

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:

- 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 she 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 her? How does she respond to people she knows when they greet her or want to play?
- Describe situations when (child's name) gets happy or excited. What does she do that tells you she is feeling this way?
- Some kids are more affectionate than others. How does your child respond to snuggle times, hugs or 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? 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 her usual routine.
- How does your child participate in games – like back and forth play (e.g., peek –a-boo) – or when he has to take turns or follow the rules?
- Does your child seem to understand rules and expectations? Does she behave differently depending on the location? (e.g., she is quieter at the library but knows it is okay to be louder outside in the yard)

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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 he communicate with others when you are outside of the house?
- How does she understand and respond to directions and requests from you or others?
- Tell me about a time when 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 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. (e.g., red ones, shoes go on feet, small/little, a spoon can scoop but a fork can't)
- Tell me about times when you know she remembers something that you may have talked about or taught her earlier. (e.g., words to familiar songs or fill in the blanks when reading books, if she is pretending to do grown up things does she 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? Count things or people during meals? Recognize signs for favorite places to eat or labels on favorite foods)
- What are some of her favorite toys? How does she use or play with them? How does she play with other familiar items like old boxes and kitchen tools?
- Are there toys or play activities that you would like to do with your child but that he runs away from or doesn't seem to want to do?
- How does your child imitate other people's actions? Does your child use imitation 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 her to work on?
- When have you noticed that your child tries different ways to do something if not originally successfully? (e.g., 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 she 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, changing diaper or going to the bathroom.
- How does she show you that she 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 get his needs met, but that might be different than we would expect?
- When you or others aren’t playing with her or there isn’t something fun going on – what does your child usually do? Are there any things she likes to do by herself?
- Describe mealtime with (child’s name). Does he help out with preparing food or using utensils?
- If toys or household items require some action in order to work, what does she do? (e.g., turn on toys, change channel with remote, turn off lights, use computer 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 her age? Does she participate in these activities in similar ways to the other children?
- When you aren’t able to meet your child’s needs immediately, how does he respond? (e.g., waiting for a bottle, waiting while you are on the phone)
- What does your child do when she is upset or needs comfort? What does she do when she is hungry?