

TLC Quarterly News



Philadelphia Teaching Collaborative
Child & Family Studies Research Programs

Winter 03

Why is Working in Natural Environments So Critical?

Part C of IDEA states that to the maximum extent appropriate, early intervention services must be provided in natural environments, including home and community settings in which children without disabilities participate. Ok so we understand the law but why is it so important to provide services in a child and family's natural environment? When services are provided in the natural environment it gives service providers and families an opportunity to collaborate and enhance their relationship. Early intervention staff can gather information about a family's beliefs, values, and attitudes about various aspects of their family life and raising a child with special needs. Early intervention providers can work with the family to support the family and child meet their I FSP outcomes. In the natural setting, service providers can empower families to take an active role in their service delivery and be an advocate for their child in the present and the future. Providing services in the natural environment has benefits when it comes to in-

corporating the child's sibling into the service delivery. The sibling does not feel left out since the child with special needs may require more attention from the parents. Incorporating siblings provides opportunities for increased modeling of skills. Early intervention strategies and activities are embedded into the family's daily routines and activities, giving the family opportunities to practice and carry over goals.

Another benefit to working in the natural environment is the provider can observe the child in his or her daily routines and see the child's strengths. The provider can also observe how the parents interact with their child in terms of facilitating the child's motor, social, and communication development. By gathering this information from a family through observation a service provider can begin to provide support to the family and the family and child are that much closer to meeting meaningful outcomes.

Hanft, B.E. & Pilkington, K.O. (2000). Therapy in Natural Environments: The Means to an End Goal for Early Intervention. Infants

Natural Environments on The Web

Coaching in Natural Environments

http://www.puckett.org/coaching/core_values.php

Early Childhood Connections

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/earlychildhoodconnections/natural.htm>

TaCTICS (Therapists as Collaborative Team members for Infant/Toddler Community Services)

<http://tactics.fsu.edu/>

Family Guided Approaches to Collaborative Early Intervention Training and Services

<http://www.parsons.lsi.ukans.edu/facets/index.html>

Wisconsin Birth to 3 Natural Environments Web Site

<http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/earlyint/natenvir/index.html>



*"Making the community map helped me see what I do in my daily routine and helped me make the routines less stressful."
Mom whose child received early intervention services*

*"The map gives me an opportunity to socialize and communicate with families and find out about their likes and dislikes."
Early Intervention Service Provider*



TLC 2

How to Make a Community Map

Teachers, therapists, and families can use the community map to figure out resources in the community the family is currently using and help the family identify places that the family might like to go but are unable to get to or are unable to use. After gathering information about the family's resources therapists and teachers can show the family how to adapt the environment so they will be able to go to the places they would like to go to or even visit the places with the family. Remember a natural environment includes settings that reflect where children and families would normally spend their time if their child did not have special needs.

Here are some tips for making a community map:

- ◆ Be creative – the map is a representation, a picture -- not an accurate drawing of distances, etc.
- ◆ Don't worry about the artwork. Draw the best you can or ask the family to draw the locations. The idea is to understand how the family uses their neighborhood resources and to figure out resources they would like to but are unable to use (for whatever reasons) and what resources they might be considering for the future.

Continued on page 3

How to Make a Community Map continued

from page 2

- ◆ Families may not be able to use resources because of many reasons including money, transportation, they don't view the resources as "available to them" or "available to their child with a disability" or they may see that they need more people to use this resource than they have available – maybe there are not two "grown-ups" to take children to the museum and they think two people would be really needed, etc.
- ◆ The resources that families identify may include friends and neighbors houses, health facilities, church or religious facilities, stores, etc. If the family has difficulty identifying resources, you might try prompting them with some of these (i.e., "where do you take _____ to the doctor?," "Do you visit relatives in the neighborhood?")
- ◆ Another way of prompting families is to do the map as if it represented a particular day (or represents "weekdays"/"weekends"). "Pretend this is any week day – what do you typically do?" Or you might try a statement like "Let's make the map for yesterday – what did you do, where did you go?"
 1. Select one of the families with whom you are currently working.
 2. Use a large piece of paper and markers to make the map.
 3. Start by drawing the family's house.
 4. Ask them to identify places they go each day themselves and with their child.
 5. Draw those places on the map. Talk to the family about what they do or what the child does in those locations.
 6. Find out other places the family may go during a week (like to church, the store, etc.) Draw

these on the map.

7. At the end of making the map, ask the family if this map represents the things that they typically do – places they typically go.
8. Then, ask them to identify other places that they might like to go but are unable to get to or are unable to use. Draw these on the map.
9. When you are totally done, ask the family if the map represents things they do and things they would like to do and add anything else that is "missing."



TLC Training Corner

Here is an update on TLC trainings that we have had so far.

- ⇒ During Fall 2002, Natural Environments 1, 2, 3, & 4 was held at Albert Einstein Medical Center. A big thanks goes out to Beth Konde and Jean Ann Vogelman for facilitating these trainings.
- ⇒ In Fall 2002, Core Policies and Procedures was on-line and information from the Policies and Procedures Update 2002 training on Documentation and Communication Guidelines was incorporated into the course
- ⇒ TLC Focus group projects got off to a great start. The topics are Functional behavior, Facilitation: talking with families, Consultation in childcare settings, Assistive Technology, Sensory Integration, Relationship Based EI, Working with Children with Cerebral Palsy or Multiple Disabilities, NDT and motor programming for therapists, Evidenced Based Practices, and Hanen Training. Early intervention providers in Birth-3 participating in these focus group projects have two assignments that they need to complete which requires them to apply principles they have learned in the training to working with their family. The first assignment focuses on doing an observation/evaluation/assessment that pertains to the topic of the focus group and then sharing the information obtained with the family. For example, in the functional behavior focus group participants were asked to select a child on their caseload and observe the child in its natural environment without doing anything with the child for 15 minutes. After the observation is finished the participants needed to complete a summary by using a summary sheet guideline. Participants had to pretend that they were sharing the information from their observation with the child's family either verbally or in a written summary. The second assignment involves putting together a child portfolio with the child's family. The purpose of the project is to help early intervention providers focus on strengths of the children they are providing services to so that they can view the children in terms of their abilities not their disabilities. A big thanks goes out to all our instructors.
- ⇒ The Transition Self Study Guide was mailed out at the end of December 2002 to people that did not complete the transition training in the 2001-2002 training year. Participant have until March 7th, 2003 to complete the on-line quiz and postmark assignments back to TLC.

We look forward to seeing everyone at upcoming trainings.



Fun with Natural Environments

Here is a word search that has different settings and activities in a child and family's natural environment. Great game to share with your EI families. Have fun!

C O L L A B O R A T I O N G D
R A C S D G C E H O K G A R O
L Y I I C N T U O O A N C O O
R T F N V I J G U Z Y I T C H
E I S G S R V A S P S H I E R
A N P I H E F E E L E T V R O
D U G N T P A L O A N A I Y B
I M N G G A M E F Y I B T S H
N M I Q N I I L W G T L I T G
G O Y L E D L T O R U K E O I
B C A Y R P Y T R O O R S R E
O O L D T M H I S U R L M E N
O N P A S X K L H N H O M E E
K N A T U R A L I D P A R K X
S S E T T I N G P G N I T A E

ACTIVITIES
BATHING
CAR
COLLABORATION
COMMUNITY
DIAPERING
EATING
FAMILY
GROCERYSTORE
HOME
HOUSEOFWORSHIP
IFSP
LITTLELEAGUE
NATURAL
NEIGHBORHOOD
PARK
PLAYGROUND
PLAYING
READINGBOOKS
ROUTINES
SETTING
SINGING
STRENGTHS
ZOO



Promoting a Child's Development, Learning, and Participation in the Natural Environment

- ◆ Find out where children and families spend time and what they do
- ◆ Figure out what activities and routines are going well and which are not going well
- ◆ Use a top-down process to merge outcomes/goals with activities/routines
- ◆ Identify environmental and child strengths
- ◆ Identify interferers
- ◆ Think about what children will learn
- ◆ Use an activity framework
- ◆ Develop adaptations to facilitate participation
- ◆ Embed interventions that facilitate participation into classroom/home activities and routines.



Facilitating Children's Participation

Improve Routine
or Activity



Promote
Participation
in Activity or
Routine

Environmental Accommodations

- Adapt Room Set-up
- Adapt/Select Equipment
- Equipment/Adaptations for Positioning

Select or Adapt Activity

Adapt Materials

Adapt Requirements or Instructions

Have Another Child Help-

- Peer Assistance/Tutoring
- Cooperative Learning

Have an Individual Child do Something Different

Have an Adult Help a Child Do the Activity

Have an Individual Child Do Something Outside of the Room (with an Adult)



TLC 6

Promoting a Child's Development, Learning, and Participation in the Natural Environment

Start with a family who is comfortable trying something new. Together pick a routine or activity and use the following strategies to embed interventions into the routine.

Here is the Scenario:

You have finished doing the community map activity with your EI family. They have indicated that they want to go to the playground with their child but have not been able to do so.

Try this Activity Framework

What is the environment?

Playground

What are the Subenvironment(s)?

Swings

Slide

Wading Pool

Jungle Gym

Sandbox

Playhouse

Riding Toys

The child's mother has told you that her daughter loves playing in the bathtub and wants to be able to use the wading pool at the playground.

Break up all the steps required to play in the wading pool.

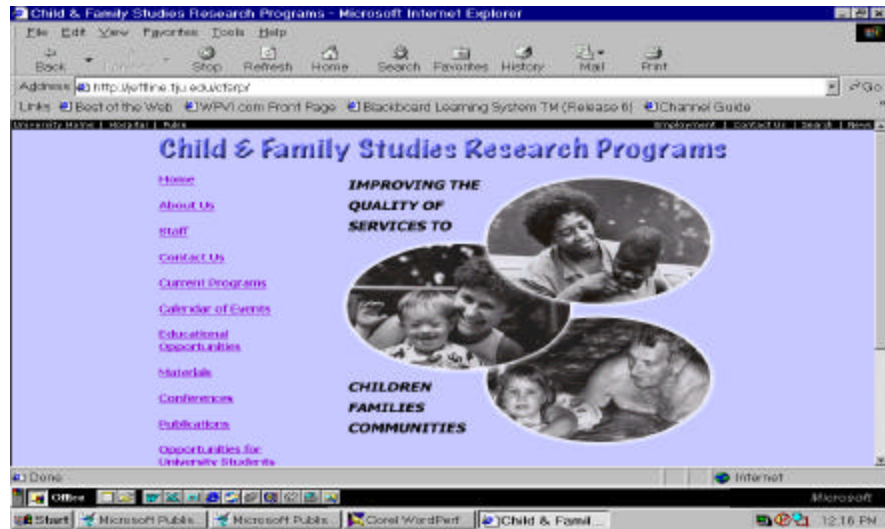
Steps

1. Go to Pool
2. Climb into Pool
3. Sit in Water
4. Play with Water Toys
5. Climb out of Pool
7. Go to Another Playground Activity

Next figure out some potential adaptations that can assist the child to participating in this activity successfully. Once you are finished coming up with some adaptations you are ready to embed intervention/strategies into each step of the activity.



Check Us Out On the Web: <http://jeffline.tju.edu/cfsrp>



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Inside This Issue

Natural Environments
