

Early Childhood Outcomes Conversation Starters

Directions: Use these questions to guide your discussions with family members, other IFSP/IEP team members, early childhood staff or other caregivers who can provide information on the child's skills and abilities across a variety of settings and activities.

These questions are NOT designed to be a checklist of performance but to help you gather information on the child's development that can be used in completing the authentic assessment tool that will be used to make ECO ratings.

A. Children have positive social/emotional skills (including positive social relationships)

- Build and maintain relationships with adults and other children;
- Behave in a way that allows them to participate in a variety of settings and situations;
- Understand and follow social rules (greetings, waiting turns, familiar/unfamiliar, quiet in certain places);
- Regulate their emotions. (express feelings in ways that are constructive rather than impulsive/reckless)

Conversation Starters:

- Besides your family who are other people that your child spends time with often and that he knows well?
- What kinds of things do you like to do with (child's name)?
- What are some things that he does that make you proud?
- Describe funny times – stuff that he does that makes you laugh.
- How does he get along with his siblings and neighborhood kids that he knows well?
- When you are out together, how does (child's name) react when a stranger talks to him? How does he respond to people he knows when they greet him or want to play?
- Describe situations when (child's name) gets super happy or excited. What does he do that tells you he is feeling this way?
- Some kids are more affectionate than others. How does your son/daughter respond to snuggle times or hugs and kisses?
- Everyone has moments when they are frustrated or overwhelmed. When your child is feeling this way, what does he do? Does this seem to happen a lot? What situations may cause a negative reaction? It can be hard to know what to do when your child is having these strong reactions. What do you usually do?
- How does (child's name) handle change? – like when you have to go from place-to-place or if you do something different than his usual routine, or if you visit a new place.
- How does your child participate in games – like back and forth play (peek –a-boo) – or when he has to take turns or follow the rules?
- Does your child seem to understand rules and expectations? Does he behave differently depending on the location? (he has to be quieter in church or the library, he can run outside but not in the house)

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B. Children gain and use knowledge and skills (including early language and early literacy for 3-5 year olds)

- Think, reason, remember, and solve problems;
- Understand and use symbols that build to early literacy skills;
- Participate in daily learning opportunities as they explore and use toys and objects;
- Use vocabulary, through spoken, signed or augmentative systems, to communicate in more and more complex/difficult ways.

Conversation Starters:

- How does (child's name) let you know what he wants? Because we know our children so well, sometimes we understand what they are communicating but other people may not. How does s/he communicate with others when you are outside of the house?
- How does he understand and respond to directions and requests from you/others?
- Tell me about a time when s/he tried to solve a problem (e.g., like something was out of his reach, couldn't open a door, needs a piece to finish a puzzle). What did s/he do?
- Describe any times when you have seen (child's name) sort items or talk about differences between things or what something does or does not do. (red ones, shoes go on feet, small/little, a spoon can scoop but a fork can't)
- Tell me about times when you know s/he remembers something that you may have talked about or taught him earlier. (words to familiar songs or fill in the blanks when reading books, if he is pretending to do grown up things does he follow the steps, follow steps in familiar routines like brushing teeth)?
- How does your child respond to books, or play with letters and numbers? (does he hold up fingers or say how old he is? Play with number or letter items and say them, counting things or people during meals, recognize signs for favorite places like McDonald's or cereals)
- What are some of his favorite toys? How does he use them? Sometimes even old boxes and kitchen tools are things that children choose to play with.
- Are there toys or play activities that you would like to do with her but that she runs away from or doesn't seem to want to do?
- How does your child imitate others' actions across different places to learn or try new things?
- What are you most proud of when you think about (child's name) learning? What is one thing that you would like him to work on?
- When have you noticed that your child tries different ways to do something if not originally successfully? (turn puzzle piece, switch hands to use scissors, or hold paper when trying to write)

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C. Children use appropriate behaviors to meet needs

- Take care of basic needs (e.g., eating, dressing, sleeping, toileting, etc.);
- Play a part in health and safety (e.g., follows rules, assists with hand washing, stays away from dangerous things, moves around in fun ways);
- Get from place to place (mobility) to participate in everyday activities and routines; and
- Use objects as tools in appropriate ways (e.g., spoons, strings attached to objects, switches, etc.).

Conversation Starters:

- Describe times when your child shows that he really likes or wants something – a toy or person? What did he do to get it? Does he seek your help or try to get it on his own?
- When you have to say, “No” to something that your child really wants, what does he do?
- How does (child’s name) get from place to place when he wants something or just to move about?
- Tell me about how (child’s name) participates in activities that we all have to do every day, sometimes many times a day – like brushing teeth, washing hands/face, blowing nose, changing diaper or going to the bathroom.
- How does s/he show you that he understands that some situations may be dangerous (e.g., hot stoves, high places, cars/crossing streets, strangers)?
- Are there situations when your child has difficulty doing something to get his needs met? Do you think this happens a lot? Are there other ways that he has learned to do it that might be different than we would expect, but he is successful?
- When you or others aren’t playing with him or there isn’t something fun going on – what does your child usually do? Are there any things he likes to do by himself?
- Describe mealtime with (child’s name). Does s/he help out with preparing, use utensils?
- If toys or household items require some action in order to work, how does he handle that? (turn on toys, change channel with remote, turn off lights, use computer or ipad or cell phone)
- Describe other routines that you and your child do together every day. How much does he participate in this routine?
- What kinds of things does your child do with other children his age? Does he participate with them in similar ways?
- When you aren’t able to meet your child’s needs immediately, how does he respond? (Waiting for a bottle, waiting while you are on the phone)
- What does your child do when he is upset or needs comfort? What does he do when he is hungry? What does he do when he is frustrated?

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