child language learning in interest-based everyday activities. The checklist includes those features of responsive teaching that are most likely to increase child language in the context of interest-based everyday learning activities. Following your interactions with a parent, complete the checklist by indicating if you did (*Yes*) or did not (*No*) have the opportunity to help the parent use the practices.

<b><i>Did you help the parent...</i></b>	Yes	No
1. Engage the child in interest-based family and community language learning activities?		
2. Provide the child time to initiate interactions with people or objects in the activities?		
3. Pay attention to and notice when and how the child uses or tries to use language in interactions with people and objects in the everyday activities?		
4. Respond promptly and positively to the child's language use in ways that match the amount, pace, and intent of the child's behavior?		
5. Respond to the child's language use with comments, joint interaction, and gestures to support child engagement in the activity?		
6. Respond to the child in ways that encourage the child to use language in new and different ways?		
7. Use different materials or arrange the environment to encourage the child to use language in new and different ways?		
8. Encourage the child to elaborate on his or her language in ways that are increasingly more complex?		
9. Provide the child frequent opportunities to use and practice newly learned language abilities in the everyday activities?		

## Caregiver-Mediated Child Learning Evaluation Checklist

This checklist includes questions you can use to help a parent assess the benefits of efforts to provide his or her child interest-based everyday language learning opportunities. The checklist is used to ensure your interactions with a parent involve the parent's judgments of the benefits of interest-based, everyday child language learning. Following your interactions with a parent, complete the checklist by indicating if you did (**Yes**) or did not (**No**) have the opportunity to help the parent assess the consequences of using the practices.

<b><i>Did you help the parent...</i></b>	Yes	No
1. Determine if the child had the opportunity to participate in many different family or community activities providing language learning opportunities?		
2. Determine if the child had chances to use language in different ways in any one family or community activity?		
3. Determine if the child initiated using more language in interactions with people and objects in the everyday activities?		
4. Determine if the child displayed a greater variety of communicative behaviors in the everyday activities?		
5. Determine whether the child used more complex language in interactions with people and objects in the everyday activities?		
6. Determine whether the child smiled, laughed, or showed enjoyment in response to his/her accomplishments using language during everyday activities?		
7. Determine those parenting behaviors that supported and encouraged child language learning in the activities?		
8. Determine which aspects of their provision of interest-based child language learning opportunities were most gratifying to the parent?		
9. Recognize the important role the parent had in providing his or her child interest-based language learning opportunities?		
10. Use the evaluative information to change the everyday activities used for interest-based language learning?		