

Hello Early Learning Specialists and Coordinators,

We are now training on “best practice principles” in ParentChild+ home visiting. As a part of this effort, we are releasing a series of videos on our distance learning platform, Elevate, that describe these five areas of practice: 1) Encouraging parent-child interaction; 2) Family collaboration and engagement; 3) Building on the family’s strengths, values, and culture; 4) Observing, reflecting, and responding to parent-child emotions; and 5) Exploring learning and development together. The Elevate courses, as well as the below tool built around the same topic areas, are intended to help you identify and strengthen behaviors and micro-behaviors that lead to the desired program outcomes. After you complete the training or Elevate courses, we hope you will continue to use this as a reflection tool to evaluate and self-evaluate the practice.

Things to keep in mind:

- + The content of this document is in its Version 1 form. Going forward, the intention is to convene a **committee** of Early Learning Specialists and Coordinators from across sites to revise this document until it meets the training needs. Even then, it will continue to be a live document and subject to undergo future revisions.
- + The principles are informed by research in the early childhood home visiting field. They draw heavily on the work of Phyllis Levenstein, founder of ParentChild+, and Lori Roggman, author of “Developmental Parenting.”
- + There are *optional* questions at the end of the document designed to help guide reflective conversations.
- + Currently the only published course in Elevate is “Encouraging Parent-Child Interaction.” Others will be added soon.
- + The following **areas are outside the parameters of this document** but will be covered by other trainings, guidance from the National Center, and your own agency’s policies and protocols, including:
 - How to enter the home, greet the family, or leave the home
 - Difficult conversations or situations
 - Managing referrals to partnering organizations and ELS/family participation in social events
 - Ethics
 - The home visiting staff’s role in safeguarding children and as mandated reporters
- + Please note, the words “family” and “parent” are used interchangeably.

Thank you!

Best Practice Principle 1: Encouraging Parent-Child Interaction

Name: _____ Family/video reference ID: _____ Date: _____

Definition: The Early Learning Specialist supports the family's role as the child's primary caregiver and first teacher, encouraging the family to “take the lead” in observing and interacting with their child's strengths and needs based on verbal and nonverbal cues. The focus of the home visit should always be on the relationship between parent and child.

Does the Early Learning Specialist....?	Not Observed or N/A	Need Support	Meet Often	Excel
Interact with both parent and child together.				
Support ongoing parent-child interactions and reinforce positive parent-child interactions. This might mean observing and commenting or waiting and listening.				
Encourage parent responsiveness to child by either highlighting the child's cues or asking questions to help the parent enrich interaction with the child.				
Have supportive body positioning to encourage parent-child interaction or togetherness.				

Comments:

Best Practice Principle 2: Family Collaboration and Engagement

Definition: The Early Learning Specialist collaborates with the family to incorporate their ideas on how the direction of visits and activities impact the child's development and learning outcomes. These practices should always be family centered, inclusive, and respect their ideas and insights.

Does the Early Learning Specialist....?	Not Observed or N/A	Need Support	Meet Often	Excel
Ask questions about parent preferences and respond accordingly				
Involve parents in planning activities they want to complete with their child during the next visit.				
Reflect and share the child's development and learning observations with the family.				
Hand the VISM material to the parent and/or encourage parental lead with the VISM or materials in the home environment.				

Comments:

Best Practice Principle 3: Building on the Family's Strengths, Values, and Cultures

Definition: This is the Early Learning Specialist ability to actively learn about each family and their unique characteristics, asks about the family's values and expectations, and see them as a source of strength. The Early Learning Specialist assists in finding ways to use the family's strengths to meet their children's developmental needs and considers those strengths when planning program activities. This information can be also used to help the family identify ways that they can integrate learning into every day, pre-existing activities or routines.

Does the Early Learning Specialist...?	Not Observed or N/A	Need Support	Meet Often	Excel
Ask open-ended questions about family behaviors, beliefs, and practices as it relates to the child.				
Acknowledge ways the child is positively supported in the family and community environment.				
Adapt to the environment in a way that honors their strengths, values, and culture. One way to do this is by including other family members or making use of objects within the home environment.				
Plan or model activities that build on the family's activities, strengths, and culture.				

Comments:

Best Practice Principle 4: Observing, Reflecting, and Responding to Parent-Child Emotions

Definition: This is the Early Learning Specialist's ability to think about the thoughts, feelings, and intentions of both the parent and child. The Early Learning Specialist helps the parent explore why the child has behaved a certain way and make comments on affective states. This often involves labeling emotions that are not yet being articulated or expressed – exploring the thoughts, feelings, and intentions that might underlie a child's behavior.

Does the Early Learning Specialist....?	Not Observed or N/A	Need Support	Meet Often	Excel
Facilitate awareness of emotions by responding to positive or negative feelings by mirroring, labeling, and describing the affect for both the child and parent.				
Engage empathetically with the parent and promote empathy towards the child by the parent.				
Verbally encourage child's efforts, rather than praise the outcome.				
Reflect or ask reflective questions on the child's behavior and actions, providing parents with the language or tools that help the parent to understand the child's socio-emotional needs.				

Comments:

Best Practice Principle 5: Exploration of the Child's Learning and Development

Definition: This is the Early Learning Specialist's ability to help the family identify and respond to their child's interests in ways that are interesting and relevant to the child's development and learning. In this domain, the Early Learning Specialist might: 1) ask questions to enhance language and literacy; 2) share information pertaining to child development, social-emotional learning, exploration and play; and 3) introduce ways to enhance communication skills. Objects or activities presented to the family recognize home language, they are child friendly, culturally sensitive, and potentially utilize resources available in the home. Child-led play should be encouraged, even if it means the child's interest moves away from the VISM.

Does the Early Learning Specialist....?	Not Observed or N/A	Need Support	Meet Often	Excel
Ask questions and offer suggestions to help the parent and child engage in the activity or understand when the activity should shift to child-led play.				
Pause and wait for child's response after making a suggestion or asking a question AND/OR alter the pace of activities to meet the child's needs.				
Respond to child's vocalizations and behaviors by showing attention, encouragement, enthusiasm, or interest in what s/he is doing.				
Make suggestions to parent to engage in or extend child's play, especially symbolic play. Accept the parent and child's play ideas and encourage creative behavior in play.				
Support the parent in having developmentally appropriate expectations and in making developmentally appropriate choices with their child.				
For Cycle 1: Label characteristics of the book or object, including features like color, shape, texture, and movement. (This is developmentally appropriate for younger toddlers.) For Cycle 2: Ask the child open-ended or prediction questions about a book or object, like "who, what, when, where, why, how?" (This is developmentally appropriate for older toddlers).				

Comments:

Self-Reflection and Group-Reflection Supervision Questions (Optional)

Think about one family or home visit session this week that you would like to discuss:

1. What principle I was most using or trying to use with this family? What was I trying to accomplish?
2. How was I communicating this?
3. What was the child communicating and doing (nonverbally and non-verbally)?
4. What was the parent communicating and doing (verbally and non-verbally)?
5. What was I thinking and feeling during this session?
6. In what areas of my practice do I wish I had done more? Where was I stuck and didn't know what to do?
7. For the "missed opportunities" listed above, if any, are there 1-2 alternative things I might have said or done?