

Promising Practice: Adults' Guidance of Children's Free-Choice Activities and Play

TA Support Resource

Key Points: Adults' Guidance of Children's Free-Choice Activities and Play

- Children have many opportunities to participate in a variety of learning activities and play of their choice
- Opportunities for children to make choices and adult support for helping children understand, develop, and communicate their choices
- Adults use scaffolding strategies for supporting active engagement in activities and play
- Adults are available and show enjoyment when engaging with children
- Adults provide support for extending children's learning and play

Best Practices

All of the adults in a classroom show enjoyment and availability when engaging with children during activities and play. Children have many opportunities to decide on activities, playmates, and play topics that they like during free-choice activities and they are given many opportunities to make choices during activities and playtime. Children have an adequate amount of free choice and play daily. Adults in the classroom observe children's engagement in play and consistently support children's play using individualized strategies such as verbal/nonverbal prompting, modeling, commenting/asking questions, enlisting other peers and using assistive technology and visual supports (an adult uses a visual map to help a child begin, perform, and complete an activity).

Look For.....

- Adults monitor children's involvement in play and support children who have difficulty becoming engaged in activities and play
- Adults create opportunities for children to make choices about their play, activities, and playmates
- Adults use scaffolding strategies to support children's active engagement in activities and play
- Adults consistently support and extend children's engagement relative to each child's activity and play skills
- Children make many choices to decide their activities, who will be their playmates, what play topics they want to utilize and play materials
- Children have several choices during small group activities
- Adults observe children's play and support their learning with a variety of individualized instruction strategies. Strategies may include verbal/nonverbal, prompting, modeling, asking questions, use of AT enlisting peers and the use of visuals
- Visual organizers and choice boards are present if needed

Guiding Questions for Team Discussion

- How do you intentionally set up an environment that leads to children making choices?
- In what ways do you intentionally plan for instruction that is aligned with IEP goals during free choice/play and activities?
- Do you have specific group or individual goals that are stressed during free choice/play and activities?
- How do you determine what instructional strategies you will use, when to use them and how they will be used?
- In what ways do you extend children's play and promote peer interaction and support during free choice/play?

Self Check

- ✓ Do I arrange and set up my student's environment to promote opportunities to make choices?
- ✓ Do I lesson plan for free choice/ play for my individual students?
- ✓ Do I purposefully integrate IEP goals and learning into my free choice/play?
- ✓ Do I support and extend learning during free choice/play time?
- ✓ Do I consistently ensure all of my students are actively engaged during free choice/play?
- ✓ Do I provide and consistently use any adaptive materials to promote more sustained engagement in free choice/ play?

Resources to Support

Checklists

[Embedded Instruction Practices Checklist](#)

[Play Checklist](#)

[Following the Child's Lead Practitioner Guide](#)

Books/Articles

Book: [From Play to Practice](#)

Book: [When Play is not Easy](#)

Book: [When Play is not Fun](#)

Book: [DEC Recommended Practices Instruction Monograph](#)

Article: [Peer Mediated Strategies](#)

Websites

[Embedded Instruction Practice Guide](#)

[30 Reasons Play is Important to Children with Disabilities](#)

Video Clips/Modules/Webinars

Module: [Connect Module Embedded Instruction](#): This module specifically supports practices for embedding instruction into play, not necessarily supporting a child to engage in or extend play.

Module: [CONNECT Module: Assistive Technology Planned Instructional Sequences](#)

[Activity Matrix Training Program](#)

Video: [Instructional Strategies to Support Individualization](#)

[Center Area Sign Visual Supports](#) (scroll to bottom of page)

Additional Information and Next Steps

- *What areas of strength are present in the current classroom relating to this practice?*
- *What additional support or resources are needed for professional learning and growth with this practice?*
- *What are the goals or next steps that want to be pursued with this practice?*