



Foundations for an Evidence-Based Approach to Early Childhood Intervention and Family Support

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Abstract

Sources of information constituting the foundations of an integrated approach to early childhood intervention and family support are included in this *CASEmaker* bibliography. The integrated approach has theoretical, conceptual, operational, and performance foundations that, taken together, insure interventions with children, parents, and families have capacity-building characteristics and consequences. Research on different aspects of the integrated approach to early childhood intervention and support constituting the focus of the integrated framework has produced evidence supporting the validity of the model.

This *CASEmaker* bibliography includes selected references to an approach to early childhood intervention and family support that aims to strengthen and build child, parent, and family capacity and competence (Dunst, 2000, 2004). The integrated model is shown in Figure 1. According to this approach, early childhood intervention and family support are defined as the provision and mobilization of children's learning opportunities, parenting supports, and family and community resources in a family-centered manner. The intersecting and overlapping elements of the model include the contexts for children's everyday learning opportunities (activity settings), the methods and procedures for promoting child competence (development-enhancing parenting styles and practices), and the experiences afforded parents strengthening existing and promoting new parenting competence (participatory opportunities).

The integrated framework has theoretical, conceptual, operational, and performance foundations that, taken together, provide an approach for using theory and research to inform practice in ways that support and strengthen child, parent, and family capacity (see e.g., Dunst, 1999). The model differs from other approaches to early childhood intervention and family support by its explicit focus on child, parent, and family *capacity building* as the major outcome for measuring success. The *Prescription for Practice* lists key sources of information that readers should find helpful in developing a better understanding and appreciation of the key characteristics of early childhood intervention and family support constituting the focus of the integrated framework.

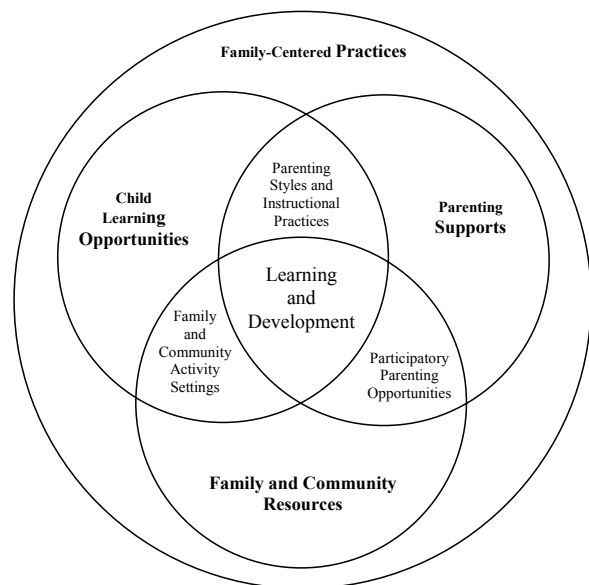


Figure 1. Integrated Framework for Practicing and Studying Early Childhood Intervention and Family Support

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Rx Prescription for Practice Rx

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Theoretical Foundations

The integrated framework draws from a number of sources of information providing the theoretical foundations for a capacity building approach to early childhood intervention and family support. The framework uses *ecological* and *social systems* theory for understanding how different intervention processes (practices) influence and contribute to human growth and development. Major sources of information about the theoretical foundations for the integrated framework include:

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Conceptual Foundations

The implementation of the integrated model is accomplished using a capacity-building "world view" that provides the foundation for the approach to early childhood intervention and family support constituting the focus of this *CASEmaker* (see especially Dunst, 1995; Dunst & Trivette, 1997). The conceptual foundations for the integrated framework draw from key characteristics of *promotion, empowerment, strengths-based, resource-based, and family-centered models*, with a special emphasis on how these approaches support and strengthen human functioning.

Promotion Models

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- Empowerment Models**
- Cochran, M., & Woolever, F. (1983). Beyond the deficit model: The empowerment of parents with information and informal support. In I. Siegel & L. Laosa (Eds.), *The empowerment of parents with information and informal support* (pp. 225-246). New York: Plenum.
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- Strengths-Based Models**
- Asinwall, L., & Staudinger, U. (Eds.). (2003). *A psychology of human strengths: Fundamental questions and future direction for a positive psychology*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Curran, D. (1983). *Traits of a healthy family: Fifteen traits commonly found in healthy families by those who work with them*. Minneapolis, MN: Winston Press.
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- van Lieshout, C. F. M., & Heymans, P. G. (Eds.). (2000). *Developing talent across the life span*. Hove, England: Psychology Press.
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- Kretzmann, J. P., & McKnight, J. L. (1993). Building communities from the inside out: A path toward finding and mobilizing a community's assets. Chicago, IL: ACTA.
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Family-Centered Models

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Operational Foundations

Major sources of information about the key characteristics of the operational foundations of the integrated framework are included in this section of the bibliography. These different but procedurally congruent kinds of practices provide the foundations for ensuring that child, parent, and family interventions have capacity building and competency enhancing consequences (see e.g., Dunst & Trivette, 1996; Dunst, Trivette, & Deal, 1994; Trivette, Dunst, & Hamby, 1996).

Child Learning Opportunities

- Dunst, C. J., Bruder, M. B., Trivette, C. M., Hamby, D., Raab, M., & McLean, M. (2001). Characteristics and consequences of everyday natural learning opportunities. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 21*, 68-92.

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Parenting Supports

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- Unger, D. G., & Nelson, P. (1990/1991). Evaluating community-based parenting support programs: Successes and lessons learned from empowering par-

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Family and Community Resources

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Family-Centered Helpgiving

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(Eds.), *Supporting and strengthening families: Vol. 1. Methods, strategies and practices* (pp. 171-186). Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books.

Performance Foundations

The performance foundations of the integrated model include practice indicators that are used as standards and benchmarks for determining the extent to which practices are consistent with those having capacity building characteristics and consequences. Several sources of information that have been useful in developing the practice indicators for the integrated framework are included in this section of the bibliography. Also included are references to scales that have been developed as part of measuring adherence to the practices constituting the focus of the integrated framework practices.

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Conclusion

The integrated framework for practicing early childhood intervention and family support provides one way of culling theory and research and using both for opera-

tionalizing and implementing practices having competency-enhancing and capacity building consequences. The approach “brings together” diverse but conceptually and procedurally consistent sources of information which makes possible model building for understanding the factors, conditions, experiences, and opportunities best suited as “interventions” supporting and strengthening child, parent, and family functioning. This *CASE-maker* include the major sources of information that was used to develop the integrated framework.

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