Guide for Observing and Individualizing

Birth–12 Months

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EXAMPLES OF OBSERVATION OPPORTUNITIES

Behaviors may be observed during a care routine, such as a mealtime or a diaper change; playtime; or during a guided activity, including a book sharing. Pertinent ELM activities (Communication/Language) are cited in parentheses.

Receptive language

Responds to an adult’s words

☐ turns head and/or looks toward the person speaking
☐ kicks legs, reaches with hand/arm, waves arms
☐ makes a verbal utterance

Aware of the meaning of several words

☐ looks or smiles when hears his/her name
☐ points to a pictured object(s) or person a caregiver names, such as
  ☑ parts of an animal (Block 4, Option 3) or types of animals (Block 2, Option 3; Block 6, Option 3)
  ☑ parts of a baby (Block 7, Option 3; Block 10, Option 3; Block 15, Option 3; Block 17, Option 3)
  ☑ a baby (Block 18, Option 3), cup (Block 14, Option 3)
☐ points to a part of own body named by caregiver, such as eyes (Block 10, Option 3) or nose (Block 15, Option 3)
responds with appropriate gestures or actions, such as
- moving hands or scarf when caregiver says “peekaboo” (Block 8, Option 2)
- waves when caregiver says “bye-bye” (Block 20, Option 3)
- smiles when a caregiver requests “smile big!”

Expressive language

Uses coos, babbles, cries to communicate with caregiver during
- care routines, such as when the infant sees a bottle
- a book sharing
- experiences with repetitive book text or games, including saying a word with a caregiver (Block 7, Option 3; Block 13, Option 3; Block 2, Option 3)
- open-ended or guided playtimes, such as seeing a desired toy
- arrival and departure times

EXAMPLES OF FOLLOW-UP LEARNING SUPPORTS

Reintroduce

Receptive language

Responds to an adult’s words
- Emphasize a simple word or phrase, such as “baby,” “uh-oh,” or “all gone,” when you speak with an infant. Use an exaggerated tone of voice, such as a raised pitch, and repeat the word or phrase. Describe the infant’s response to your word(s), such as facial expressions or utterances. Example: “I am saying ‘uh-oh.’ You are smiling!”
- Make eye contact with an infant when you speak with him/her. Use smiles and other facial expressions to support the infant’s engagement with you as you speak.
- Speak in short sentences.

Aware of the meaning of several words
- Use a child’s name frequently when speaking with him/her. Say your name. Example: “You are Sammy! I am Miss Tanya.” Point to infant and to self, and accentuate each name as you say it.
- Name a food item an infant is eating or is offered. Point to the item as you say it. Point to and say “diaper” during a diaper change.
- Point to pictured objects or persons during a book sharing. Use a book that shows and describes objects (Block 13, Option 3). Point to and say the name of a toy(s) an infant is exploring during a playtime.
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Expressive language

Uses coos, babbles, cries to communicate with caregiver

- Play games that provide opportunities for the infant to vocalize, such as those in Block 8, Options 1 and 2.
- Promptly and enthusiastically acknowledge any infant utterance. Repeat the infant’s utterance. Example: “You are saying ‘ba-ba-ba’ to me! Ba-ba-ba!”
- Demonstrate use of simple language. Example: If an infant points to a picture in a book, say the name of an image in the book. “You are pointing at the picture of a baby in our book. Baby. This is a baby.”
- Repeat or adapt an activity that encourages the infant to repeat a familiar word with you (Block 7, Option 3; Block 14, Option 2).
- Select a book sharing activity option (Block 15, Option 3) with a repetitive word the infant can say with you. Encourage the infant to say the word or part of the word with you.

Reinforce

Receptive language

Responds to an adult’s words

- Promptly and enthusiastically acknowledge any sign that the infant notices you are speaking or pays attention to a word(s) you say. Examples: “You are looking at me. You hear my words.” “You are waving your arms while I sing.”
- Repeat words you want an infant to notice. Use facial expressions, gestures, and/or other forms of nonverbal communication to accentuate your word(s).

Aware of the meaning of several words

- Remember that a book with one bold image per page is most appropriate for young infants. This enables you to emphasize one or two words in naming or describing an image in a book.
- Encourage the infant to point to an object or aspect of a pictured image in a book. Example: “You can point to the baby’s nose!” (Block 7, Option 3).
- During diapering and mealtimes, use simple sentences to describe your actions and the actions or reactions of the infant.
- Add words to an infant’s nonverbal request. Example: If an infant points to a cracker, ask “Do you want a cracker?” Emphasize the word “cracker.”
Expressive language

Uses coos, babbles, cries to communicate with caregiver

- Promptly and enthusiastically acknowledge any infant utterances. Examples: “I am smiling at you and you are making little cooing noises! It’s fun to talk together!” “You are crying. I think you want me to do something for you.”
- Imitate or repeat an infant’s utterance.
- Offer experiences that involve repetitive use of an utterance or coherent word. Invite the infant to say with you a repeated word, such as “more” (Block 21, Option 3) or part of the repeated word, such as “peek” in “peekaboo” (Block 2, Option 3; Block 5, Options 2 and 3) and “night” in “goodnight” (Block 12, Option 3). The infant should not be expected to clearly articulate the repeated word.

EXAMPLES OF PORTFOLIO ENTRIES

Recently Hunter has started to use babbling in conversations with me. He enjoys hearing me repeat his babbling. I will continue to provide opportunities for Hunter to communicate with me in this way. His babbling in our conversations is a good step in language development.

Jamie is showing signs of knowing what some important words mean. She knows your (parents’) names and her first name. Yesterday she joined me in pointing to a baby’s nose in a picture book we looked at together. I will continue to help Jamie become familiar with the names of people and things in our room and in books we share.

Endnotes

1 The categories and behaviors are informed by the following source: Bricker, D., Capt, B., & Petti-Frontczak, K. (2002). Assessment, evaluation, and programming system for infants and children, 2nd ed., Vol. 2: Test, birth to three years and three to six years. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.
2 The infant’s response shows awareness that an adult is speaking. The response does not need to show awareness of what the adult is saying; awareness of the meaning of a word(s) is a more advanced skill and a separate behavior category.
4 Some activity plans in other areas also support an infant’s expressive language development. Examples: Social-Emotional Block 1, Option 1 and Block 2, Option 2.