

How to Create Verbal Learning Opportunities

Performance Aid

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide five strategies that can be used during interactions with children that will enhance your chances of creating verbal learning opportunities (LO's) during your play

- **Follow the child's lead**

- DON'T try to lead the interaction by getting the child to perform some activity that you have prepared
- Instead, follow the child's lead, interact with him or her while the child is performing an activity of *his or her choosing*

- **Avoid directions**

- DON'T give too many directions on how to perform a task
- It **doesn't matter** on how well the child performs the task at hand – **what matters** is how much he or she is speaking
- Even if the child makes a mistake in the task, if he or she is speaking more, then the interaction is successful

- **Avoid questions**

- DON'T ask the child too many questions about items during the interaction – chances are, you will simply end up answering them yourself!
 - The child may not have the knowledge to be able to answer a question, and it may just lead to more “vocal noise” in the environment for the child
- Provide prompts and simple comments on the interaction, and provide the child ample time to provide a response to you
 - Remember, despite the fact that silence is typically awkward in most areas of life – in this circumstance, silence is an “*opportunity to respond*”

- **Simplify the environment**

- MAKE SURE to have a variety of toys/activities accessible to the child, but NOT in the way of the interaction
- After a child has picked an activity, move other items to the side (still accessible though) so that you and the child can focus on the activity without distraction
 - *This ensures that any verbal comments that you make will not be confused with other items*

- **Substitute activities**

- While following the child's lead is important, sometimes it may be necessary to substitute another activity to create more LO's
- If the first activity is causing problems, or doesn't provide many opportunities for LO's, then make another activity reinforcing by playing with it and then including the child or asking him or her to join in