



Checklists for Promoting Parent- Mediated Everyday Child Learning Opportunities

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This *CASEtool* includes a description of the development and use of *Checklists for Promoting Parent-Mediated Everyday Child Learning Opportunities*. The checklists are based on an approach to early childhood intervention that promotes parents' abilities to provide children interest-based learning opportunities in the context of everyday family and community activities. The checklists can be used by colleagues, supervisors, or coaches to examine the extent to which a practitioner is using evidence-based practices promoting interest-based child learning and the development of a plan for improvements in practices that better mirror research evidence.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this *CASEtool* is to describe the development and use of the *Checklists for Promoting Parent-Mediated Everyday Child Learning Opportunities*. The checklists include practice indicators of key characteristics of a contextually mediated approach to early childhood intervention (Dunst, 2006a, 2006b) based on research evidence on the characteristics of practices associated with child learning and development (e.g., Dunst, Bruder, Trivette, Hamby et al., 2001; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Wachs, 2000). A practitioner who understands, uses, and masters the checklist practices is implementing evidence-based child learning interventions. The reader is referred to Dunst (2006a, 2006b) for additional information about the approach to intervention constituting the focus of the checklist content.

This paper includes an overview of contextually mediated practices, a description of the checklists for promoting parent-mediated everyday child learning opportunities, and guidelines for administering and using the checklists for improving practices. The checklists are included in the Appendix.

CONTEXTUALLY MEDIATED PRACTICES

Contextually Mediated Practices™, or CMP™, is a promotional approach to early childhood therapy and intervention that uses everyday family and community activities as the contexts for children's learning, and child interests as the foundation for involving children in everyday learning activities (Dunst, 2006a, 2006b). A major focus of CMP is promoting parents' abilities to increase children's interest-based participation in a variety of ev-

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everyday activities providing opportunities for child-initiated and child-directed learning. CMP differs from more traditional approaches to early childhood therapy and intervention where practitioners often direct what and how a child learns (see Dunst, Trivette, Humphries, Raab, & Roper, 2001).

The major components of CMP include: (a) the everyday activity settings making up children's family and community lives, (b) children's interests and assets for promoting participation and learning in everyday activities, (c) increased opportunities for practicing existing abilities and learning new competencies, and (d) parent's mediation of children's interest-based everyday learning. The relationships among these different components are shown in Figure 1.

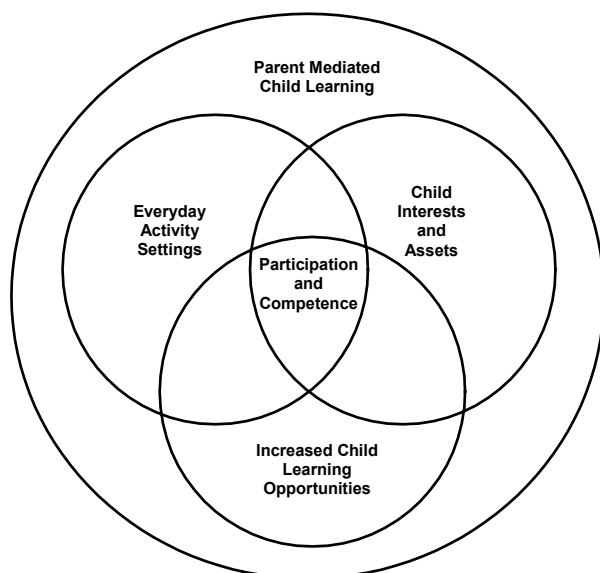


Figure 1. Major components of the contextually mediated practices model for providing young children interest-based everyday learning opportunities.

Everyday Activity Settings

CMP uses everyday activity settings that occur as part of children's family and community lives as the principle contexts for child learning. Activity settings are everyday experiences, opportunities, and events involving children's interactions with the social and nonsocial environment (Dunst & Bruder, 1999; Dunst, Bruder, Trivette, Raab, & McLean, 2001; Farver, 1999). Participation in everyday activity settings provides children opportunities to learn about their own abilities and how those abilities and actions bring about responses from people and objects. Activity settings that are most likely to serve as sources of children's learning opportunities

are ones that are interest-based, engaging, provide opportunities for competence expression and child exploration, and encourage children's recognition of their own abilities to influence their social and nonsocial environments (Dunst, 2000, 2001; Dunst, Bruder, Trivette, Hamby et al., 2001).

Child Interests and Assets

CMP uses child interests as the basis for involving children in everyday activities serving as contexts for child learning, and child assets as the basis for building on a child's existing abilities and promoting new abilities. Child interests refer to a child's likes, preferences, favorites, etc., that influence his/her engagement and expression of competence in everyday activities (Dunst, Herter, & Shields, 2000; Krapp, Hidi, & Renninger, 1992). Child assets include a child's abilities, skills, strengths, capabilities, etc. that he/she uses to engage in interactions with objects and people in different activities.

Increased Learning Opportunities

A primary goal of CMP is increased opportunity to participate in activity settings providing interest-based learning opportunities. Research indicates that any one activity setting is a source of many different kinds of learning opportunities (Dunst & Bruder, 1999). Increasing learning opportunities includes identifying and using a greater number of activity settings that provide opportunities for interest expression, ensuring variety in the kinds of activity settings used as contexts for child learning, and increasing the frequency of child participation in everyday activity settings (Dunst, Bruder, Trivette, Hamby et al., 2001).

Parent-Mediated Everyday Child Learning

In CMP, parents mediate children's learning by increasing the number, frequency, and quality of interest-based child learning opportunities and supporting children's interest-based participation and competence expression in everyday activities. The role practitioners play in CMP is unique. Rather than implementing interventions directly with children, as is often the case with other kinds of early childhood intervention practices, practitioners support and strengthen parents' capacity to understand, recognize, and use interest-based learning opportunities with their children.

CMP includes methods and procedures for promoting parents' abilities to: (a) identify their children's interests (e.g., Dunst, Herter et al., 2000; Dunst, Roberts, & Snyder, 2004), (b) identify everyday activities making up their children's family and community life (e.g., Dunst,

Bruder, Trivette, Raab et al., 2001), (c) use child interests as the basis for selecting activities that can be used as sources of interest-based everyday learning opportunities, (d) increase the number, frequency, and quality of child participation in a variety of activity settings (e.g., Dunst, Bruder, Trivette, Raab et al., 2001), (e) support children's participation and competence expression using responsive interactional styles (e.g., Dunst, Wortman Lowe, & Bartholomew, 1990; Field, 1978; Raab, Wortman Lowe, & Dunst, 1991), and (f) identify and use new learning opportunities for promoting child learning.

Benefits of Contextually Mediated Practices

The expected child benefits of CMP are increased child participation in everyday activity (Shweder et al., 1998) and acquisition of new competencies initiating and sustaining interactions with objects and people in the environment (Dunst, Holbert, & Wilson, 1990; Dunst & McWilliam, 1988). Through interest-based participation in everyday activities, children have opportunities to practice existing skills, acquire and perfect new skills that are useful for participation in a variety of activities (Farver, 1999), understand the relationship between their own behavior and its consequences (MacTurk & Morgan, 1995), and become more involved in socially and culturally meaningful ways in everyday activities (Göncü, 1999).

CONTEXTUALLY MEDIATED PRACTICES CHECKLISTS

Both the Contextually Mediated Practices model (Figure 1) and the research foundations of the model were used to develop checklists for assessing the extent to which practitioners employ practices promoting parent-mediated everyday child learning opportunities (Appendix). The checklists include six sets of indicators based on research evidence on children's interest-based participation in everyday activities (e.g., Dunst, Bruder, Trivette, Hamby et al., 2001; Renninger, 1992); the kinds of everyday activity settings that serve as sources of children's learning opportunities (e.g., Dunst, Hamby, Trivette, Raab, & Bruder, 2000; Dunst, Hamby, Trivette, Raab, & Bruder, 2002); and the adult interactional styles that support child participation, learning, and development in those settings (e.g., Göncü, 1999; Mahoney, 1988; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Wolery & Sainato, 1996). The indicators were developed based on a review of relevant research and were revised based on feedback from practitioners and other professionals considered proficient in

the use of the practices. Each indicator is worded so as to reflect different aspects of practices promoting parents' active use of CMP with their children.

The six sets of indicators include the following elements of parent-mediated everyday child learning opportunities:

- *Identifying Everyday Activity Settings.* This checklist includes practice indicators for identifying the everyday activities making up a child's family and community life that can be used as contexts for interest-based child learning.
- *Identifying Child Interests.* This checklist includes practice indicators for identifying child interests and assets.
- *Selecting Everyday Activities as Contexts for Interest-Based Child Learning.* This checklist includes practice indicators for selecting the everyday activities that will be used as contexts for interest-based child learning.
- *Increasing Child Learning Opportunities.* This checklist includes practice indicators for increasing the frequency, number, and variety of family and community activity settings used as contexts for interest-based child learning.
- *Using Responsive Teaching Strategies.* This checklist includes practice indicators for using caregiver responsiveness for maintaining and supporting children's ongoing interactions in the context of interest-based participation in everyday activities.
- *Creating New Learning Opportunities.* This checklist includes practice indicators for providing children new and expanded interest-based learning opportunities.

The checklists are included in the Appendix. The left hand side of the checklists shows how identifying both child interests and everyday activities are used to select those particular activities that are used as the contexts for interest expression. The right hand side of the checklists shows how responsive teaching strategies are used as part of both increasing children's everyday learning opportunities and creating new child learning opportunities.

COMPLETING THE CHECKLISTS

The six checklists constitute practice standards that operationalize evidence-based indicators promoting parents' provision of interest-based child learning opportunities. For each indicator, the user (e.g., practitioner, supervisor, coach) is asked to indicate whether (Yes/No) the strategies used by a practitioner with a child/family promote a parent's understanding and active use of the practices. Space is provided for noting examples of prac-

tices that can be examined in terms of their consistency or inconsistency with the practice standards. The checklists also include a section for practitioners to develop a plan for making desired improvements in their practices with families. The checklists can be used for a number of different purposes:

- They can help a practitioner understand the key characteristics of evidence-based practices promoting parent-mediated child learning opportunities. For example, two or more practitioners, or a supervisor/coach and practitioner, can use the checklists to generate examples of exemplary practices and examine the practices in terms of how and in what manner they mirror the practice indicators.
- Supervisors or coaches can use the checklists as observational tools for determining the extent to which a practitioner is promoting the use of parent-mediated child learning opportunities. The supervisor/coach can provide the practitioner feedback and guidance about which practices are consistent or inconsistent with the practice indicators and what a practitioner can do to improve his/her practices. The supervisor/coach and practitioner also can use the *Practitioner Planning* section of the checklists to develop plans for changing practices to better mirror the practice indicators.
- Practitioners can use the checklists to conduct a self assessment of his/her use of interventions that promote parents' use of contextually mediated practices. A self assessment can be accomplished by a practitioner reflecting on his/her practices with a family and determining whether the practices are consistent or inconsistent with each practice indicator. The *Practitioner Planning* section of the checklists can be used to develop a plan for changing practices and identifying the supports needed to make practices more consistent with the practice indicators.
- The checklists can be used to monitor use of the practices for program evaluation purposes by aggregating information for a number of practitioners or assessing improvements in one practitioner's use of CMP over time. Consistency in use of the practices is the basis of ascertaining treatment fidelity, and improvement in the use of the practices provides a measure of practitioner mastery of the practices.

CONCLUSION

The *Checklists for Promoting Parent-Mediated Everyday Child Learning Opportunities* include six sets of indicators describing practices that are part of a contextually mediated approach to child learning and development.

This approach focuses on parent's use of child interests as the basis for involving children in everyday family and community activities that serve as sources of learning opportunities. The checklists are useful as benchmarks and standards for determining the extent to which early childhood intervention practices mirror research evidence on child learning and development. They also provide a basis for practitioners, either individually or together with supervisors/coaches, to examine their practices against a set of evidence-based practice standards, increase their knowledge and understanding of the practices, and make improvements in their practices.

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Checklists for Promoting Parent-Mediated Everyday Child Learning Opportunities

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Practitioner Name _____ Date _____

Checklist Descriptions

These checklists include practice indicators of the key characteristics of a contextually mediated approach to early childhood intervention. Contextually Mediated Practices (CMP) use everyday activity settings as the contexts for child learning, and child interests as the foundation for children's participation in everyday learning opportunities. Parents mediate children's learning by increasing interest-based child learning opportunities and supporting children's interest-based participation in everyday activities. A practitioner who supports and encourages parents' use of these practices is using evidence-based child learning opportunities.

The checklists include six sections describing different areas of practices: (a) Identifying Everyday Activity Settings, (b) Identifying Child Interests, (c) Selecting Everyday Activities as Contexts for Interest-Based Child Learning, (d) Increasing Child Learning Opportunities, (e) Using Responsive Teaching Strategies, and (f) Creating New Learning Opportunities. The left hand side of the checklists shows how identifying child interests and everyday activities are used to select those particular activities that are used as contexts for interest expression. The right hand side of the checklists shows how responsive teaching strategies are used as a part of both increasing children's everyday learning opportunities and creating new learning opportunities.

Use of the Checklists

The six checklists include 34 indicators that are the foundation for promoting child learning and development. The checklists can be used for a number of different purposes:

- They can be used to help a practitioner learn and master the key characteristics of evidence-based practices promoting parent-mediated everyday child learning opportunities.
- Supervisors or coaches can use the checklists as observational tools for determining the extent to which the practitioner promotes the use of parent-mediated child learning opportunities. They can be used to provide feedback and guidance about which practices are consistent or inconsistent with the practice indicators, and what the practitioner can do to improve his/her practices. The supervisor/coach can use the Practitioner Planning section with the practitioner to develop plans for changing practices to better mirror the practice indicators.
- A practitioner can use the checklists to conduct a self assessment to examine his/her use of CMP. A self assessment could be accomplished by the practitioner reflecting on his/her practices with a family, and determining whether the practices are consistent or inconsistent with each practice indicator. The Practitioner Planning section can be used to develop plans for changing practices and identifying the supports needed to make practices consistent with the practice indicators.
- They can be used for program evaluation purposes by monitoring consistency in the use of the practices and monitoring improvements over time.

The items below constitute those things parents can do to engage children in interest-based everyday learning opportunities. Determine whether the practices you use with the child and parent encourage or support parent-mediated child learning by indicating whether or not what you do as a practitioner encourages and supports a parent's use of the practices.

| Increasing Child Learning Opportunities | Are the practices with this child/family characterized by the following? | Yes | No | Examples/Notes |
|---|---|-----|----|----------------|
| | Parent identifies and uses procedures for <i>increasing the frequency</i> of child participation in everyday <i>family activities</i> selected as contexts for child learning. | Y | N | |
| | Parent uses procedures for <i>increasing the number</i> of everyday <i>family activities</i> that serve as contexts for child learning. | Y | N | |
| | Parent uses procedures for <i>increasing the variety</i> of everyday <i>family activities</i> used as contexts for child learning. | Y | N | |
| | Parent identifies and uses procedures for <i>increasing the frequency</i> of child participation in everyday <i>community activities</i> selected as contexts for child learning. | Y | N | |
| | Parent uses procedures for <i>increasing the number</i> of everyday <i>community activities</i> that serve as contexts for child learning. | Y | N | |
| | Parent uses procedures for <i>increasing the variety</i> of everyday <i>community activities</i> used as contexts for child learning. | Y | N | |
| | ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ | | | |
| Using Responsive Teaching Strategies | Are the practices with this child/family characterized by the following? | Yes | No | Examples/Notes |
| | Parent gives the child <i>many opportunities to initiate interactions</i> with objects and people in everyday activities selected as contexts for child learning. | Y | N | |
| | Parent takes the child's <i>individual styles and characteristics</i> into consideration with regard to intent to interact. | Y | N | |
| | Parent <i>responds to the child's initiations</i> in ways that maintain what he/she is doing with objects and people. | Y | N | |
| | Parent encourages the child to <i>build upon his/her ongoing behavior</i> with objects and people. | Y | N | |
| | Parent encourages the child to <i>use behaviors that are appropriate</i> (generally accepted) for the situation. | Y | N | |
| | Parent gives the child <i>many chances to produce and practice new behaviors</i> . | Y | N | |
| ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ | | | | |
| Creating New Learning Opportunities | Are the practices with this child/family characterized by the following? | Yes | No | Examples/Notes |
| | Parent recognizes and is aware of the child's <i>emerging interests</i> . | Y | N | |
| | Parent is sensitive to and aware of <i>new learning opportunities</i> in activities selected as contexts for child learning. | Y | N | |
| | Parent identifies <i>new family activities</i> that provide opportunities for expression of new child interests. | Y | N | |
| | Parent identifies <i>new community activities</i> that provide opportunities for expression of new child interests. | Y | N | |
| | Parent provides his/her child <i>sufficient time in everyday activities</i> to exhibit existing competencies, practice emerging skills, and develop new skills. | Y | N | |
| | Parent recognizes and <i>responds to new child competencies</i> exhibited in the context of everyday activities. | Y | N | |

Practitioner Planning

Based on analysis of the practice examples, prepare a plan for making practices more consistent with the practice indicators. Describe the specific improvements in practices that will be made and the action steps that will be taken to improve practices. Identify the particular experiences and opportunities that will be used to promote the practitioner learning how to make the needed changes in practices.

**Identifying Everyday
Activity Settings**

Needed change :

Action Steps (i.e., What will be done; by when):

**Selecting Contexts
for Child Learning**

Needed change :

Action Steps (i.e., What will be done; by when):

**Identifying Child
Interests**

Needed change :

Action Steps (i.e., What will be done; by when):

**Increasing
Child Learning
Opportunities**

Needed change :

Action Steps (i.e., What will be done; by when):

**Using Responsive
Teaching Strategies**

Needed change :

Action Steps (i.e., What will be done; by when):

**Creating New
Learning
Opportunities**

Needed change :

Action Steps (i.e., What will be done; by when):