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Increasing Family Collaboration and Engagement in Early Childhood Special Education Using a Family-Centered Approach

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**Increasing Family Collaboration and Engagement in Early Childhood Special
Education Using a Family-Centered Approach**

A Project Presented to
The Graduate Faculty of
Minnesota State University Moorhead

By
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In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in
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Abstract

The Division of Early Childhood (DEC) has recognized family-centered practice as the recommended model of service delivery for early intervention. A key component of family-centered practice involves collaboration with families. It is critical for families and early childhood special education teachers to work together to increase student outcomes, while keeping the needs of the family in mind (Hile, Santos, and Hughes, 2016). Themes discovered in the literature include: building relationships with families (Odom & Wolery, 2003), family engagement opportunities (Kelty & Wakabayashi, 2020), and providing families with resources (Summers et al., 2007). To increase family collaboration and engagement for the 2021-2022 school year, this project consisted of a series of handouts intended for families to practice research-based strategies at home, in their natural environment. Parent handouts included research-based strategies to target skills in the five different developmental domains of early childhood: fine and gross motor development, adaptive development, language development, social-emotional development and cognitive development.

Literature Review

Prior to 1997, IDEA focused on individuals rather than the family unit. The reauthorization of IDEA in 1997 placed greater emphasis on providing early intervention services to the family unit versus solely focusing on children with disabilities or children who are at risk for disabilities. The need to implement family-centered practices became apparent due to the shift from child-focused services to family-focused services (Hile, Santos, and Hughes, 2016). Since then, the Division of Early Childhood (DEC) has recognized family-centered practice as the recommended model of service delivery for early intervention for young children with developmental delays.

Researchers note that young children interact with their family more than any other person or group of people, thus placing their family in the optimal position to create opportunities for growth and development (Hile et al., 2016). Early childhood professionals need to take into account each family's experiences, priorities, and resources to determine best intervention strategies. Additionally, keeping the family dynamic and daily routine in mind is necessary when using a family-centered practice. It is critical for teachers and families to form collaborative relationships to increase student outcomes (Hile et al., 2016). Thus, research shows to support families in facilitating their child's development, the use of family-centered practices is paramount.

Family-Professional Partnerships

An effective collaborative partnership between families and professional service providers is a primary facet of family-centered practice (Dinnebeil, Hale, & Rule, 1999).

Emerging themes in research centered on building relationships with families, family engagement opportunities, and family resources.

Building Relationships

It is essential for early childhood professionals working with families to establish positive relationships between the parents (or other caregivers) and their children (Odom & Wolery, 2003). The existence of strong relationships between parents and their children's teachers significantly impacts how parents feel about the care and education their child receives. Trust in the teacher or caregiver significantly influences the parent's perception of the quality of care their child is receiving. Furthermore, teachers who project a positive attitude toward the parent and child and who are responsive to their needs seem to create a respectful relationship with the parent (Knopf & Swick, 2007). Respecting the style and interests parents have can help to forge trusting and meaningful relations (Knopf & Swick, 2007). Parents are powerfully impacted by how early childhood professionals relate to their children. This research suggests the relationship parents have with early childhood professionals is significant and the relationship style professionals bring to the interactions with parents is a powerful factor (Knopf & Swick, 2007).

Family Engagement

Family engagement is defined by the National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement (NAFSCE) as a "shared responsibility in which schools and other community agencies and organizations are committed to reaching out to engage families in meaningful ways and which families are committed to actively support their

children's learning and development" (2021). Family engagement must ensure parents play an active role in developing their child's learning, that parents are actively involved in their child's education at school, and that parents are full partners in their child's education and included in decision-making (Kelty & Wakabayashi, 2020).

Family engagement includes activities and behaviors that connect with and support children in ways that are interactive, purposeful, and directed toward meaningful learning and affective outcomes (Kelty & Wakabayashi, 2020). Family engagement practices are divided into three types: engagement in the home, community, and school. Family engagement in the home is the most important resource for early learning as it facilitates learning in a child's natural environment. Some engagement activities in the home include book reading and parent-child conversations.

Family engagement in the community offers opportunities for the student to learn about the world within the context of community. Community engagement activities include volunteering in classrooms, participating in policy councils, or acting as a school liaison.

Class newsletters or other online forums highlight one way in which family engagement can be facilitated in schools. Family engagement in the school makes an intentional effort to connect with home (Kelty & Wakabayashi, 2020). Schools must also actively reach out to children's primary caregivers to jointly support children's learning and development in ways most effective, yet comfortable for families. The focus of family engagement should be on developing and promoting meaningful opportunities to engage family priorities and knowledge to support their child's education (Kelty & Wakabayashi, 2020).

Family Resources

Families reported the need for more information about their child's disability and the difficulty they experienced in accessing that information (Summers et al., 2007). This finding suggests early intervention services can do much more to meet families' information needs. Families might benefit from resources such as guest speakers and family-to-family gatherings. Providing families with general information and resources is highly correlated with families' ratings of empowerment when it comes to care for their child (Fordham et al., 2011).

Barriers and Limitations

Early childhood professionals identified significant barriers to using family-centered practices. Emerging themes in research centered on a lack of understanding and/or supportive work environments, family factors, and parent apprehension.

Lack of Understanding and Supportive Work Environments

Research shows there exists a lack of understanding for family-centered practice as well as unsupportive work environments. Barriers to collaboration between the adults on a team may exist due to poor communication, lack of respect, lack of time for planning, and philosophic differences (Odom & Wolery, 2003). This information is important because research has suggested that professionals in early intervention programs prefer working in a collaborative manner and that cohesive communication between special education and early childhood teachers in inclusive programs lead to greater engagement for children with disabilities (Odom & Wolery, 2003). Furthermore, barriers exist when different service providers have different ideas of family-centered

practices (Hile et al., 2016). For example, some service providers may focus more on working solely with the child, whereas other service providers may spend their time teaching the family members how to work with their child. Parents can become confused when service providers interact in different ways or have different expectations of them (Hile et al., 2016). Lastly, some providers may not necessarily value family-centered service delivery and might lack skills necessary to support effective parent-professional collaboration (Murray & Mandell, 2006).

Family Factors

There are various family factors that may create barriers to family-centered practice. It can be more challenging to implement family-centered practices with families in lower socioeconomic statuses as they often need to work multiple jobs, making it more challenging to schedule visits. Furthermore, some parents have a difficult time engaging with their children because they have household chores or are too tired from working.

Cultural expectations also create barriers to providing family-centered services. For example, service providers might not consider a family's culture when planning interventions. Therefore, they are not providing services based on the family's needs, priorities, and concerns (Hile et al., 2016).

A parent's understanding of their child's disability and expectations about how long it takes to see progress are also barriers to family-centered practices (Hile et al., 2016). If a parent has unrealistic expectations of their child's capabilities, they may get frustrated with service providers for lack of progress in their child.

Parent Apprehension

There are many apprehensions families face when it comes to family-centered services. Fear of judgment lack of communication from school professionals were articulated as strong concerns by parents, which lead to ineffective family engagement (Kelty & Wakabayashi, 2020). Furthermore, some parents tend to perceive professionals to be either unprepared or unwilling to meet their children's or family's needs (Murray & Mandell, 2006).

Implications

This review of literature found several implications for practice. First, building quality family-professional collaborative relationships is key to providing positive family-centered services. Next, many opportunities for family engagement should be provided. Last, supporting families through providing resources and information helps to build the family's knowledge and helps them to feel empowered.

Looking forward to the 2021-2022 school year, these implications will be imperative for me, as an early childhood professional to keep in mind when providing family-centered services. Therefore, I have created a series of research-based strategy handouts for parents. During a school conference or IEP meeting, handouts will be introduced to parents when a concern comes up about a specific developmental area. Parents will use these handouts with their child to practice skills in areas with delays. Parents will use the recording sheet to record activities they engaged in with their child along with comments about the activity. The recording sheet will be shared with me so that I can provide specific feedback. The inclusion of these handouts during a family

conference or IEP meeting will help ensure a meaningful and collaborative relationship
foundation is set to provide the best overall care to families.

FINE MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

Before your child learns to write, they need to have strength in their hand muscles. This is called fine motor development. Fine motor development is the ability to control small muscles in the hands. When working on fine motor development at home, remember to make it FUN! There are many activities that can increase fine motor muscle strength and coordination using objects you have around the house.

FINE MOTOR ACTIVITIES:

- **Puzzles:** Complete a variety of puzzles. Puzzles with small and large knobs, chunky puzzles, magnetic puzzles, and shape/color/number puzzles are different types of puzzles that strengthen fine motor skills. Puzzles also increase hand-eye coordination and work on crossing the midline as children need to flip, turn, and remove pieces when working on a puzzle.
- **Play-Doh:** Play-Doh provides endless opportunities to build fine motor skills. As children shape Play-Doh, they strengthen fine motor skills in a variety of ways through pushing, pulling, squashing, squeezing, cutting, and rolling the Play-Doh into various shapes. See attached Play-Doh recipe!
- **Use Vertical Surfaces:** Using a vertical surface such as a chalkboard, fridge, easel, or wall is more natural for children as it supports hand development. Anything that can be done on a flat surface can also be done on a vertical surface. Give coloring, stamping, painting, and magnets a try on a vertical surface.
- **Scissor Skills:** Cutting with scissors is an important fine motor skill all children need to develop. Before they can cut, they need to learn the open-shut pattern that is required of using scissors. Start by having your child crumple paper by opening and closing their hand. Then, move onto ripping paper, snipping paper, and finally cutting paper.
- **Other Activities:** There are many other activities that build fine motor skills including: building with blocks or Legos, putting pegs in a peg board, finger painting, painting with a paintbrush, stickers, stringing beads, noodles, or cereal using string or pipe cleaners, stamps, and using tweezers or tongs to pick up small objects.

Community Playthings. (2020, February 18). *Get a Grip on Fine Motor Development*.
<https://www.communityplaythings.com/resources/articles/2020/get-a-grip-on-fine-motor-development>

HOMEMADE PLAY-DOH RECIPE:

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cups salt
- 4 teaspoons cream of tartar
- 2 cups lukewarm water
- 2 Tablespoons vegetable oil

Food coloring is optional

DIRECTIONS:

- Stir together the flour, salt, and cream of tartar in a large pot.
- Next, add the water and oil. Add food coloring if desired.
- Cook the mixture over medium-heat, stirring constantly. Continue stirring until the dough has thickened and begins to form into a ball.
- Remove from heat and place mixture inside a bowl, wax paper, or gallon-sized bag.
- Allow to cool slightly and then knead until smooth. Once the dough is smooth, you're ready to play! 😊
- Store the dough inside a container or bag. Play-Doh will keep for up to 3 months.

GROSS MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

Gross motor development includes skills such as walking, running, jumping, skipping, throwing, and kicking. Young children learn how to control and coordinate their body movements when they are given opportunities to develop gross motor skills. It is also important for young children to have opportunities to develop gross motor skills to promote exercise and activity, which leads to a healthy lifestyle.

GROSS MOTOR ACTIVITIES:

- **Go to the Park!** A playground promotes many different gross motor skills. When playing at the park or on a playground, children have to run, walk, jump, climb, balance, etc. Playing at the park is a natural way for children to develop gross motor skills.
- **Balls:** There are many ways to practice gross motor skills by using a ball. Practice these following ball skills with your child: rolling, throwing, catching, and kicking. Turn these activities into a game to make them even more enjoyable.
- **Music:** Music is a fun way for your child to practice and develop gross motor skills. Songs like 'Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes' provide an opportunity for your child to practice bending and standing, while pointing to different body parts. Also, use the 'Freeze' song to practice gross motor skills such as hopping, skipping, twirling, and galloping.
 - Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QA48wTGbU7A>
 - Freeze Dance song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2UcZWxvqMZE>
 - Listen and Move song: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j24_xH5uvdA
- **Riding a Tricycle:** This activity helps to improve balance and coordination, which are skills necessary for more complex gross motor activities. Riding a tricycle also involves steering and pedaling, which requires the use of large muscles in our body.
- **Other Activities:** There are many other activities that help develop gross motor skills including: hide-and seek or tag, walking on a balance beam, navigating through an obstacle course, ride-on toys, going for walks, dancing, pushing a wagon or stroller, hopscotch, jumping on a trampoline, climbing up stairs, and playing with balloons.

ADAPTIVE DEVELOPMENT

Self-care, such as feeding and dressing, is one major component of adaptive development. Adaptive development refers to the ability level of a child related to functional life skills. Adaptive development is important because young children need to grow up to be independent, productive adults. Children with a developmental delay may have a harder time learning these skills. To foster independence in young children, they need to be given daily opportunities to practice different self-help skills.

ADAPTIVE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES:

- **Getting Dressed:** Getting dressed is an important adaptive skill used daily. Start by first teaching your child how to remove clothing. This is often easier than putting clothes on. This will increase self-confidence in your child so they are more likely to try complex self-help skills. After they have mastered removing clothes, teach them orientation of clothing items (front, back, top, bottom, etc.) Then, teach them to put clothes on using the largest piece of clothing first. Don't forget to practice buckling, zipping, snapping, and fastening. When teaching your child to get dressed, use very simple steps, positive reinforcement, and have a lot of patience!
- **Toilet Training:** If your child is able to communicate to you (either verbally or nonverbally) that their diaper is wet or they need to go to the bathroom, they are ready to start formal toilet training. This can be a daunting process for many parents, but with consistency and patience, toilet training can be a successful experience for all. Try to make using the toilet a part of your child's daily routine. For example, encourage them to use the toilet when waking up in the morning, before or after snacks or meals, and before nap and bedtime.
- **Feeding:** If your child has difficulty feeding themselves, incorporate these different activities into your child's day: scooping and pouring water while playing in the bathtub, scooping and pouring sand while playing in the sandbox, using a shape sorter to sort small shapes, pretending to feed a baby doll, having pretend meals or picnics, and using a pretend fork and spoon when playing with Play-Doh. These are all activities that will help to ensure carryover of skills during meal times.

ADAPTIVE DEVELOPMENT

Personal responsibility, including tasks such as putting away toys, transitions and avoiding common dangers, is another major component of adaptive development. Personal responsibility adaptive skills also include the ability to engage in age-appropriate, desirable activities with minimal prompting. Adaptive development in the personal responsibility category is important because children need to be able to follow a daily routine, transition to new activities, and understand personal safety in order to increase independence.

ADAPTIVE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES:

- **Visuals:** If your child has a difficult time following a routine or transitioning to a new activity, give visuals a try! Visuals teach a variety of skills that children have difficulties with. See the attached page on visual examples you can use with your child.
- **Social Stories:** Sometimes children with delays have a hard time understanding an ambiguous situation or activity. A social story is presented to a child in a literal or concrete way for them to understand.
- **Following Directions:** If your child has difficulty following directions, have them practice following simple directions at home. Use the sheet below to practice following directions.

FOLLOWING TWO-STEP DIRECTIONS

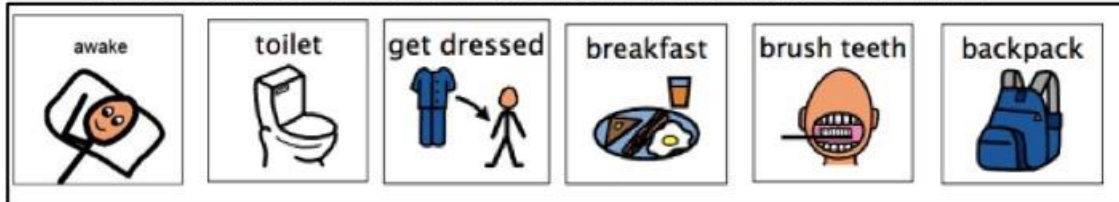
1	Get a spoon and bring it to me
2	Sit on a chair, then put hands in the air
3	Hop on your feet, then sit down
4	Close the door, then hop on one foot
5	Clap your hands, then touch your nose
6	Stand up, then give me a hug

These are just examples. Any simple, two-step direction can be used. Provide short, concrete examples when giving directions. Provide modeling and repeat directions if needed.

Knight, V., Sartini, E., & Spriggs, A. D. (2014). Evaluating visual activity schedules as evidence-based practice for individuals with autism spectrum disorders. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 45(1), 157–178. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-014-2201-z>

VISUALS:

VISUALS FOR MORNING ROUTINE



As your child completes each step in the morning routine, have them cover up the task. This will help your child visually see which task has been completed and which tasks they still need to complete.

FIRST/THEN VISUALS TO HELP WITH TRANSITIONS



When trying to get your child to complete a task or transition to a new activity they do not want to do, try the use of first/then visuals. First/then visuals are used as a behavioral strategy to help a child complete a task they do not want to do. First/then visuals present simple visuals to a child by showing them what needs to be done first and what they will do next.

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Expressive communication is one area of language development. Expressive communication skills include relating information to others by using gestures, sounds, words, and sentences. Articulation, or the production of speech sound, is also included in this area of language development. Children develop expressive communication skills through interaction with other adults and children.

EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES:

- **Play:** Engage in free-play with your child! Play is the most natural way for a young child to learn. When playing with your child, model what to do with the toys when playing. Follow your child's lead when playing and talk about what you are doing with the toys as you are playing with them.
- **Give Choices:** Rather than simply giving your child something, offer them choices so they are required to use words to make a request rather than by taking or pointing to something. For example, say: "Would you like milk or juice?" To respond, encourage them to say: "I want juice, please".
- **Engage:** When going about daily activities with your child, engage them in constant conversation and explain daily activities. Talk about what you are doing and why you are doing it. For example, if you need to go to the grocery store, say: "Today we are going to the grocery store. The grocery store is where we buy food. We have to drive in our car to get there. When we get there we need to get a shopping cart to put all of our food into. We need to bring our grocery list, so that we know what food to buy. A grocery list is where we write down all of the food we need to get". There is so much value in simply explaining daily activities to your child and engaging them in conversation while completing daily activities.
- **Books:** Books also provide a natural way to increase a child's expressive development. When reading books, use simple 'wh' (who, what, where, when, why) questions to increase language. For example, talk about what is happening on each page, where they are, why something is happening, and who is in the picture.
- **Expand Language:** Expanding on your child's languages gives them the ability to hear language modeled correctly. For example, if your child says: "cat", you can expand that language by saying "A small, black cat". You can expand language for any short phrases your child says.

Hebert-Myers, H., Guttentag, C. L., Swank, P. R., Smith, K. E., & Landry, S. H. (2006). The importance of language, social, and behavioral skills across early and later childhood as predictors of social competence with peers. *Applied Developmental Science, 10*(4), 174-187.
https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532480xads1004_2

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Receptive communication is another area of language development. Receptive communication skills include having the ability to understand words and language. Young children need both expressive language and receptive language to communicate effectively. When a child has delays in receptive language development, they may have difficulties following instructions or they may be unable to respond to questions appropriately.

RECEPTIVE LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES:

- **Sequencing:** Sequencing is a foundational language and executive functioning skill needed to have to understand the order of things. To help your child with sequencing, take 3-5 pictures of them completing an activity, such as washing their hands or putting on their shoes. Print the pictures and ask your child to put them in order of how they happened. This can be done for different activities your child completes.
- **Play 'Simon Says':** Playing the game 'Simon Says' helps build receptive language skills because it involves your child listening and following directions. You can take turns with your child in following and giving directions. When playing, start with simple directions (ex. 'Simon says touch your toes'). Gradually increase directions in length (ex. 'Simon says touch your toes, then sit down').
- **Questioning:** Use books to ask questions when reading with your child. Again, use simple 'wh' (who, what, where, when, why) questions your child can answer when reading. Ask: Who is in the book? What are they doing? Where are they going? If your child cannot give you the correct answer, model the answer and explain it to them.
- **I-Spy:** Playing the game 'I-Spy' is another way to help build receptive language skills because it involves active listening. Take turns with your child in following and giving 'I-Spy' directions.
- **Model:** If your child has trouble following directions or sequencing a task, physically model or show them what needs to be done. This will help them visually understand what they are supposed to do.

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT: MATH

Cognitive development refers to a child's ability to learn, remember, and solve problems. Math is one area of cognitive development that helps promote readiness for school. Studies show early engagement in math leads to increased math achievement later in life. There are many activities you can do with your child that promote different math concepts that help build readiness for school.

MATH ACTIVITIES:

- **Sorting:** Sorting is a very simple activity to do with your child using materials you already have. Sorting helps develop executive functioning skills, which are brain skills that help with memory, attention, and problem solving. To complete a sorting activity, have your child gather materials from around the house and put them into one big pile. From there, have them sort items into smaller piles. For example, all the red things go in one pile and all the blue things go into another pile, etc. Sorting activities can also be done by shape, size, or category.
- **Counting:** There are many ways to practice counting in your child's natural environment. Count trees when you are out on a walk. Count as you take steps when walking. Use many different materials at home to practice counting, such as cereal, rocks, toys, popsicle sticks, coins, buttons, etc.
- **Patterning:** Patterning is another skill that helps develop executive functioning skills. To make patterns with your child, gather multiple two different colored objects (ex. red and blue beads). Start making a pattern for your child and see if they can copy your pattern (ex. red, blue, red, blue). If they can, move on to a more challenging skill and see if they can extend the pattern you create. Once they have mastered extending a pattern, move on to creating their own simple pattern and more complex patterns.
- **Other Activities:** There are many other math activities that help build cognitive skills needed for school readiness. Give these activities a try: counting dots on a dice, playing number recognition games with cards, magnet numbers, writing numbers with chalk, subitizing objects (the ability to tell how many without counting), measuring objects, shape hunt, color hunt, and playing games such as Candyland, Hi-Ho Cherry-O, Trouble, Sorry, Chutes and Ladders, Uno, and Jenga.

Pelkowski, T., Herman, E., Trahan, K., Winters, D. M., Tananis, C., Swartz, M. I., Bunt, N., & Rodgick, C. (2019). Fostering a "head start" in math: observing teachers in early childhood mathematics engagement. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 40(2), 96–119. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10901027.2018.1522397>

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT: LITERACY

Literacy is another area of cognitive development that helps promote readiness for school. When parents engage in and model the uses of literacy, children are better prepared for school. Literacy is an ongoing process and everything you can do as a parent to support your child's literacy development counts! There are many ways to promote literacy development in the home through use of materials you already have.

LITERACY ACTIVITIES:

- **Reading:** Aim to read with your child for 10-15 minutes every day. Make this part of your daily routine and read with your child at a time that fits best into your family's schedule. Bedtime works best for most families. Reading to your child every night will have a significant impact on your child's readiness for school. Tips for reading at home include: choosing books that relate to your child's interests, discussing what happens before, during, and after a story, making connections to real life, and talking about a character's feelings. Also, encourage your child to turn the pages of the book, orient the book correctly, point out the front/back, and top/bottom of the book.
- **Writing:** Writing is a critical foundational skill students need to achieve success in reading and literacy. Help build a writer at home! At-home writing activities for your child to complete include: making a shopping list before going to the store, making a card for someone, writing about something they did that day, or write in a journal. There are many stages of writing your child will go through. Stages of writing include: drawing, scribbling, letter marks, letter strings, copying words from the environment or writing known words, using the initial sound to represent the whole word, using the initial and final sound to represent the whole word, and using vowels. Celebrate any way your child is able to write!
- **Letter Activities:** Give your child many opportunities to explore letters at home in an engaging way. Start by teaching the letters in their name. Those are the letters a child most often recognizes first. Use hands-on experiences when exploring letters with your child. At-home letter activities include: writing letters in chalk, using paint to form letters, forming letters with blocks or Play-Doh, going on a letter hunt, and playing letter games. Make learning about letters a natural experience by talking about and exploring letters every day.
- **Rhyming:** Rhyming is a phonemic awareness skill that requires children to listen to sounds within words. There are many ways to help build your child's rhyming skills. Activities to build rhyming skills include: reading Dr. Seuss books, singing nursery rhymes, and having your child fill in the missing rhyming word (ex. cat, mat, hat, sat, ____).

Kid Sense. (2021, July 21). *Are You Worried?*

<https://childdevelopment.com.au/areas-of-concern/literacy/> Kid Sense

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Emotions and behavior are two important components of social-emotional development. Often times, impulse behavior and negative emotionality are displayed in children who have difficulty with social interactions. To help foster these skills, there are many activities that teach emotional and behavioral regulation that you can do with your child.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES:

- **Emotions:** Just like academics, students with delays in social-emotional skills need these skills to be directly taught. Try the following emotional regulation activities with your child: play an emotion memory game by drawing different emotions on cards and having your child find the match, sort different emotion pictures, teach feeling words (happy, sad, mad, frustrated, etc.), and read different books about emotions by visiting the library.
- **Sticker Chart:** A sticker chart is used as a behavior intervention that encourages positive behavior. This helps with compliance, daily routine activities, or social behaviors. Since children are different, we can work together on a sticker chart that is developmentally appropriate for your child and is tailored to their needs.
- **Social Stories:** Sometimes children with delays have a hard time understanding an ambiguous situation or activity. A social story is presented to a child in a literal or concrete way for them to understand. Again, if there are certain areas of behavior that your child has difficulty with, we can work to make a personalized social story to be used at home.
- **Implement a Routine:** Children function best in a structured routine because it allows them to predict their day. A structured, predictable routine also presents comfort and safety to children. Implement a routine at home (ex. doing the same things at around the same time each day). If your child has trouble with bedtime, start a bedtime routine by first giving them a bath, reading books, singing songs, then snuggling before they go to sleep each night.

Gadaire, A. P., Armstrong, L. M., Cook, J. R., Kilmer, R. P., Larson, J. C., Simmons, C. J., Messinger, L. G., Thiery, T. L., & Babb, M. J. (2020). A data-guided approach to supporting students' social-emotional development in pre-k. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ort0000522>

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Positive relationships, including peer and adult relationships, is another important component of social-emotional development. Age-appropriate positive social-emotional skills are foundational skills students need to create positive relationships. Children given the opportunities to practice social-emotional skills are able to improve relationships, regulation skills, and behavior concerns.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES:

- Role-Play: Suggest a common problem your child has (ex. sharing). Role-play how to handle a situation in which your child has to share, but may not want to. Give them ample opportunities to practice problem-solving.
- Cooperation: Work together to build something. Make sure it doesn't go the way they want it to go, so you can model what to do in a frustrating situation.
- Joint Action Routines: If your child has trouble initiating and attending to a play routine, show them step-by-step how to play with something. For example, to show your child how to play with puzzles, say: "Go get the puzzle and put it on the floor. Then, take out all the pieces. Now, put the pieces back in the puzzle. We are all done with the puzzle. Let's put it away". You can model joint action play routines for many different activities including: Play-Doh, bean bag toss, Mr. Potato head, and Legos.
- Talking with Adults: Many children are naturally shy around adults. Look for opportunities in your daily routine that give your child a chance to talk with other adults (ex. saying 'hello' to the neighbor or saying 'thank you' to the cashier).
- Play Dates: Schedule a play date for your child with neighbors, family members, or friends. Play dates provide natural opportunities for children to practice important social-emotional skills. Problem-solving, sharing, cooperating, turn-taking, and critical thinking are all skills children develop when playing with other children.

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Activity Tracking Sheet for Parents

Child's Name: _____ Month: _____

Date	Activity	Comments

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