

# PARENT CONNECTIONS

A Newsletter for First Steps Families ♦ Spring 2009

## Family-Guided Routines for Early Intervention

Excerpt adapted from resources prepared by FACETS

Routines can be described as naturally occurring activities or times of the day in which families regularly participate in “doing things.” When put into practice, routines are a part of everyday life and include meaningful events, common chores and work that are associated with daily living. Routines could be as simple as waving goodbye when big brother goes to school each morning, or they might be more complex and include several related activities (such as bathing and dressing). Regardless of their complexity, all of these activities provide opportunities for teaching and learning.

Because they are predictable and repetitive, routines are an important context for early intervention with children who have special needs. Routines provide meaningful opportunities for a child to practice and improve functional skills. When early intervention is embedded in naturally occurring routines, the caregiver interacts with the child to accomplish a task. In most routines, a positive outcome is achieved, such as changing a diaper, bathing or eating a meal with the family.

Family-guided routines that are useful for intervention should be predictable and

meaningful activities; they should be selected by family members to match their interests and schedules. These routines should also be flexible, changing to meet the needs of the child, the caregiver and the family unit.

Any activity could become a routine if it is repeated regularly, has a specific outcome and can be developed into a sequence. Taking the dog for a walk, greeting visitors or family members, and riding a rocking horse are all examples of activities that families have identified and developed into routines.

It is important to remember that not every activity or routine is appropriate for intervention. Putting on shoes could be an opportunity to work on specific outcomes, but it might not meet a child’s needs at a particular time.

Successful family-guided routines will mean positive interactions between the child and the caregiver, as well as positive developmental outcomes for the child.

*FACETS (Family-guided Approaches to Collaborative Early-intervention Training and Services) is a joint project of the University of Kansas and Florida State University. Download the full document at <http://www.parsons.lsi.ku.edu/facets/pdf/TipsheetFamilyguidedrou.pdf>.*

## Spring Cleaning

Accumulating paperwork can be overwhelming for parents of children with disabilities. Here are some tips to cut down on the clutter and get organized this spring!

- Find and organize all of your papers. Whether you use a binder, an accordion-file folder, a box or a file cabinet, keep everything in a place that is easy to access. Find a filing method (by date, by topic, etc.) that works for you. (If you have a binder, try using dividers.)
- Keep a telephone log by your phone. This could be a notebook or printed log sheets. Write down the names of people you talk to, dates of all conversations and topics discussed.
- Use a calendar or a planner to map out your activities for the month.

Do you have tips that have worked great for you? E-mail them to [pschneeflock@ptimpact.org](mailto:pschneeflock@ptimpact.org).





## A Missouri Family's Story

By Amy Mefford of Cameron, Mo.

Our twins were born four-months premature in March 2008. The horrendous 100-day stay in the hospital was nothing compared to the challenges we have faced since we came home. I thank heaven and Missouri First Steps every day for bringing the most valuable people into our lives – therapists. While we would never dismiss the value of *all* therapists, our speech pathologist/OT is by far the most important person in our lives right now. We never thought we would have to teach our babies how to eat, let alone how to handle oral and sensory aversions.

As we move through the therapy maze, we cannot help but wonder how two babies born at exactly the same time to the same parents could be so different. Strategies as simple as a washcloth pressed around the inside of their mouths (or the use of a NUK brush rolled around in their cheeks, over their tongues and across their lips) have helped desensitize my sensitive girl and sensitize my desensitized boy. And the pacifier – don't forget the pacifier! At first we were reluctant to use this tool; we had a naive perception that it would be the

most difficult item to get rid of later on. To our surprise, it helped in the formation of tongue-grooving (as we had to teach our babies how to eat) and in soothing reflux symptoms.

Our speech pathologist/OT comes prepared once a week to help with feeding strategies, to chart the twins' progress (or lack of progress sometimes), and to help coordinate with doctors and dieticians the best plan for each of our children. She has also helped us create charts that doctors and dieticians rave about. These charts keep track of each child's daily intake and output, which is immensely helpful to us. We have realized that parenting multiples can lead to confusion as to who did what. To top it all off, she is always available for a phone call when we feel trapped by an ongoing problem.

The greatest benefit for us is that our speech pathologist/OT comes to our house once a week and continues to work on difficulties we are having. This is a service our doctors could not keep track of on a regular basis, yet it is an essential part of our daily survival.

### Ziploc Bag Book

1. Gather pictures of your child's favorite people, pets and places. Use your own photographs or pictures from magazines.
2. Use a glue stick to attach each picture to construction paper or lightweight cardboard from a cereal box. This will help reinforce the pictures.
3. Slip each picture inside one Ziploc bag. Seal the bags so that the sealable end is on the left.
4. Stack the bags so all of the pictures are facing you like a book; make sure the sealable ends are lined up on the left.
5. Staple the bags together (using about three staples) down the left end.
6. Reinforce with heavy-duty tape (packing tape, duct tape, etc.) so that the staples are covered.
7. Have your child share this personalized picture book with family and friends!



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