



## Center for Early Literacy Learning

For **HOME-BASED** early childhood educators

# Additional skill-building exercises to help home visitors promote **CHILDREN’S INTEREST-BASED LEARNING**

The practice activities below provide early childhood home visitors and early interventionists with follow-up support in utilizing the CELL Early Literacy Learning Model. These exercises are designed to reinforce and enhance practitioners’s skills in identifying and employing children’s interests in ways that promote early literacy development.

The exercises provide the home visitor/early intervention practitioner with opportunities to practice, evaluate, and reflect about a child interests. The intent is to take these practice activities into the home and community to create an authentic, hands-on experience utilizing the components of the CELL model.

### Exercise 1

#### Activity:

Read the vignettes below from the *CELLpractices* parent practice guide titled **Up, Down, All Around**.

#### Using Directions

Two-year old Anami likes to help her mom in the kitchen—unpacking groceries and cooking. Her mom uses lots of spatial terms to help Anami figure out where things are.

“Bring me the heart-shaped cookie cutter, please,” Mom says. “It’s next to the sink.” When Anami finds it and holds it up, Mom says “Great! Can you put it *on the kitchen table*?”

Anami has started using these words too to help her mom understand what she wants. When she can’t reach a toy car, for example, she says, “Go *under* couch!,” and Mom gets it for her.

#### Follow Along

Toby, who is almost three, loves playing Follow the Leader with his twin sister. They take turns being the leader and running around their backyard, all the while talking about what they are doing. “Let’s go *under* the picnic table!” Toby yells, leading the way. “And over the tree trunk.” “Let’s go *along* the driveway and *behind* the garage,” his sister answers. This game lets Toby build on his love of climbing and running around to practice using important spatial terms. He asks his sister to play *Follow the Leader* regularly, and has started using these words in other contexts too.



### **Where in the World?**

Nineteen-month-old Gideon has a moderate visual impairment that sometimes causes him trouble knowing exactly where things are. His dad helps him learn the meaning of important spatial terms during one of Gideon's favorite activities: finger painting. Gideon loves bright colors, and he picks out a few favorite ones each time. As he paints with his fingers, he and Dad talk about where the paint is going. "You put yellow *on top of* red," Dad says. "Now you have paint on the *backs of* your hands." Gideon has fun mixing and spreading the colors. His dad introduces him to the spatial words that help him understand what he is doing. Dad knows that Gideon has learned some of these words, because Gideon uses them in other situations besides painting.

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#### **Evaluate:**

- What interests did you identify within the vignettes?
- How did you determine that the child was interested?
- How did the adult in the story support the child's interests?

## **Exercise 2**

#### **Activity:**

Select one child that you see on weekly home visits. Talk with his/her parent about the importance of child interests. Select a *CELLpractices* parent practice guide that highlights child interests and use it to illustrate a discussion with the parent, for example: [http://www.earlyliteracylearning.org/cellpract\\_parent/toddler/PG\\_1\\_T\\_BooksCrayonsOnesOwn.pdf](http://www.earlyliteracylearning.org/cellpract_parent/toddler/PG_1_T_BooksCrayonsOnesOwn.pdf).

During the next home visit allow the child to choose the materials, activities and people with which to interact. Together with the parent observe the child and note the following:

- Materials, activities and people that make the child smile and laugh
- Activities the child works hard at doing
- Activities the child wants to repeat over and over
- Objects, people and activities that attract the child's attention

#### **Evaluate:**

Based on the exercise completed, answer the following questions:

- What interests of the child did **you** identify? What interests of the child did **the parent** identify?
- What surprised you and/or the parent about any of the interests? Was the parent aware of interests before the observation?

## Exercise 2, continued

- How did you and the parent determine that the child was interested?

### **Reflect:**

During the home visit did you help the parent identify the objects, people, activities and actions that:

- Are the child's favorites?
- Make the child smile and laugh?
- Are especially exciting to the child?
- The child chooses most often?
- The child works hard at doing?
- Attract the child's attention?

## **Exercise 3**

### **Activity:**

Now that you and the parent have identified the child's interests, you should have enough information to plan a literacy activity that is based on the child's interests.

For example: one of the child's interests is cats so you encourage the parent and child to make a book about cats. The parent provides an old magazine for the child to cut or tear pictures of cats and paste to sheets of paper. The parent may encourage the child to "read" the cat book.

This week it's your turn to support the parent in providing literacy activities that are based on his/her child's interests.

### **Evaluate:**

- What kind of interest-based literacy experiences did the parent provide the child?
- How did the child participate in the literacy activity?
- How did the child respond during the activity?
- How did the parent support the child's participation during the activity?
- How did you support the parent? How did you help the parent determine whether the interest-based literacy activity worked? (Did the child laugh and smile, etc.?)

### **Reflect:**

During the home visit did you help the parent identify the objects, people, activities and actions that:

- Are the child's favorites?
- Make the child smile and laugh?
- Are especially exciting to the child?
- The child chooses most often?
- The child works hard at doing?
- Attract the child's attention?