



Research Snapshot No. 4

November 2022

Keilty, B (2020). Assessing the home environment to promote infant-toddler learning within everyday family routines.

What you need to know:

Research has demonstrated the importance of assessment and intervention that focuses on the social interactions, physical features, and temporal environments of everyday family routines that make up the child's learning environment.

The *social* environment is the interactions occurring between child and others, including sensitivity, consistent responsiveness, contingent responsiveness, and engagement in everyday routines.

The *physical* environment is the inanimate features of a routine, including the environmental layout, objects and materials, and level of environmental stimulation. The *temporal* environment focuses on when routines and transitions occur, how long routines and transitions occur, and how slow or quick the routines and transitions progress.

What is this article about?

The purpose of this article is to share the importance of social, physical, and temporal environments to child learning in home routines and how early childhood intervention practitioners can partner with each family to create adaptations that uniquely fit their child and their family.

The paper proposes ways to assess environmental strengths and needs, whilst being respectful of individual family strengths, priorities, and culture.

What did the researcher do?

The researcher investigated three frequently used home assessments that consider social, physical, and temporal environments.

- Social and physical environment
Home Observation Measurement of the Environment (HOME) (Caldwell & Bradley, 1984),

- Social environment
Parenting Interactions with Children Checklist of Observations (PICCOLO)
(Roggman et al., 2013)
- Physical and temporal environment
Creating Adaptations for Routines and Activities (CARA's Kit for Toddlers)
(Campbell et al., 2012)

The researcher then provides practical examples through a case study of how early childhood intervention practitioners can partner with each family to create adaptations that uniquely fit their child and their family. The approach focuses on strength-based approaches.

What did the researcher find?

The researcher proposes that how routines occur in an individual family reflects that family's priorities and culture. By uncovering those elements during assessment, adaptations can be designed to fit the family's priorities and culture as much as they fit the child's developmental characteristics.

The researcher found that ECI practitioners can enhance assessment by:

- Affirming environmental strengths

This strategy goes beyond acknowledging what's working well but affirms with the family how those strengths help their child learn. This provides an opportunity for families to share their thinking and how those features reflect the family's culture and priorities.

- Understanding environmental needs within the family context

When practitioners have a conversation with families to understand how particular environmental features might reflect the family's culture and priorities, they work towards adaptation recommendations that fit both the child and the family.

- Respecting family culture

This assessment strategy explores how the family chooses to go about their routines in order to avoid assumptions about family priorities and culture when planning interventions.

How can you use this research?

Adapting the social, physical, and temporal environments to support children's learning and development is a recommended practice (DEC, 2014).

To plan such interventions, early childhood intervention practitioners should analyse both the child and the environment. The focus should be on understanding environmental strengths and needs of family routines by answering the question: *"How well does the environment facilitate the individual child's learning experiences?"*.

Assessment must also focus on understanding how those environmental characteristics reflect family priorities and culture by affirming environmental strengths, understanding environmental needs within the family context and respecting family culture. Specific examples of how to understand these characteristics are provided above.

Where to from here?

- DEC Recommended practices (2014). Retrieved from <https://www.dec-sped.org/dec-recommended-practices>
- Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center- Practice Improvement Tools: Using the DEC recommended Practices. Retrieved from <https://ectacenter.org/decrp/>
- Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center- Practice Improvement Tools: Evidence-based Professional Development Procedures. Retrieved from <https://ectacenter.org/decrp/ebpdp.asp>
- The Envelope <https://theenvelope.commons.gc.cuny.edu/>
- Workgroup on principles and practices in natural environments https://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/topics/families/Principles_LooksLike_DoesntLook_Like3_11_08.pdf

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This Research Snapshot was prepared by Dr Kerry Bull PRECI committee member and Early Childhood/Early Intervention Consultant

In the spirit of reconciliation PRECI acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.