



# THE INFANT / TODDLER RESPONSIVE CAREGIVER CHECKLIST

Part of Guiding Stars of Duval 2.0

**Resource Guide**

compiled by ELC of Duval



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## Section 1 – About ITRCC

**The Infant/Toddler Responsive Care giving Checklist (ITRCC) developed by the Missouri Quality Rating and Improvement System and adapted for Guiding Stars of Duval 2.0**, is designed to measure care giving practices for groups of children ages **from birth up to age 3 (36 months)** in center based early childhood programs. **A minimum of 3 hours is required for valid assessment** (may be a little under 3 hours in some cases based on the schedule). Further clarification and/or examples in this document for each indicator, are not meant to be all inclusive, but are provided to assist in training purposes for assessors, coaches, and/or caregivers.

Responsive care giving of very young children and infants is focused on each child as they develop a sense of well being, belonging, exploration, communication, and the contributions they make to their world. **The learning of very young children and infants is multifaceted and integrated, rather than divided in separate content areas. Therefore, many of the items on the checklist happen during naturally occurring routines and events, rather than teacher led or directed activities for the whole group.** Responsive care giving is rooted deeply in relationships that are formed among children, families, primary caregivers, and peers.

The indicators in the checklist measure what all caregivers, and all children who are awake experience, rather than just what the lead caregiver does or what one or two children experience. The intent is not that all children participate in the same activities at the same time, but rather that all children have opportunities to experience a wide variety of high quality interactions and experiences throughout the day as they show interest.

*The indicators do not target a single child or a single caregiver but capture the interactions and the responsive care-giving available to all children in the classroom.*

**The points assigned to each indicator are organized around themes of cues (most important in infant / toddler care-giving), routines and activities becoming the basis for language and learning, and support for emotional needs of infants and toddlers.**

### DEFINITIONS:

- **Caregiver:** when the term ‘caregiver’ is noted in the checklist, it is defined as teaching staff responsible for the care of the children. Volunteers, visitors, or ‘floater’ staff who give the regular staff member a short break (less than one hour in the care setting) are not considered caregivers when assessing the group unless that person has an extreme negative interaction with a child or negatively impacts on the overall environment.
- **Cues:** following the infant or toddler’s leads with personal attention and respond based on the child’s interest and need
- **Empathy:** the ability to imagine how someone else is feeling in a particular situation and respond with care.
- **Joint attention:** Situations in which caregivers and infants and toddlers share the **same focus and interest** on an object or topic are referred to as episodes of joint attention.
- **Routines** are repeated, predictable events that provide a foundation for the daily tasks in a child’s life. Teachers can create a predictable routine for infants and toddlers, and they can individualize those routines to match children’s needs for sleeping and eating and to support children’s development of self-regulation. Individualizing a routine means that the sequence is the same but the actions and timing may vary to accommodate the needs of individual children.
- **Toddlers:** includes 1 year olds and 2 year olds

**Section 2 – ITRCC Indicators**

<b>INDICATORS</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Frequency, intensity, and quality of interaction and experience of the children during a 3-hour period – (except #14)		
1. Caregivers recognize and respond appropriately to children’s individualized cues.		
2. Caregivers use daily routines and interactions to form the basis for learning.		
3. Caregivers use joint attention with children during normally occurring routines and activities to demonstrate being responsive to the child’s interests.		
4. Caregivers narrate what is happening to children during routines and activities.		
5. Caregivers verbally help children anticipate familiar routines and events.		
6. Caregivers encourage positive peer interactions through modeling and arrangement of the environment.		
7. Caregivers help children identify and express their emotions.		
8. Caregivers encourage children to notice when their peers are expressing emotion.		
9. Caregivers model empathy or assist children in showing empathy towards their peers.		
10. Caregivers support children’s sense of competence by encouraging them to do things for themselves as they are developmentally ready.		
11. Caregivers encourage children to solve their own problems.		
12. Caregivers provide children with a variety of opportunities to develop their gross motor skills.		
13. Caregivers provide children with a variety of opportunities to develop their fine motor skills.		
14. Throughout daily interactions and naturally occurring experiences, caregivers encourage children to explore developmentally appropriate concepts, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comparing Quantities</li> <li>• One-to-one Correspondence</li> <li>• Volume</li> <li>• Cause and Effect</li> <li>• Object Permanence</li> <li>• Compare and Contrast</li> <li>• Opposites</li> </ul> (Must observe a minimum of 4 different concepts being introduced and the children present should be involved)		
15. Caregivers engage in language play (songs, rhymes, games) with children that introduce listening and responding.		

SCORES SECTION – Mark Y / N under each indicator – only Ys get points															
	I-1	I-2	I-3	I-4	I-5	I-6	I-7	I-8	I-9	I-10	I-11	I-12	I-13	I-14	I-15
Y / N															
Points	3	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2

**TOTAL POINTS (out of 25) \_\_\_\_\_; Percentage: \_\_\_\_\_**

<b>Guiding Stars of Duval – GSOD 2.0</b>				
Infant Toddler Classrooms - Teacher Child Interaction - Responsive Caregiver (ITRC) - 15%				
1.1 _____	1.2 _____	1.3 _____	1.4 _____	1.5 _____
ITRCC Score - 70% to 75%	ITRCC Score - 76% to 80%	ITRCC Score - 81% to 85%	ITRCC Score - 86% to 90%	ITRCC Score - 91% to 100%

Refer to the GSOD 2.0 manual for additional information about how this tool fits into the star ratings calculation.

## Section 3 – Basic Examples for each indicator in the ITRCC

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### 1. Examples of recognizing and responding to individualized cues include:

- An infant rubs her eyes and the caregiver picks her up, asks her if she is tired, and sits in the rocking chair with her.
- A toddler points to a cup on the counter and the caregiver asks if he is thirsty and gives him a drink.
- A two year old is turning away and wiggling when the caregiver is reading a book to her. The caregiver asks if she would rather go play and read the book later.

### 2. Examples of using daily routines and interactions to form the basis of learning include:

- An infant gives the caregiver a toy and the caregiver says, “Emma, thank you for the blue truck!” when saying thank you.
- While washing hands, the caregiver tells a toddler, “We make the soap bubbles to get your hands clean and wash away germs.”
- At lunch, the caregiver helps a two year old count out the number of green beans on his plate, “Uno, Dos, Tres...”

### 3. Examples of sharing joint attention include:

- The caregiver notices an infant gazing at a ball, and rolls it back and forth in front of her while she plays on her tummy.
- A toddler brings a book off the shelf to the caregiver and sits in her lap to read it together.
- A two year old finds a ladybug on the playground and the caregiver squats down to look at it and talk with him about it.

### 4. Examples of narration during routines and activities include:

- As the caregiver is offering an infant a bottle, he says, “Does it taste good? Is it warm in your tummy? Are you getting full?”
- While getting ready to go outside, the caregiver says to toddlers, “We are putting on our coats so we do not get cold.”
- Preparing for lunch, the caregiver says, “Jose, will you help me with the plates? We need 4 plates, 1 for you, 1 for...”
- While getting ready to go home, the caregiver could say “Your socks came off when you were playing; you are getting ready to go home and I am going to put on your socks”, (this could be an example for #5 also).

### 5. Examples of helping children anticipate familiar routines and events include:

- The caregiver tells the child, before picking them up, “I think you need a diaper change. Would you like a clean diaper now?”
- The caregiver says to a toddler, “Maliah, first we will have snack and then we will go outside to play.”
- The caregiver sings a special song to let the older children know that it will be time to clean up in five more minutes.
- During circle time, the caregiver talks with children about what she is going to do by saying, “First we’re going to have circle time, then we’ll wash our hands and have breakfast.”

### 6. Examples of encouraging positive peer interaction include:

- The caregiver places two non mobile infants on a mat with toys next to each other for tummy time and talks with them both.

## Section 3 – Basic Examples for each indicator in the ITRCC

- The caregiver offers two toddlers some pretend tofu and rice and encourages them to offer a cup or chopsticks to one another.
- The caregiver tells a two year old, “I wonder if anyone wants to paint with us, too. Who can we ask to join us at the table?”

### 7. Examples of helping to identify and express emotions include:

- A non mobile infant is reaching for a toy just out of reach and starts to whine. The caregiver says, “Oh Soo Jin, you really want that! You look frustrated right now.”
- A toddler starts to cry when his dad leaves. The caregiver says, “I know you are sad to see daddy go. Would you like to wave at him out the window?”
- A two year old slides down the slide and says, “I did it!” The caregiver says, “You sure did! You must be proud of yourself.”
- An 8-month old infant saw someone opening the door and the caregiver says “You look like you are getting excited because Mommy will be coming soon!”
- A feeding situation with a 10-month-old fussing as he spits out food with a new texture: “Oh, Benji, you weren’t expecting those beans were you? Did that make you feel upset to get something you weren’t expecting? I think you want the apple sauce right now. How about you give these beans a try and we’ll have apple sauce next.”
- As a child runs for a swing, another child reaches it and gets on. The first child begins to frown. The caregiver approaches her and says, “You look a little disappointed about that swing.”
- Emotions – examples - happy, sad, scared, nervous, excited, mad etc

### 8. Examples of encouraging children to notice when their peers are expressing emotion include:

- The caregiver is holding two children in her lap while they look at a book together. One infant smiles and squeals and the caregiver tells the other infant, “He is excited! He loves this book!”
- A child new to the group clings to his grandmother’s leg when she is dropping him off. The caregiver tells another toddler who is staring at the child, “Do you think Aiden is feeling scared? It is hard to come to a new place with new friends.”
- A two year old is playing with a toy lawnmower outside. Another two year old pulls it away from her and she yells “NO!” The caregiver squats down next to the two children and says, “Oh, look. Jasmine is mad that you took the lawnmower away from her.”
- “Mikayla looks sad, I wonder if she wants her blanky and cannot find it; Can we see if it is in the crib?”

### 9. Examples of modeling for children or assisting them in showing empathy towards their peers include:

- An infant falls when cruising while holding onto a shelf. The caregiver picks her up and gives her a hug, saying, “Goodness, Mina, are you okay? You had a big fall, didn’t you?” while other children watch.
- A child lies down on a pillow in the soft area and the caregiver remarks to a toddler nearby, “Elijah looks tired. Would you like to give him this doll and blanket to rest with?”

## Section 3 – Basic Examples for each indicator in the ITRCC

- A child is crying after being pushed by another child. The caregiver says, “Jackson doesn’t like to be pushed. What can we do to make him feel better?” to the two year old that pushed him.
- Describe how others are feeling: “Angelo is sad because he lost his ball.” This helps children become more aware of their feelings and the feelings of others.
- Gently guide the children's play to encourage empathy: “David is hungry too! He needs some snack on his plate!”
- “Chandra, look at Sierra—she’s very sad. She’s crying. She’s rubbing her arm where you pushed her. Let’s see if she is okay.” This helps children make the connection between the action (shoving) and the reaction (a friend who is sad and crying).

### 10. Examples of encouraging children to do things for themselves include:

- Placing a rattle within reach of an infant, but not in his hand; allowing an infant to self feed (even though it is messier) rather than have an adult feed her.
- Paper towels are placed in a convenient location so toddlers can dry their own hands after washing.
- A two year old is allowed to put on his own hat in preparation to go outside.
- Older infant is offered finger foods by the caregiver to allow the infant to feed on his own.
- Older infants and toddlers are encouraged to help pull socks on and off, pull up pants after diapering and help put their arms through sleeves.
- Two year olds are encouraged to brush their teeth after lunch and snacks on their own.
- Two year olds given the responsibility for placing napkins or utensils on the table.

### 11. Examples of encouraging children to solve their own problems include:

- The caregiver notices an infant trying to pick up a toy that she had dropped. The caregiver sits next to her and says, “Can you get it? Reach...” After a few moments, the child gets frustrated and the caregiver says, “I can help” while giving it to her.
- A toddler is attempting to place a square block in the round hole of a shape sorter toy. When he sees that it won’t fit, the caregiver says, “That did not work, did it?” and waits for the child’s response. He looks up at the caregiver after trying again and she says, “Maybe we should try a different one...” and waits for his response.
- A two year old is upset because he got paint on his pants. The caregiver says, “What do you think we should do?” The child says, “I don’t know!” The caregiver says, “Well, we do have water in the sink. Or, you have another pair of pants in your cubby. What would you like to do?”

### 12. Both caregiver language and the room arrangement facilitate gross motor movement. Examples of encouraging children to move their whole bodies by reaching, rolling, crawling, cruising, walking, running, or balancing include:

- The room and outdoor space is arranged so that there are safe, open spaces where children can roll, crawl, cruise, or walk.
- There are gross motor equipment and materials such as mats, activity gyms, climbers, tunnels, scarves, balls, or ride on toys accessible to children of all ability levels.
- The caregiver verbally encourages children while they practice emerging gross motor skills.

## Section 3 – Basic Examples for each indicator in the ITRCC

### 13. Examples of providing children with a variety of opportunities to develop their fine motor skills include:

- There are a variety of fine motor materials accessible to children such as rattles, puzzles, stacking toys, bead mazes, blocks, or large stringing beads. A variety is defined as many objects that encourage a range of abilities.
- Art experiences are provided for children older than 12 months.
- Children are encouraged to pick up pieces of food using first their fingers, then as they get older using a spoon.

**14. Examples are included below for a number of concepts.** Please note that the list of possible concepts that might be introduced to infants and young children during the observation is not comprehensive. If other concepts are observed being discussed between caregivers and children, it can count towards meeting this item. The interactions and/or activities do not need to be planned activities for a group of children, but take place during naturally occurring happenings within the daily routines and activities. The assessor must observe caregivers demonstrating competence in verbalizing these types of concepts to children when responsive to interaction and/or activities. At least 4 different concepts must be introduced or discussed during the observation.

#### a. Comparing Amounts (“more” or “less” or “same”)

- An infant stops drinking her bottle and the caregiver says, “Do you want more?” while making the sign for ‘more’.
- Two children are playing with toy cars and the caregiver says, “Miya, you have two cars and Evan, you have two cars! You both have the same number of cars.”
- The caregiver says, “I have less than you do. Can you pour more into my cup?” when playing with a two year old at the water table.

#### b. One to One Correspondence (matching sets)

- The caregiver says while putting on an infant’s socks, “Here is one sock for this foot and here is one sock for this foot.”
- The caregiver says to the toddler, “How many stuffed animals do we have here?” and points to each one as she counts.
- The caregiver asks a two year old to help set the table for lunch. She helps him place one plate in front of each chair.

#### c. Volume (pouring and dumping)

- The caregiver places a container with objects in it next to an infant. When he dumps them out, she says, “You dumped them all on the mat.”
- Toddlers older than 18 months are provided with opportunities for sand and water play, along with materials to encourage pouring and dumping. Caregivers interact with children while at the sand and water area.
- A simple cooking activity is offered for two year olds so that they can practice pouring and dumping ingredients with a caregiver’s help.

#### d. Cause and Effect

- An infant bangs a rattle on the mat. The caregiver says, “You banged your rattle and it made a loud noise.”
- A toddler pushed a ball down the slide. The caregiver says, “Marquis, you pushed your ball and it rolled down to the bottom.”

## Section 3 – Basic Examples for each indicator in the ITRCC

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- A two year old gave another child a toy and the child smiled. The caregiver says, “You made Lily happy because you shared with her.”

### e. Object Permanence (that things they can’t see still exist when they play peek-a-boo or crawl into the next room to find you)

- The caregiver plays peekaboo with an infant.
- The caregiver sings, “Where is Thumbkin?” with a toddler.
- A caregiver and two year old discuss how Mommy is at work and she will come back in the afternoon.

### f. Compare and Contrast

- Toys with different textures are given to infants to feel or mouth. The caregiver talks about the toy’s attributes such as “smooth, bumpy, and soft”.
- A couple toddlers and the caregiver explore “feely bags” where familiar objects are in a bag and the children stick their hand in and talk about how it feels. The caregiver asks them what it feels like and if the items feel the same or different.
- The caregiver talks with a small group of two year olds about their pets. She points out that some children have dogs, others have cats, and others do not have animals at home.

### g. Opposites

- The caregiver points out the black and white shapes in the board book for an infant.
- The caregiver encourages the toddlers to first run fast and then walk slowly while playing outside.
- The caregiver talks with a two year old about the weather being rainy yesterday, but sunny today.

## 15. Examples of language play with children that introduce listening and responding include:

- The caregiver says, “Ma Ma Mommy” to an infant when she babbles “mama mama”.
- The caregiver singsongs a rhyme with the children and encourages them to repeat the rhyming words.
- The caregiver sings, “Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes” and encourages the children to join in.

## Section 4 – Infant Toddler Development & Responsive Care-giving process

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### Infant and Toddler Basics: Development during the First Three Years

Responsive care-giving involves the creation of safe, structured environments with predictable routines and interesting materials to explore, and sensitive, caring, and dependable interactions with consistent adult caregivers. The nurturing, protective, and stable relationships that infants and toddlers need with adults are constructed through daily interactions between young children and their parents and other caregivers. Positive interactions with primary caregivers help young children organize their emotional responses and behavior, develop secure attachments, and resolve interpersonal conflict in healthy ways.

Brain development research indicates that the degree of responsive care-giving that children receive as infants and toddlers positively affects the architecture of the brain itself, thereby promoting healthy development.

Between birth and age three, children rapidly achieve many important milestones that create the foundation for later growth and development. Early in life, babies depend on others to meet their needs for safety and security. When infants receive warm, consistent care and attention from adults, they are able to establish a sense of trust in the world. They learn that caregivers will feed them, change them, bathe them, and play with them. This trust serves as an important first step for children's development during the toddler years, a time when children establish independence by exploring their environment. If toddlers trust their caregivers and use them as a secure base from which to explore, they are more confident in their efforts to learn about the world.

Responsive caregivers use every opportunity to 'get in tune' with the infant or toddler. It is rooted deeply in relationships that are formed among children, families, primary caregivers and peers.

Providers and caregivers need to understand that babies' and toddlers' physical, social emotional, language and cognitive development are inter-related. Providers also need to be culturally competent in order to help babies and toddlers understand and develop their sense of identity. Incorporating the home cultures and languages of babies and toddlers in child care settings including the use of familiar music, materials, practices and customs, can create positive early learning experiences.

## Section 4 – Infant Toddler Development & Responsive Care-giving process

Responsive care starts with the ability to recognize, read, and interpret cues from infants, toddlers, and twos. It is care that responds positively to a child's own needs and signals and helps the child build tolerance for stimulation and new experiences gradually. .

### The Responsive Process

- **Watch:** Before you engage with a child, watch him. Being a good observer helps you to connect with the baby. The more we observe the ways that an individual child interacts with people and his environment, the better we can understand his emotional signals and get to know his personal style.
- **Ask:** While you play with the child, ask yourself what messages is she sending? Look at all aspects of what she is saying; through her facial expressions, sounds, gestures and movements. What is it that she wants you to do? How could you participate in what she is trying to do or to learn? Ask the infant/toddler questions, what would you like? Or is this right? Then observe his response. Express emotions, be excited and be available.
- **Adapt:** Take some time to reflect on various interactions that you have with the child. Think about what her goals may have been while she played? What did she see, hear and respond to? How could you support her learning processes? What could you say or do? What materials could you offer her to further her exploration? In this way, you can modify your actions according to her needs.

**How caregivers talk is at least as important as how much they talk.** When adults expand and repeat children's words, language development improves. Why? Infants and young children best understand, and best use, the language they hear if they can connect it to specific objects or activities. The more an adult can respond to an infant's gaze with related language instead of redirecting the child's attention elsewhere, the more easily the infant can make connections between concepts and words. It is believed that this type of speech supports word learning by lowering the cognitive load (i.e., how much information a child has to sort through about her environment) on a child and helping her connect words to the world around her.

**High-quality child care environments where care-givers look for opportunities to engage in episodes of joint attention and are responsive to the cues of infants and toddlers, have been shown to be tied to higher rates of language acquisition.**

## Section 4 – Infant Toddler Development & Responsive Care-giving process

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### **Love, Learning, and Routines**

For most of us, our lives involve a series of patterns—routines we perform almost every day, like stopping at the same place each day for coffee on the way to work. This is also very true for babies and toddlers. While we play a part in creating routines in our children's lives, we may not fully realize the role they play in young children's development.

### **Routines help babies and toddlers learn self-control.**

Consistent routines, activities that happen at about the same time and in about the same way each day, provide comfort and a sense of safety to young children. Whether it is time to play, time for a snack, a nap, or a loved one to return, knowing what will happen next gives babies and toddlers, security and emotional stability. It helps them learn to trust that caring adults will provide what they need. When children feel this sense of trust and safety, they are free to do their "work," which is to play, explore, and learn.

### **Routines can bring you and your child closer together and reduce power struggles.**

Stable routines allow babies and toddlers to anticipate what will happen next. This gives young children confidence, and also a sense of control. Routines can also limit the amount of "no's" and behavior corrections you need to give a toddler throughout the day, since your child can better predict what should happen next: "I know you want a cracker. But it is clean-up time now. Remember, after clean-up, it is snack-time."

### **Routines guide positive behavior and safety.**

Routines are like instructions—they guide children's actions toward a specific goal. Routines can be used for many reasons, but two of the most important are ensuring children's health and safety, and helping children learn positive, responsible behavior. For example, children wash hands before they have snack, or must hold an adult's hand when crossing the street.

### **Routines support children's social skills.**

As babies grow, they come into contact with more people and begin to learn patterns and routines for social interaction. Greetings, good-byes, and chatting with others are examples of routine interactions that teach social skills. These interactions are also opportunities to help our children develop language skills.

Play-time and mealtime are two routines that are very social times for children and caregivers alike. Through talking, taking turns, sharing toys, learning to wait, and helping others during these activities, young children learn important social skills that will help them later on in school.

### **Routines help children cope with transitions.**

Depending on your child's temperament, transitions between activities may be easy or more difficult. Going from play to lunch and lunch to nap can be challenging. Routines can help make transitions easier.

Routines provide the two key ingredients for learning: relationships and repetition.

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## Section 5

# Strategies for Responsive Care-giving, Interactions, and Communication

Reference Source: Juniper Gardens Children's Project – University of Kansas

Individual Growth and Development Indicators for Infants and Toddlers

### What this section covers

In this section, you'll read about different strategies that promote responsive care-giving, effective teacher-child interaction, and communication and language development of infants and toddlers. ***The teachers may already be using some of these strategies.*** This section also defines these effective strategies and describes why they are important for helping young children develop stronger communication skills. It also provides examples of how these strategies may be used across program routines and activities such as playtime, clean-up time, book reading, circle time, mealtime, and diapering.

### Why is responsive care-giving and promoting communication important?

Responsive care-giving and promoting communication & language development in infants and toddlers are important for many reasons. Research has shown that greater language exposure and use ...

1. Promotes appropriate social interaction
2. Predicts greater vocabulary size at age 3 and beyond
3. Predicts reading and language skills by 3<sup>rd</sup> grade
4. Predicts Kindergarten readiness
5. Helps to prevent problem behavior

***Talking to children is very important. It helps young children to become better communicators, to become better prepared for school, and to develop the communication skills to build friendships.***

Although each strategy is described individually, using a variety of strategies simultaneously will provide children with many varied opportunities to interact with the caregiver and to practice communication skills. The coordinated use of these strategies will set the stage for responsive care-giving and benefit children as they develop, grow, and learn.

### How to use this section:

Each targeted communication-promoting strategy is organized to provide the following information:

1. Definition and description of the strategy
2. Information about why the strategy is important
3. Description of how the strategy may be used
4. Examples of using the strategy with infants and toddlers at the pre-word stage of communication
5. Examples of using the strategy with infants and toddlers at the single and multiple-word stage of communication.

## Section 5

# Strategies for Responsive Care-giving, Interactions, and Communication

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## ARRANGING THE ENVIRONMENT

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### **What is Arranging the Environment?**

- Structuring the physical environment of the classroom to promote opportunities for children to communicate more frequently throughout the day.
- Promoting social interactions to provide opportunities for frequent communication throughout the day. Arranging a developmentally appropriate social environment to provide a setting for children to actively engage in a wide variety of communication and interaction-promoting activities.
- Following a regular schedule of activities throughout the day and establishing routines that become familiar to children. (Infants must have individualized schedules).

### **Why is Arranging the Environment important?**

- The physical and social structure of the classroom affects the way children learn and how they relate to one another. A well-organized classroom can facilitate learning and social interactions. Children will be more likely to communicate about something they can see, feel or find easily.
- The arrangement of the physical and social environment can help children develop cooperation and independence and promote skill and concept development.
- Having and following daily routines helps children become more independent and develop a sense of knowing what to expect throughout the day.
- Transitions are often a bit hectic for children, but can be excellent teaching opportunities. Structuring transitions by using a song or a game can help children move more easily from one activity to another and gives them an opportunity to practice communicating.

### **Ways to Arrange the Environment**

- Room arrangement should encourage children to initiate communication about things they need, want, or find interesting. For example, pictures of children and their families posted on the walls promote communication about them.
- Plan a range of developmentally appropriate activities designed to enhance language development and positive interactions.
- Identify toys, materials, and activities that children play with or show an interest in, and include these in the physical arrangement of the classroom.
- Talk to children about what is planned for the day and about any special activities that may occur.
- Structure transitions to avoid having children simply “wait” without having anything to do. Children often have difficulty sitting or standing still for even a short time.

## Section 5

# Strategies for Responsive Care-giving, Interactions, and Communication

## ARRANGING MATERIALS AND THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- Rotate toys so that children have opportunities to play with a wide variety of toys
- Display toys/materials at a height accessible to children. They may then choose toys of interest to them and be more likely to talk about these preferred toys.
- Place some preferred toys out of reach, but within view, so that children may need to communicate their requests for toys.
- Provide some duplicates of toys and materials (e.g., enough musical instruments for each child to have one) to promote social interaction and positive social behavior.
- Arrange specific play areas (e.g., cause-effect toys, dramatic play area, manipulative play area, book area) in an enticing and engaging manner. Partially setting up the area gives children a “starter” activity to expand and talk about.
- Structure multiple activities so that children can participate in a play activity alongside one another. Then, encourage children to notice one another during play activities (e.g., “Look, Alex has a ball!”).
- Label shelves and containers with pictures of the materials so children know where materials belong. This will help to promote communication and early literacy.
- Display pictures of children, family members, and teachers on the wall at children’s eye level to promote interest and communication.
- Place pictures on the walls of the diapering area to promote interest and provide a context for communication.
- Place each child’s photo on a chair so they may find their seats at snack.
- Cut out familiar pictures from magazines to make a picture book or a poster to talk about.
- Structure a quiet book reading area away from noisier areas of the room.
- Have books available for children to look at on their own throughout the entire day.
- Place books on low, accessible shelves and place some books out during free-play. Let the infants play with books, chew on them, or bang them.
- Provide opportunities for independent ‘reading,’ and read aloud to small groups of interested children. During shared book reading, allow children to take turns identifying pictures and turning the pages, and respond to their communication.
- Read some books that are repetitive and predictable and may allow children to participate in the ‘reading’ (e.g., “Brown Bear, Brown Bear”).

**Section 5****Strategies for Responsive Care-giving, Interactions, and Communication**

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**ARRANGING THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT**

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- Place mobile and non-mobile children such that they are able to observe and interact with one another.
- Adults should be able to interact with the infants and toddlers such that they are directly facing the child and seated at child's eye level during routine and group activities (e.g., snack, circle).
- Use unexpected events or silly comments to promote communication.
- Structure multiple activities so small groups of children can play together.
- Encourage children to notice one another during play activities by saying, for example, "Connor has the dinosaurs, they're eating the food."
- Ask questions during book reading, and allow each child an opportunity to respond.
- Comment positively on children's responses and encourage children to do the same.
- Within play activities, establish some sound/phrase to pair with a specific play action, then use the sound each time the play action occurs.
- For example, if a child puts a hat on the adult's head, let the hat fall off and say, "Off." Then, repeat the routine several times to allow the child to imitate the sound.
- If a toddler is cleaning up by putting farm animals into a box, say "Good night, horse; good night, cow," etc. Then, repeat the routine several times to allow the toddler to imitate the phrase.

## Section 5

# Strategies for Responsive Care-giving, Interactions, and Communication

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### STRUCTURING DAILY ROUTINES AND TRANSITIONS

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Design, post, and follow a specific daily routine. The routine may be shown through pictures and words of daily activities. This allows children to anticipate, prepare for, and label upcoming activities. The care provider may refer to the picture schedule frequently throughout the day. (Infants would have individualized schedules).

Plan times during the day to talk about the day's schedule. During circle time, you may talk with children about what you are going to do by saying, for example, "First we're having circle, then we'll wash our hands and have breakfast."

When a transition from one activity to another is going to happen, give children a warning. For example, "In two minutes we are going to clean up." Thus, children will anticipate and will be better prepared for you to say it is time to clean up.

Avoid having children "wait" during transition times. Waiting means sitting or standing still without having anything to do, and this is often difficult for children to do for even a short moment. If children must wait during transition times, provide some activity. For example, sing songs with the children, encourage them to acknowledge one another or hold hands, play guessing games, or give them some simple manipulative toy.

Use predictable routines for clean up, diapering, transitions to outside, etc. The routines may include the use of some clearly marked opener/closer, such as a song. For example, "This is the way we go outside, go outside, go outside, this is the way we go outside, when it's time to play."

Sing songs during diapering, clean up, or transitions between activities and use these songs to teach language. For example, "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes" or the "Clean Up" song.

During routine care activities such as diapering and dressing, place clothing items in silly or unexpected places (e.g., place a mitten on the child's foot, a shoe on the child's hand). This is likely to draw comments from the child.

Try to set a regular time for book-reading and story time, and stick to those times each day. In addition, provide opportunities for independent 'reading' at other times. During shared book reading, allow children to take turns identifying pictures and turning the pages, and respond to their communication.

## Section 5

### Strategies for Responsive Care-giving, Interactions, and Communication

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#### PROMOTING COMMUNICATION WITHIN DAILY ROUTINES

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The predictability of routines helps children to learn what is expected during different activities and how to behave during those activities. When routines, such as mealtimes, nap times, separating from a parent, and toileting have built-in consistently, children learn to behave in a way that is appropriate for the routine. A goal in having predictable routines is to create a nurturing, flexible, and positive environment in which children can begin to explore.

Daily routines provide wonderful opportunities for children to learn more about themselves, their environment, and other people. Children's learning occurs in informal activities as much as in formal instruction.

Hand washing, toileting, mealtime, and naptime are some of the many routines that occur daily and are repeated throughout the day. Because of the regularity and predictability of these routines they are often carried out in a manner that may not take advantage of the natural teaching opportunities they present. It is easy for them to become - well, boring. Routines can become learning activities when some time is taken to plan for what might be taught during such routines.

As children develop, routines also need to change to match the child's level of development. For example, new songs and games may be introduced, talk can become more complex. It is important to build opportunities for flexibility and occasional surprise into routines and activities so that children find them new and interesting.

## Section 5

# Strategies for Responsive Care-giving, Interactions, and Communication

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## FOLLOWING CHILD'S LEAD AND RESPONSIVENESS

looking closely at the child's cues, following a child's lead, and responding appropriately to the child's interests and needs

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### What is Following a Child's Lead?

- Noticing what a child is interested in, looking at, playing with, and talking about.
- Using that interest to provide opportunities for communication.
- Attending to and responding to infants and young children when they use sounds, words, and gestures.

### Why is Following a Child's Lead important?

- By following a child's lead, you are responding to the child's actions and communications.
- A child's attention is greater to objects or activities of the child's choosing than of the teacher's choosing. For example, names of objects are much easier to learn if a child is already attending to the objects.
- By following the child's lead, you increase the chances that the child will be interested in communicating or talking about his or her toys or activities.
- When adults follow children's leads, children are more likely to initiate communication, and may be more likely to want to communicate with the adult in the future.
- Children are more likely to want to communicate and engage in longer "conversations" when adults follow their lead.
- The more opportunities a child has to interact with adults who are following their lead, the more opportunities there will be for teaching and engaging in communication.

### Ways to Follow a Child's Lead

- First, notice what the child is doing, playing with, looking at, or talking about.
- Follow a child's lead by commenting, labeling, describing, expanding, imitating, or asking questions about a child's toys or activities.
- Join in a child's play and follow their lead in that activity. For example, if a child is naming the characters in a book, the adult should follow the child's lead in this activity rather than try to redirect the child to name the colors.
- Let a child direct your play together. Ask the child about his or her activity, and how you should play. For example, when painting, ask, "What should I paint?"
- If a child does not answer your question, answer it yourself. If you ask, "What color is that?" and the child does not answer, answer that question yourself. "It's red."
- When a child is not engaged in an activity, present him/her with a couple choices. Base those choices on activities in which the child has shown interest in the past. Then, follow the child's lead in the chosen activity. Offering choices gives the child the opportunity to communicate his/her interest to you. Following the child's lead is being responsive to his/her interests.

## Section 5

# Strategies for Responsive Care-giving, Interactions, and Communication

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## FOLLOWING CHILD’S LEAD AND RESPONSIVENESS

### For Children Using Single Words

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#### **PLAY ACTIVITIES**

Describe the child’s actions as he or she is doing them or actions that you are helping the child do.

- “Jumping up and down.”
- “Pushing the child’s wheelchair across the room”

Label the objects with which a child is playing.

- “That’s such a sweet teddy bear.”
- “You have a fire truck.”

Ask open-ended questions about a child’s interests.

- “What are you building?” (or, coloring, cooking, playing, etc)
- “Who is swinging in the swing?” If the child does not answer, or offers a partial answer, then answer the question yourself. “LEO is swinging.”

Allow children to direct your activities.

- If a child is lining up the blocks to make a road, join in the activity and build the road. Try to avoid directing the child to build a tower.
- If a child is painting dots, allow the child to continue doing this rather than directing the child to paint a picture.

#### **DAILY ROUTINES**

Talk about the foods children are eating at snack or lunch time.

- “Krystal is eating all her goldfish crackers.”
- “What are you eating now, Dion?”
- While handing out cups, ask, “What color is your cup, Sam?”

While changing diapers or dressing, notice where children are looking and talk about the focus of their attention.

- “What are you looking at? Are you looking at the plant? Does that look pretty with long leaves?”
- If the child is watching you, comment on what you are doing. “Let’s put on your shirt.” Or, “Now I’m going to wash my hands.”
- “You have sailboats on your diaper. How many sailboats are there? Hmm...I am going to count..”

Imitate what a child says during clean-up. If a child says, “dinosaurs,” you might say, “Yes, we’re picking up the dinosaurs and putting them away.”

#### **BOOK ACTIVITIES**

When a child is looking at books, join in the activity. Offer to read the book, but if the child wants to look at the pictures and turn the pages, allow them to do so. Comment on the pictures, label the characters, and imitate the child’s sounds while looking at books.

## Section 5

# Strategies for Responsive Care-giving, Interactions, and Communication

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### FOLLOWING CHILD’S LEAD AND RESPONSIVENESS

#### For Children Using Single Words and Word Combinations

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#### **PLAY ACTIVITIES**

While playing with dolls, a child places a doll in a bed. Comment by saying, “Baby’s sleeping, night-night baby” and place another doll in the bed. Wait for the child to respond.

A child notices a large construction truck and people working outside the classroom window. Respond by sitting next to the child and saying, “Oh, that’s a big truck. What are they doing out there?” This can open up a conversation about the activities of the workers and their trucks.

While playing outside, watch each child and make one or two statements about his or her activity.

- “You’re climbing UP the ladder, and sliding DOWN the slide.”
- “I am going to lift you from your chair into the swing”
- “You’re pushing the shopping cart. What are you shopping for?”

#### **DAILY ROUTINES**

While setting up their cots for naptime, let children help and comment on their sheets or blankets.

- “You have Barney sheets.”
- “Use your hand to find the side of your cot.”
- “That’s a pretty blanket. What color is that?”

During meals, talk or sign about the foods everyone is eating.

- For example, “What are we having today?” Wait for children to respond, and then continue talking about the food they are eating.
- “I like apples. Where do apples grow?” Wait for children to respond, and then offer, “They grow on trees. Wonder what other foods grow on a tree?”

During clean-up, offer children a choice of which area they would like to clean-up. Ask, “Would you like to pick up the cars or put the books away?”

#### **BOOK ACTIVITIES**

- When a child points to pictures in a book, ask open-ended questions such as, “What are they doing?” “Who is that?” “Where are they going?” or “Why did they do that?” This can open up a lengthy conversation about what they see in the book.
- During circle time, allow children to choose books that you will read together. Let two or three different children make their choices each day as everyone is getting ready to sit down.

**Section 5****Strategies for Responsive Care-giving, Interactions, and Communication**

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**LABELING AND NARRATING THE ACTIVITIES**

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**What is labeling and narrating?**

- Giving words to the actions in which a child is involved.
- Naming or narrating or describing the toys or materials the infant or toddler is playing with.
- Talking or signing about activities or objects in which the child has shown interest.
- Talking or signing about activities in which the caregiver and child are mutually engaged.
- Describing what you are already doing with the infant/toddler during care routines.

**Why are labeling and narrating important?**

- When you label and narrate, you give children opportunities to hear how we talk or see how we sign about our surroundings and our actions, and you teach the correct labels for the actions and objects a child sees or plays with.
- When children hear more words, hear how words are used, and see how people communicate their needs and wants, they will be more likely to use gestures, vocalize, and use words to communicate their needs and wants.
- As children communicate more, they are more likely to get responses from others and will have more opportunities to practice communicating.

**Ways to Label and narrate**

- Name the toys or materials to which the infant or toddler is attending or is using.
- Describe the child's actions as they are doing them or as you are helping the child do them. Be the "narrator" for children's actions.
- Label colors, shapes, sizes, or other descriptors (e.g., in/out, big/small, up/down, open/closed, fast/slow, warm/cold, on top/under, loud/quiet, etc.).
- Talk about what you are doing or what children are doing during daily routines, such as diapering, meals, or clean-up, or other activities.

**Section 5****Strategies for Responsive Care-giving, Interactions, and Communication**

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**LABELING AND NARRATING**For Children Using Sounds or Some Single Words

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**PLAY ACTIVITIES**

- When a child is playing ball, you can say, “I see that you are playing ball and bouncing it so high.”
- When you see two children playing with blocks, you might say, “Wow – you are building a tall tower!” or say, “Uh-oh, the blocks fell down” as the blocks fall.
- During free play, notice what children are doing and say one thing about it. For example, “You’re crawling across the floor!” or “You are trying to stand up!”
- When an infant is playing in a bouncy seat, comment about what he/she is playing with.
- When an infant is positioned near a window, comment on what he/she might see outside the window by saying, for example, “I see a bird flying outside the window!”

**DAILY ROUTINES**

- While changing diapers, you might name the child’s body parts. For example, “Toes,” “Knees,” or “Your tummy.”
- While diapering or changing clothes, describe what you are doing as you do it. For example, “I’m taking your diaper off,” “Here’s a clean diaper,” or “Let’s clean up, then we can go play.”
- During bottle feeding, snacks, or meal times, name the foods. For example, “Yummy apples,” “Spoon,” “Time for a bottle. You must be hungry.”
- While putting on coats to go outside, talk about what you are doing. You might say, “Coats on,” or “Hat on.”
- You might also talk about the pictures on children’s clothing or coats. For example, “You have Spiderman on your shoes,” or “Katie has red flowers on her shirt.”

**BOOK ACTIVITIES**

- Talk or sign about the pictures in books. Some children may not attend to an entire story, but might be more interested in looking at and talking about some or all of the pictures. Describe what characters are doing, with whom they are interacting, where they are going, etc. For example, “The boys and girls are playing ball,” or “That’s so funny. The dog is wearing a hat!”
- While looking at books together, comment on the story as you read it. Rephrase what characters have just said, or reframe what is going on in the story. For example, “The bird is singing. He must be happy.”
- Name the objects to which a child points or help the child point. For example, “That’s a house.”
- Make up stories to go with picture books. For example, when looking at a book containing pictures of people, talk about who the people are, what they are doing, how they feel, etc.

## Section 5

# Strategies for Responsive Care-giving, Interactions, and Communication

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### LABELING & NARRATING

#### For Children Using Single Words and Word Combinations

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#### PLAY ACTIVITIES

While playing in a sand box or sand table, you notice that the children are pouring sand through funnels and from one container to another. You might say:

- “You’re pouring the sand in the bowl.”
- “Deandra has filled her bowl with sand.”
- “The sand feels cool on my fingers.”

During free play, comment on children’s activities and describe what you are doing with the children.

- “You’re building a tall tower!”
- “We’re making some yummy cookies”
- “We’re making music with the drums!”

During finger painting, talk about each child’s pictures. Comment on what you see, such as, “That’s a big tree,” or “It looks like you’re mixing all the colors together.” Label the colors, too. For example, “Alex is using green.”

While outside, comment on children’s actions. For example, “You’re climbing so high,” or “You can run so fast.”

#### DAILY ROUTINES

During the transition time between lunch and nap when children are getting their cots and blankets ready, comment on what children are doing. For example, “Tyler is already done putting his sheet over his cot,” or “Maria has an Elmo sheet.”

At the beginning of meals, name what foods children will be eating. “We’re having noodles and apples.”

Throughout the meal, continue to comment on children’s interests or label food as they eat it. For example, “Sierra has finished her apples,” or “Rabbits like to eat carrots.”

While dressing or diapering, label body parts. For example, point to or touch a child’s knees and say, “Here are your knees.” If a child points to a body part, label it. “Your toes. Those are your toes.”

During clean up, comment on what children are doing. For example, “Oh good, you’re putting all the animals in the box,” or “Devin, you’re finding all of the puzzle pieces.”

## Section 5

# Strategies for Responsive Care-giving, Interactions, and Communication

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### BOOK ACTIVITIES

- When looking at books, you might describe what is going on in the story. Describe the actions of the characters or other elements in the pictures.
- Label the colors or shapes you find in a book. For example, “That’s a red truck,” or “That house looks big.”
- As you look at books together, label the characters’ actions or name objects you see in pictures. For example, “The cat is sleeping on a bed,” or “There’s the dump truck.”

## Section 5

# Strategies for Responsive Care-giving, Interactions, and Communication

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## ASKING OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

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### What are Open-Ended Questions?

- Questions asked in a way that allows children to respond in multiple ways rather than simply answering yes/no or nodding their heads.
- Questions such as what, who, where, how, and why questions.
- Questions that allow more than a simple “yes” or “no” response.

### Why are Open-Ended Questions important?

- Open-ended questions provide multiple and varied opportunities for children to practice communicating.
- Asking open-ended questions allows children to respond with a wide variety of both verbal and nonverbal responses, which may promote sustained and new interactions.

### Ways to ask Open-Ended Questions.

- Ask questions that are related to the child’s play (e.g., “What are you playing?”)
- Ask questions during routine care (e.g., “Where’s your mouth?”)
- Ask questions to allow a child to direct the play or activity (e.g., “Where should we go now?”)
- After asking a question, pause and wait for the infant/toddler to answer. If they do not answer, fill in the answer yourself.
- When using questions with children who may have difficulty learning language, it may be necessary to provide additional support. For example, the adult may provide choices for the child (e.g., “What do you want? Do you want the ball or the blocks?”). Another example includes providing a lead-in cue for the child to respond (e.g., “Where is the ball? It’s under the ...”).

**Section 5****Strategies for Responsive Care-giving, Interactions, and Communication**

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**ASKING OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS**  
**With Children Using Sounds or Some Single Words**

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**PLAY ACTIVITIES**

- Notice what a child is playing with and ask, “What are you doing?” or “What is that?”
- When a child is playing with farm animals, ask, “Where is the horse?” or “can you feel the tail on the horse”
- If a child is looking out the window, ask, “What do you see?”
- When playing with stuffed animals and familiar characters, hold up a character and ask, “Who’s this?”
- As a child holds a piece to a shape sorter, ask, “Where does it go?”
- If a child is playing with noisemakers, ask, “What sound does this make?”

**DAILY ROUTINES**

- During diapering, ask questions about body parts, such as, “Where is your belly?”
- After a routine is well established, pause during the routine and ask, “What’s next?”
- As a child enters the room in the morning, ask another child, “Who’s that?”
- During mealtime, ask, “What are you eating?” or “How’s your snack?”
- When a child is sitting down for a snack/meal, ask, “Who is that next to you?”
- During clean-up time, ask, “Where does this go?” or “Which toy are you going to put away?”

**BOOK ACTIVITIES**

- When a child sits in the book area, hold up two books and ask, “Which book do you want?”
- When looking at books, allow the child to choose where he/she wants to sit by asking, for example, “Where should we sit to look at books?”
- If a child looks at a picture in a book, ask, “Where is the duck?”
- If looking at a photo book, ask, “Who is that?” or “Where’s Sarah?”

**Section 5****Strategies for Responsive Care-giving, Interactions, and Communication**

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**ASKING OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS****With Children Using Single Words and Word Combinations**

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**PLAY ACTIVITIES**

- When starting an activity with a child, ask, “Who should we invite to play with us?”
- During outside play, engage in play with the children and ask questions such as, “Where should we go next?”, “What should we make with the sand?”, and “What should we do with the ball?”
- If a child is playing with blocks or constructive toys, ask, “What are you building?”
- When beginning an art activity, ask, “How are we going to make this kite?”
- After a block structure falls down ask, “Why did it fall down?”
- While a child is completing a puzzle, notice the piece they’re picking up and ask, “What is that?” or “Where does that piece go?”

**DAILY ROUTINES**

- After a child enters the room in the morning, ask, “Which friends did you say hi to?”
- While diapering, ask about body parts, such as, “Where are your ears?”
- During toileting/hand-washing/grooming routines that a child is learning to complete more independently, pause and ask, “What’s next?”
- During mealtime, ask questions such as, “What are you eating?” “How does that taste?” “What is your favorite snack?” and “Who are you sitting next to?”
- During transitions, standing in line, or walking in the hallway, ask, “Who’s in front of you?” “Where are we going?” and “What animal should we pretend to be?”

**BOOK ACTIVITIES**

- Ask about the pictures in the book: “What do you see?” and “Where’s the boy?”
- Ask questions about the main idea of a picture such as, “What’s happening here?” and “What are these animals doing?”
- Ask questions to allow for predictions: “What’s going to happen next?”

## Section 5

# Strategies for Responsive Care-giving, Interactions, and Communication

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## GIVING PRAISE AND POSITIVE ATTENTION

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### **What is Praise and Positive Attention?**

- Making positive comments about a child's behavior and communication
- Encouraging children in what they are doing, such as sharing, playing nicely with other children, following directions, and cooperating with others.

### **Why is using Praise and Positive Attention important?**

- Using positive attention with infants and young children is important for communication development. It reinforces their use of gestures, sounds and words.
- Positive comments, smiles, and nonverbal interactions such as a rub on the back inform the child that they are doing something important.
- When you use positive comments after children use vocalizations or sounds, words, and other methods of communication, a child is more likely to use them again in the future.
- Positive attention for communication and other prosocial behaviors creates more opportunities for children to practice and develop those skills. Negative comments such as, "No!" and "Don't do that!" keep children from wanting to communicate with you and limits their opportunities to practice language.

### **Ways to give Praise and Positive Attention**

- Opportunities to use positive attention and praise are available throughout the entire day. These times include free play, mealtimes, transitions, and routine care such as changing diapers, putting on coats, and washing hands.
- Positive attention can be given for specific behaviors, such as following rules, playing nicely with other children, and helping other children. It should also be given for children using communication with caregivers and other children.
- Notice when a child is using communication to let you know what they want, then give him/her attention and respond to their behavior.
- Positive attention includes giving the child a smile, hug, or pat on the back, or verbally responding to their actions by saying, "You are playing so nicely with your friends" "Thank you for using your words to tell Eli what you want" and "You did a great job helping to pick up your toys."

**Section 5****Strategies for Responsive Care-giving, Interactions, and Communication**

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**GIVING PRAISE AND POSITIVE ATTENTION****For Children Using Sounds or Some Single Words**

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**PLAY ACTIVITIES**

- When a child uses a word or sign to label something, give positive attention by responding to what they have just said and talk about it with them.
- Tell a child how nicely they are playing. For example, “Wow, look at how nice you are playing with the blocks.”
- Give praise when a child gives another child a hug or a soft touch, such as, “Oh, that was so nice of you to give Kyle a hug.”
- Playing with a child gives positive attention.

**DAILY ROUTINES**

- Give a child attention for holding their bottle or cup by themselves by saying, “You are such a big girl, holding your cup all by yourself.”
- For infants, tell them how nicely they are lying while you are changing their diaper, such as, “You are waiting so nicely for me to finish with your diaper.”
- Give positive attention as younger children are learning new skills, such as crawling, walking, or feeding themselves. For example, “Wow, look at you walking all by yourself.”

**BOOK ACTIVITIES**

- Notice when a child is interested in a book and give them positive attention by sitting with the child and looking at it together.
- When a child is looking at a book with you and points to or tries to label the pictures, label and name things with them. For example, “You just pointed to the truck. That’s a big red fire truck.”
- “Look, you are holding a book, let’s read it together.”

**Section 5****Strategies for Responsive Care-giving, Interactions, and Communication**

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**GIVING PRAISE AND POSITIVE ATTENTION****For Children Using Single Words and Word Combinations**

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**PLAY ACTIVITIES**

- Give children positive attention for sharing their toys with other children. For example, “You are sharing your toys so nicely with your friends.”
- Give positive attention when children follow directions. For example, “You put the toys away all by yourself.”
- Give positive attention when children use good manners. For example, “Thank you for saying ‘please’ when you asked for that toy.”
- Give positive attention to children for using their words when they have a problem or need help with something.
- Simply responding to children and continuing a vocal interaction or “conversation” is a form of positive attention.

**DAILY ROUTINES**

- Give positive attention to children for doing things on their own, such as putting their coat on by themselves. For example, “You put on your coat all by yourself, great job!”
- Respond with positive attention when children are eating nicely during mealtimes. For example, “You are using your spoon so nicely to eat your corn.”
- When children are lying quietly during rest time, give them positive attention by rubbing their backs for a little while.
- During transitions, such as lining up to go outside, give positive attention to children who are waiting patiently. For example, “Thank you for standing so nicely with your hands to yourself.”

**BOOK ACTIVITIES**

- Notice when a child is interested in a book and respond with positive attention by sitting with the child and reading it together.
- When a child is sitting and reading a book nicely, let them know that you notice. For example, “You are sitting so nicely with your book; it looks like you really like it.”
- Give positive attention to children when they are sharing their book and reading it with a friend by saying, “Thanks for sharing your book with your friend, that is really nice of you.”

**Section 5****Strategies for Responsive Care-giving, Interactions, and Communication**

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**PROVIDING CHOICES**

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**What is Providing Choices?**

- Structuring the environment in a way that allows children to choose from more than one activity or toy.
- Providing two or more objects or activities for a child to choose from means the child will need to communicate which toy or activity they prefer.
- Using a switch that will allow the child to choose from two or more toys or activities.

**Why is it important to Provide Choices?**

- Providing choices for children throughout the day encourages communication and language development.
- Giving choices allows children to choose an object or activity in which they are most interested.
- By choosing a preferred item, children are more likely to communicate about what they are doing by using sounds, words, or gestures.
- By having more than one object to choose from, children have more opportunities to practice communication and language by talking about things in their environment.

**Ways to Provide Choices**

- In order to provide choices, toys and other classroom materials can be rotated so that children have the chance to play with a variety of toys, and may find them more interesting.
- Present the child with two objects and ask the child to choose one, allowing them to practice communication.
- Give choices only when children really have a choice. For example, “Would you like to play with the cars or the animals,” but NOT, “Do you want to put the toys away before going outside?”
- It is helpful for children at the early language-learning stages to have some visual picture of their choices. When possible, hold up the choices or some visual representation of the choices to which children can respond.

**Section 5****Strategies for Responsive Care-giving, Interactions, and Communication**

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**PROVIDING CHOICES****For Children Using Sounds and Some Single Words**

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**PLAY ACTIVITIES**

- Put a variety of toys out during play times, giving a choice of activities.
- Hold up two toys, a car and a doll, and let the child point to or reach for the object with which he/she wants to play.
- When a child is working on a shape sorter, present two pieces to the child and ask, “Do you want red or blue?”
- When putting music into the CD-player, hold up the CD containers and ask, “Do you want Sesame Street or Raffi?”

**DAILY ROUTINES**

- At snacktime/mealtime, present two options to a child and ask, “Do you want goldfish or apple slices?”
- During diapering, offer a choice of small toys for the child to hold. For example, “Do you want the car or the dinosaur?”
- If possible, allow a child to choose the color of the diapering pad by saying, “Do you want the green pad or the blue pad?”

**BOOK ACTIVITIES**

- Hold up two books and have the child point to or reach for the book he/she wants to look at by asking, “Do you want the animal book or train book?”
- If structuring a book activity, offer a choice of seating. For example, “Do you want to sit on the floor or in a chair?”
- After reading a book, ask the child, “Do you want to read more books or build with the blocks?”

**Section 5****Strategies for Responsive Care-giving, Interactions, and Communication**

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**PROVIDING CHOICES****For Children Using Single Words and Word Combinations**

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**PLAY ACTIVITIES**

- Put a variety of toys out during play times, giving a choice of activities.
- When putting out blocks for playtime, offer a choice of two different kinds by asking, “Do you want the wooden blocks or the duplos?”
- When a child needs some direction in his/her play activity, offer a choice such as, “Would you like to play with the dinosaurs or the puzzles?”
- When structuring an art activity, offer a choice of writing utensils, colors, and/or materials. For example, “Do you want markers or crayons?” or “Which color paper would you like to use?”
- If a child is playing alone, offer him a choice of peers to invite to the activity: “Who should we invite to play? Should we ask Malik and Lily to play with us?”

**DAILY ROUTINES**

- During snacktime/mealtime, allow the child to choose which food he/she would like to serve first by asking, “Would you like the crackers or the apples?”
- During clean-up times, ask the child which toys he/she wants to put away by saying, “Would you like to put away the blocks or the cars?”
- During diapering, offer a choice of songs to sing. For example, “Do you want to sing ‘heads, shoulders, knees and toes’ or ‘wheels on the bus’?”
- Make cards with pictures that represent songs the child knows
- As a child is developing more independence with self-care routines, offer a choice of going alone or with an adult. For example, “Would you like to go potty by yourself or would you like for me to come with you?”

**BOOK ACTIVITIES**

- Make a variety of books available to children throughout the day.
- During circle or small group activities, present 2-3 books for children to choose to read during that time. For example, “Do you want to read ‘There was an Old Lady’ or ‘The Very Hungry Caterpillar’?”
- Have children choose where they want to sit and look at books by asking, “Would you like to sit at the table or sit on a pillow while you read?”

## Section 6 – Bibliography of Supporting Resources

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### Bibliography of Supporting Resources

<http://www.zerotothree.org/public-policy/state-community-policy/nitcci/multidisciplinary-consultant-module-3.pdf>

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