Intervention Strategies Caregivers Use to Support Participation

Building on What Works: Responsive Strategies

The responsive interaction strategies in this list are supports for parent-child engagement and can be useful for embedding a wide variety of targets in routines and play. Building on what the parent already uses and works for the child promotes participation for both. Systematically expanding the strategies as needed can provide options for the parent to use in other routines, to increase opportunities for the child, and also increase independence and diversity.

- **Waiting expectantly and balancing turns:** Gain the child's attention and pause. Use facial expressions and body language that signal that the adult is interested and ready to interact. Always give the child an opportunity to respond to the adult attention and take a turn. Continue the interaction by responding and waiting for the child again. Too many turns from one partner leads to decreased initiation and participation by the other partner.

- **Joining in:** Join the child in looking at or interacting with materials or an activity, (e.g., sit at her level, put your hand out as a request for an object, do what he does) to maximize opportunities for simple interactions that are interest based and directed by the child.

- **Contingent responding:** Respond to all of the child's attempts. After noticing, the caregiver can respond in many ways matched to the child's targets and the setting. Respond to the request or action from the child with a model or expansion of the child's target.

- **Contingent imitation:** Join in and repeat what the child says or does (gesture/action/words) to establish an interaction. Think of it as a "copycat" strategy <u>with the child taking the lead</u>.

- **Label actions/objects:** Use sounds, gestures and words to name objects, to make requests or protest (e.g., reaching toward or pointing to an object, using sounds to label the object and then learning the word). Naming the object and action gives the child experiences that lead to comprehension of language. Label and expand can support learning new gestures and words.

- **Expand:** Repeat the child's communication or motor or play action and add something small and related. Expanding connects what the child already knows and can do to new information or skills. It supports learning through observation and imitation.

- **Balanced turn-taking:** Take turns in the interaction. Respond and wait for the child. Too many turns from one partner leads to decreased initiation and participation by the other partner.

- **Recast:** Repeat child's communication or motor movement in a more correct way. Recasting reinforces both the child's attempts and the caregiver's clear models. Good models are important for child learning. Supporting another turn to practice with more information or adaptation is important to increase accuracy.

- **Set predictable routine:** Responding to child attempts, approximations, and target behavior in a similar manner establishes predictability that allows the child to anticipate what is coming next and to be prepared. This increases independence for the child. Routines can be as simple as using "1-2-3-Go" before letting go of the swing or taking a milk cup to the kitchen sink when snack is over. Routines should have a clear beginning, middle, and ending.

- **Modeling:** Use language or motor behaviors at the child's target level to describe or demonstrate objects and actions; model the behavior you want to see (e.g., if using two hands, model using two hands; if joint attention, model sharing attention and gestures on objects; if two word phrases, use two word phrases).

- **Environmental arrangements:** Be face-to-face with the child on their level and offer a choice of interesting materials as well as materials that provide opportunities for practicing skills (e.g., toys that require turn-taking, toys that require two hands, toys that require wrist rotation). Plan how the materials are available or presented that can support additional turns with interaction and practice on targets (e.g. limit access, organize toys into play schemes).

- **Temptations:** Inadequate materials (child needs to request or physically access more materials), forgetfulness (pretending to forget toothpaste while brushing teeth), in sight out of reach (child needs to request, pull up, move toward an object), assistance needed (child needs to request help or use target motor skills to open).

- **Natural consequences:** The response is the reinforcer. For example, when the child asks for a cookie, he gets a cookie. The cookie is the natural consequence for asking for it. You do not need to say, "good talking."

Extending Support: Strategies for Increasing Frequency and Sophistication

This list of intervention strategies focuses on the individual needs of the child and parent to teach specific targets embedded in routines. We say they are increasing skills because specific attention is directed to the child's acquisition and competence in using the skill. The caregiver may add one or more of these to the Universal strategies in place to increase skills or frequency of practice.

- **Graduated guidance:** Provide the amount and type of assistance that the child needs to complete the targeted behavior and reduce support as the child begins to use the skill (e.g., begin by providing full support for transitioning to sitting, and reduce support as soon as the child begins to acquire the skill). Be careful to fade support as quickly as possible to encourage the child's independence!

- **Least to most prompts:** Provide the least intrusive or supportive prompt possible (e.g., time delay or a task direction) and increase support if the child needs it (for example, if the child does not respond to a time delay to request "help", ask "what do you want" or tell him to "say help"; if the child does not respond to a direction to "turn the water on" to wash hands, increase support by pointing while saying "turn the water on", or use a touch cue moving his arm toward the faucet).

- **Time delay:** Look expectantly at child and wait, providing a nonverbal cue for the child to perform the target behavior. If the child does not respond after 5 seconds, provide a more supportive prompt (e.g., question, direction, touch cue). Cues should be added systematically and faded.

- **Open-ended questions:** Ask the child a question that provides the child an opportunity to independently generate ideas or actions (e.g., "What comes next?" or "Where should we go?")

- **Choices:** Offer the child a verbal or nonverbal choice (e.g., hold up two items and see which the child reaches for; ask the child "play with cars or play-doh?"). Be sure the choices are meaningful.

- **Visual supports:** Visual supports are graphic cues that can be used to support communication, behavior, and use of other new skills. Visual supports may include picture schedules, first-then pictures, rules (e.g., clean up before getting out a new toy), sequences (e.g., hand washing steps, or pictures of how to feed the kitty), or picture systems for communication.

- **Augmentative, alternative communication (AAC):** The use of low and high-tech devices from picture-based systems to computerized speech-output devices that increase opportunities for communication.

- **Assistive technology (AT):** Any item that supports a child's ability to participate actively in his or her home, childcare program, school, or other community settings.

Specialized: Individualized and Specific Supports for Participation

Children may need additional specialized supports based upon their identified needs. These supports are often discipline specific, e.g. PT or SLP. They may also be focused on behavioral interventions. Information on these types of intervention should be planned by the team in collaboration with the family and should address the unique needs of the child.