



Characteristics and Consequences of Everyday Child Learning Opportunities

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Abstract

This bibliography includes selected references to a particular approach to early childhood intervention that uses everyday family and community activities and child interests, respectively, as the contexts for and as determinants of child learning. The main goal of the intervention approach is enhanced child competence and child sense-of-mastery of his or her capabilities.

This *CASEmaker* bibliography includes selected references to different conceptual and operational features of early childhood intervention practices supporting and strengthening child learning and development. The practice characteristics that are the focus of this bibliography emphasize the use of children's everyday family and community activities as sources of development-instigating learning opportunities (Bronfenbrenner, 1992), and child interests as the basis for involving children in everyday activities having development-enhancing characteristics and consequences (Dunst, Bruder et al., 2001). Interest-based participation in everyday family and community activities that support and strengthen child competence is one component of an integrated approach to early childhood intervention and family support (Dunst, 2000, 2004) that guides research and practice at the Center for the Advanced Study of Excellence in Early Childhood and Family Support Practices. The *Prescription for Practice* lists six articles that readers should find particularly helpful in terms of fully appreciating the child learning component of this approach to early childhood intervention.

Everyday Child Learning

Foundations

The conceptual foundations for the early childhood intervention practices promoting child competence include both the person and environmental factors influencing child learning and development (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). Environmental factors include the social and non-social experiences and opportunities afforded children as part of family and community life providing children opportunities for learning context-specific and culturally

valued behavior (Dunst, 2004). Person factors include children's personal interests and assets influencing their participation in everyday activity settings (Renninger, Hidi, & Krapp, 1992). Sources of information about the conceptual foundations for using children's interests and everyday activities as the contexts for learning are described in:

- Dunst, C. J., Trivette, C. M., Humphries, T., Raab, M., & Roper, N. (2001). Contrasting approaches to natural learning environment interventions. *Infants and Young Children, 14*(2), 48-63.
- Dunst, C. J. (2000). Revisiting "Rethinking early intervention." *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 20*, 95-104.
- Dunst, C. J. (2004). An integrated framework for practicing early childhood intervention and family support. *Perspectives in Education, 22*(2), 1-16.
- King, G., Law, M., King, S., Rosenbaum, P., Kertoy, M. K., & Young, N. L. (2003). A conceptual model of the factors affecting the recreation and leisure par-

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Rx Prescription for Practice Rx

The following articles are useful for increasing knowledge and understanding about practices that promote children's interest-based participation in everyday activity supporting and strengthening child learning and development:

- Dunst, C. J. (2004). An integrated framework for practising early childhood intervention and family support. *Perspectives in Education*, 22(2), 1-16.
- Dunst, C. J., Herter, S., & Shields, H. (2000). Interest-based natural learning opportunities. *Young Exceptional Children Monograph Series No. 2: Natural Environments and Inclusion*, 37-48.
- Dunst, C. J., & Bruder, M. B. (1999). Family and community activity settings, natural learning environments, and children's learning opportunities. *Children's Learning Opportunities Report*, 1(2). Available at <http://everyday-learning.info/reports.php>
- Dunst, C. J., & Hamby, D. (1999a). Community life as sources of children's learning opportunities. *Children's Learning Opportunities Report*, 1(4). Available at <http://everydaylearning.info/reports.php>
- Dunst, C. J., & Hamby, D. (1999b). Family life as sources of children's learning opportunities. *Children's Learning Opportunities Report*, 1(3). Available at <http://everydaylearning.info/reports.php>
- Dunst, C. J. (2000). Everyday children's learning opportunities: Characteristics and consequences. *Children's Learning Opportunities Report*, 2(1). Available at <http://everyday-learning.info/reports.php>

participation of children with disabilities. *Physical and Occupational Therapy in Pediatrics* 23, 63-90.

- Krapp, A., Hidi, S., & Renninger, K. (1992). Interest, learning and development. In K. Renninger, S. Hidi, & A. Krapp (Eds.), *The role of interest in learning and development* (pp. 3-25). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Renninger, K. A. (2000). Individual interest and its implications for understanding intrinsic motivation. In

C. Sansone & J. M. Harackiewicz (Eds.), *Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation: The search for optimal motivation and performance* (pp. 373-404). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

- Shelden, M. L., & Rush, D. D. (2001). The ten myths about providing early intervention services in natural environments. *Infants and Young Children*, 14(1), 1-13.

Interest-Based Learning

Practices promoting child participation in learning opportunities include those experiences that are interest-based, engaging, competence producing, and result in a child's sense of mastery about his or her own capabilities. The key characteristics of practices supporting and strengthening children's interest-based learning and development are described in the references included in this section of the bibliography.

- Chen, J.-Q., Krechevsky, M., & Viens, J. (Vol. Eds.). (1998). *Project Zero frameworks for early childhood education: Vol. 1. Building on children's strengths: The experience of Project Spectrum*. (H. Gardner, D. H. Feldman, & M. Krechevsky, Series Ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Dunst, C. J., Herter, S., & Shields, H. (2000). Interest-based natural learning opportunities. *Young Exceptional Children Monograph Series No. 2: Natural Environments and Inclusion*, 37-48.
- Dunst, C. J., Roberts, K., & Snyder, D. (2004). *Spotting my child's very special interests: A workbook for parents*. Asheville, NC: Winterberry Press.
- Guberman, S. R. (1999). Supportive environments for cognitive development: Illustrations from children's mathematical activities outside of school. In A. Göncü (Ed.), *Children's engagement in the world: Sociocultural perspectives* (pp. 202-227). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Nelson, K. (1999, Winter). Making sense: Language and thought in development. *Developmental Psychologist*, 1-10.
- Raab, M. (2005). Interest-based child participation in everyday learning activities. *CASEinPoint*, 1(2). Available at <http://www.fippcase.org/products>
- Renninger, K. A. (1990). Children's play interests, representation, and activity. In R. Fivush & J. A. Hudson (Eds.), *Knowing and remembering in young children* (pp. 127-165). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Renninger, K. A. (1992). Individual interest and development: Implications for theory and practice. In K. A. Renninger, S. Hidi, & A. Krapp (Eds.), *The role*

of interest in learning and development (pp. 361-395). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Sources of Learning Opportunities

The sources and contexts of learning opportunities promoting child learning and development are the everyday activities making up the fabric of a child's everyday life. Everyday activities include experiences, opportunities, and events that happen as part of family and community life and involve a child's interactions with people and objects providing contexts for development-enhancing learning opportunities. Practices promoting the use of everyday activities as sources of child learning opportunities are included in:

- Dunst, C. J. (2001). Participation of young children with disabilities in community learning activities. In M. J. Guralnick (Ed.), *Early childhood inclusion: Focus on change* (pp. 307-333). Baltimore: Brookes.
- Dunst, C. J., & Bruder, M. B. (1999). Family and community activity settings, natural learning environments, and children's learning opportunities. *Children's Learning Opportunities Report, 1*(2). Available at <http://everydaylearning.info/reports.php>
- 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 (Erratum in Vol. 4(4), 25).
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- Dunst, C. J., Hamby, D., Trivette, C. M., Raab, M., & Bruder, M. B. (2002). Young children's participation in everyday family and community activity. *Psychological Reports, 91*, 875-897.
- Dunst, C. J., Herter, S., Shields, H., & Bennis, L. (2001). Mapping community-based natural learning opportunities. *Young Exceptional Children, 4*(4), 16-24.
- Hart, B., & Risley, T. R. (1995). *Meaningful differences in the everyday experience of young American children*. Baltimore: Brookes.

Law, M. (2002). Participation in the occupations of everyday life. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 56*, 640-649.

Outcomes and Benefits

The desired outcomes of children's interest-based participation in everyday learning opportunities are increasingly complex and situationally relevant behaviors influencing a child's increased participation in everyday social and cultural activity (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). The benefits associated with interest-based involvement in everyday activity include: (a) increased child participation in his or her social and cultural groups and settings and (b) child behavioral and developmental progress, including, but not limited to, positive child engagement in activities, peer social interaction, increased communicative competence, positive child behavior, and developmental progress. Some of the benefits associated with children's everyday learning are described in:

- Briggs, J. L. (1991). Expecting the unexpected: Canadian Inuit training for an experimental lifestyle. *Ethos, 19*, 259-287.
- Dunst, C. J. (2000). Everyday children's learning opportunities: Characteristics and consequences. *Children's Learning Opportunities Report, 2*(1). Available at <http://everydaylearning.info/reports.php>
- 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.
- Dunst, C. J., Bruder, M. B., Trivette, C. M., & Hamby, D. W. (in press). Everyday activity settings, natural learning environments, and early intervention practices. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities*.
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- Gaskins, S. (1999). Children's daily lives in a Mayan village: A case study of culturally constructed roles and activities. In A. Göncü (Ed.), *Children's engagement in the world: Sociocultural perspectives* (pp. 25-61). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hart, B., & Risley, T. R. (1999). *The social world of children: Learning to talk*. Baltimore: Brookes.
- Lancy, D. F. (1996). *Playing on the mother-ground: Cultural routines for children's development*. New York: Guilford Press.

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Conclusion

The approach to early childhood intervention constituting the focus of the sources of information included in this bibliography emphasize child-initiated and self-directed learning as the primary means for supporting child competence, confidence, and mastery (Dunst, Mahoney, & Buchan, 1996; Lerner & Busch-Rossnagel, 1981; Nelson, 1999). Parents' and practitioners' roles include the provision and mediation (Klein, 1996) of everyday learning opportunities that provide the contexts for interest expression and competence enhancement. This approach to early childhood intervention differs from other approaches to intervention that are adult-directed where children are asked to produce primarily adult-desired behaviors (see Dunst, Trivette, Humphries, Raab, & Roper, 2001). Sources of information about parents' roles in promoting child participation in interest-based learning activities are included in a companion *CASEmaker* (Wilson, 2005).

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