



Individualization Strategy Guide

**SETA Head Start
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Individualization Strategy Guide

A central principle of Head Start has always been to recognize each child as an individual with unique combinations of strengths and limitations, gifts and needs. As required in the Head Start Program Performance Standards, “programs must respond to and support the individual abilities, interests, temperaments, developmental rates and learning styles of young children.” The foundation is a quality early childhood program that ensures the participation of all children.

Parents play a critical role in planning individualization strategies for the classroom. They provide important information about their child’s interests, preferences, background and culture. Their input is essential and must be included when choosing or developing strategies. The professional input from specialists, therapists, special education teachers, etc. also play a vital role in developing strategies for children who have a disabling condition and/or an active Individual Education Plan (IEP).

The Individualization Strategy Guide will provide teaching staff with a sampling of ideas that support adaptations within general education classrooms. Specific strategies for children who have IEP’s, English Language Learners, as well as for those who are having difficulty learning new skills are included in the guide. Many of these strategies will be familiar to early childhood educators as developmentally appropriate practices that emphasize active learning and supportive relationships with adults. Teachers will use the Strategy Guide as a resource to write their weekly Lesson Plans.

The Intervention Specialist will use the Guide to develop home/school strategies for children who have active IEP’s or who need additional support in certain domain areas.

The Individualization Strategy Guide

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inclusion & Membership• General Adaptations• Social/Emotional• Expressive Language• Receptive Language• Articulation• Gross Motor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fine Motor• Cognitive• Vision Impairment• Hearing Impairment• Autism• English Language Development• Advanced Learners
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Membership is Key for Inclusion

Membership encompasses such terms as belonging, acceptance, and positive relationships with peers. Membership and having a sense of belonging is important to all children, including children with disabilities. Becoming a member of the class can serve as the foundation of peer relationships and friendships.

Teachers can foster membership and create a classroom community by using the following strategies:

- Greet each child warmly by name every day.
- Provide every child with a name card for the attendance chart and a cubby to store their belongings.
- Have children choose a class name, and create a display using photos of the children in the greeting area.
- Ask families for photos or drawings from home to share and recognize individual children's interests and preferences.
- Start the school year by promoting social skills so that children can get to know each other. Take children's photos, and use them to make a visual schedule of the class routine and expectation chart. Use photos of families, field trips, classroom routines and activities to display and make photo albums.
- Assign class jobs or responsibilities to every child in the class.
- Make sure every child has the opportunity to be a leader or helper.
- Make accommodations so that every child has the opportunity to answer questions, make choices, or make a comment. For example: put the names and pictures of songs on a chart so that children can make their choice by naming or pointing to the song.
- Plan specific ways to fully include all children in learning opportunities, free play and routines, such as snack and field trips.
- Model, encourage, and teach positive social interaction skills.
- Plan projects that can be done as groups or in pairs. For example: class mural or collage.
- Use social materials, like building blocks or dolls, that are likely to encourage interactions. Use play group equipment like wagons or tricycles with carts that can encourage social interaction.
- Introduce Group Friendship Activities. Take a familiar song like "If You're Happy and You Know It" and change the actions to friendly gestures like a "hand wave" or "shaking hands," etc.
- Help children understand that everyone can participate in activities and routines, but that sometimes activities will need to be adapted for some children.

General Adaptations

Environmental Support: Alter the physical and social environment and the timing of activities to promote a child's participation, engagement, and learning.

- Change lighting in room, noise level, visual and auditory input, physical arrangement of the room, equipment and accessibility of materials.
- Create a calm environment using neutral colors and items from nature, and reduce clutter on shelves and walls.
- Create a sense of belonging by including photographs of children and families in the classroom.
- Use photographs or pictures on shelves and containers to make clean-up a matching game. If a child has great difficulty with clean-up time, provide a special basket so that the child can carry, gather, and place materials into the basket. Staff can return the items to the correct location at the end of class.
- Make visual schedules with photos of children in class and use to show child what activity is next. Also label each learning area with a photo or picture. For children who need extra support, provide them with an individual photo schedule of the day on a ring or small clipboard.
- Provide a few places in the classroom where children can wait for next activity as needed: library, writing area, free choice art, puzzles, etc.

Material Modifications: Modify materials so that the child can participate as independently as possible.

- Provide a chair or place materials on the floor or table to make all materials as accessible as possible for every child.
- Stabilize materials to keep them from slipping by adding tape, Velcro, nonskid backing such as bath mat appliques, and clamps.
- Use a variety of materials and methods for collage activities: glue in a squeeze bottle, and a container with brush or sponge. Use paste, glue stick, contact paper, or sticky note paper.
- Increase interest in the block area by wrapping blocks with wrapping paper. Use clear contact paper to add photos of the children and their families, as well as familiar stores or restaurants.
- Increase interest in books by including class photograph albums in the library area. Make class books about field trips, class activities, or child's favorite interests.

Modify the activity: Simplify complicated tasks by breaking them down into smaller parts or reducing the number of steps.

- Hand child beads or puzzle pieces one at a time, and gradually increase the number of pieces with the child's success.
- Break down projects (cooking or table games) into smaller steps, and describe the steps in clear terms: "First we do _____, then we do _____." Draw pictures to make the steps even clearer.
- Use props when reading books, such as flannel board pieces or objects to represent characters in the story.
- Post pictures strategically along halls or outdoor paths to help child get from one place to another: "You made it to the baby elephant picture—can you find the baby lion?"

- Plan activities with all children in mind; some may complete a project in one day while others may just complete a few of the steps. Consider extending the project over several days; advanced children will elaborate on the process, others will be able to learn through repetition and complete the project on a later day.

Using Child Preferences: Identify and integrate the child's preferences for materials or activities so that the child takes advantage of available opportunities.

- Let the child hold a favorite quiet toy during group or circle times. Divide children into smaller groups to make it easier for individual children to stay focused and participate.
- Alert the child to transition times by using visual props, verbally telling them what will happen next.
- Start circle or group times with a child's favorite song or activity.
- Add some of the child's favorite materials to activities. If a child likes small cars, add them to the water table, sand table, or use for a painting activity.

Peer Support: Utilize peers to increase a child's participation.

- Encourage child's friend to show them how to select an activity or game.
- Provide children with verbal and nonverbal tips on how to invite another child into play. Role play social situations or use scripted stories to foster friendship skills.
- Have children choose partners to line up or move from one activity to another.
- Seat English speaking and non-English speaking children at the same meal tables and name food in both languages.
- Seat more advanced children strategically at activities or circle to model for other children.
- Seat child next to the same child often to promote friendship skills.

Invisible Support: Arrange natural occurring events within an activity.

- Have children who can pour from a pitcher go first, so that the pitcher is less full when it gets to children who are learning to pour.
- Encourage talkative children to share first to help give less verbal children ideas about what they can say.
- Add a popular, fun, or noisy activity to the end of something that is more difficult for the child. For example, let children hit a gong after they walk across a balance beam.
- Place children who have a difficult time attending in a seat not facing the window, or next to a quieter child.

Adult Support: Intervene or join the activity to support the child's level of participation.

- Show children how to use materials in different ways by making small alterations to the way the child is currently playing. For example: at the sand table, if a child continuously only dumps and pours sand, show him/her how to fill the cup in different ways by using a funnel or tube, and dump it in the same place to make a hill.
- Provide books on tapes or record parents reading favorite stories for the child to listen to. The parent can include clues on when to turn the page or ask simple questions about the story.

Social / Emotional

- ❖ Shows developing understanding of people's behaviors, feelings, thoughts, and individual characteristics. (SED 2)
- ❖ Develops close relationships with one or more familiar adults (including family members) and interacts in an increasingly competent and cooperative manner with familiar adults. (SED 3)
- ❖ Becomes increasingly competent and cooperative in interactions with peers and develops friendships with several peers. (SED 4)

Use the Teaching Pyramid [Inventory of Practice](#) for Promoting Children's Social-Emotional competence.

For more challenging behaviors, refer to the [Routine Based Support Guide](#).

- **Examines personal, family, and cultural views of child's challenging behavior**
- **Examines own attitudes towards challenging behavior**
- **Develops meaningful relationships with families and staff**
- **Develops meaningful relationships with children**
Greet by name, communicates at eye level, verbally interacts, speaks calmly, etc.
- **Designs the physical environment**
Use soothing colors, natural materials, soft textures, limit clutter, etc. Display family photos.
- **Develops schedule and routines**
Use children's photos to make a visual schedule and refer to it throughout the day.
- **Ensures smooth transitions**
Limit transitions throughout the day, use signals to prepare children for change, etc.
- **Designs activities to promote engagement**
- **Establishes and teaches clear expectations**
Use county-wide expectations for children's behaviors; use photos, display and reinforce.
- **Gives clear directions**
- **Engages in ongoing monitoring and positive attention**
- **Uses positive feedback and descriptive acknowledgement**
Gives PDA's designed to reinforce engagement in appropriate behaviors.
- **Promotes friendship skills**
- **Characteristics of a classroom that fosters emotional literacy are visible**
Uses books, posters, pictures that portray various emotions; check-in chart, songs, art, etc.
- **Promotes emotional literacy through identification and labeling of emotions in self and others**
- **Promotes children's individualized emotional regulation to enhance positive social interactions**
- **Creates a planned approach for problem solving and conflict resolution**
Provides visual tools in learning to problem solve: the Solution Kit, Tucker Turtle and other scripted stories.

- Establishes a warm, collaborative relationship with families by using a variety of strategies: visit the family's home prior to the first day of school and learn about the family members and child. Discuss their celebrations, routines, interests, and create a communication system for on-going sharing opportunities (at arrival, departure, by phone, etc.).
- Creates a classroom environment where children and families want to be, where they feel welcomed, comfortable, and safe.
- Uses a variety of strategies to build relationships with all children: greets by name at arrival; gets down to their eye level to communicate; shows respect, consideration, and warmth.
- Creates a schedule that is balanced between large and small group activities, teacher and child directed.
- Teaches children about the schedule and use it to provide visual cues for children who need extra support.
- Teaches expectations in developmentally appropriate ways, give children time to practice, and frequently reinforce by using expectation language.
- Provides children with PDA's (Positive Descriptive Acknowledgements) to reinforce behaviors throughout the day.

Fine Motor Skills

- ❖ Child demonstrates increasing precision, strength, coordination, and efficiency when using muscles of the hand for play or functional tasks. Children who do not have the use of one or both hands may accomplish this using other body parts, or prosthetic devices. (PD–HLTH 4)
- Introduce playdough and clay, etc., without accessories to promote: touching, rolling, squeezing abilities. Provide one accessory at a time to expand activity: rollers, cookie cutters, plastic knives, etc. Maintain children’s interest by adding scent, texture, and color to the dough periodically.
- Add a garlic press to playdough to build hand and arm strength.
- Use scissors with play dough or orange skins to practice cutting skills.
- Provide a Magna–Doodle to inspire drawing and printing experiences.
- Provide jumbo crayons, pencils, and paintbrushes to the art area. Wrap pipe cleaners around these items to provide extra grip.
- Use real painter’s brushes and water/paint outdoors.
- Provide extra–large sidewalk chalk.
- Individualize cutting activities by letting children tear paper and/or use adaptive scissors (self–spring, etc.). Use cardstock/heavier paper (which is easier to cut) for successful cutting experiences.
- Add shovels and buckets to sand table. Reduce the size of these items with child’s success, introducing spoons, bowls, cups, etc.
- Place rubber shelf paper or dish mats on tables where children use manipulatives to help keep them in place.
- Make a cutting “trough” available for scissor use during the day. Use yarn or ribbon to tie scissors to corners of a cardboard box and fill with various paper scraps. Take it outdoors and make cutting available more often during the day.
- Use a variety of adhesive products for collage activities: glue (in squeeze bottles and/or in a dish with brushes), clear contact paper, glue stick, or paste to vary the experience.
- Add touch and feel books to the library area.
- Use knob or floor puzzles and provide hints and support as needed.
- Add tabs, paperclips, or self–adhesive vinyl dots on the edges of pages in books to promote page turning.
- Provide a wipe board and dry erase pen for a child with low muscle tone.
- Provide ball catchers with Velcro strap handles, Koosh or texture balls to promote grabbing and catching skills.
- Add small pitchers and cups to the water table.

Gross Motor & Movement

- ❖ Moves body and interacts with the environment, demonstrating increasing awareness of own physical effort, body/spatial/directional awareness. (PD–HLTH 1)
 - ❖ Shows increasing proficiency in fundamental locomotion skills (rolling, crawling, cruising, walking, running, jumping, galloping). (PD–HLTH)
 - ❖ Child shows increasing proficiency in gross motor manipulation skills (reaching, kicking, grasping, throwing, and catching).
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- Set up the classroom environment with clearly defined spaces and traffic lanes that are unobstructed and can easily accommodate doll carriages, push toys, wheelchairs, crutches, and walkers. Keep learning area appropriate size to accommodate all children, including children with adaptive equipment.
 - Pay close attention to rugs, spills, and toys left in traffic areas that could present a hazard, indoors and outdoors.
 - Pace transitions so that children with physical limitations or who use adaptive equipment do not feel like they must “keep-up” with the classroom routine.
 - Change height of some of the tables so that all children can access them easily. Rotate all materials on tables at times so that children in wheelchairs have a chance to build with blocks, play with small cars, sand/water and use large floor puzzles, etc.
 - Use carpet squares on the floor and plastic place mats or cafeteria trays on the tables to clearly define each child’s space.
 - Do music and movement songs, such as “Head, Shoulders, Knees & Toes” , “Happy & You Know It”, “The Freeze,” etc. to explore movement and coordination.
 - Play “Follow the Leader”: walk on a straight line, curve, zig-zag, etc. Add additional movements: crawling, running, jumping, galloping, with children’s abilities/success.
 - Introduce and have experienced children model how to use outdoor equipment.
 - Create an obstacle course based on children’s skill level: crawling under, jumping off, running around, walking on a balance beam, etc. Modify the course as needed to include children who use adaptive equipment.
 - Provide textured balls with mittens or gloves, and Koosh balls.
 - Have children sit in a circle and roll a ball to each other; “Roll the Ball and Say Your Name!”
 - Use a large ball to play “Bounce it Back & Forth”; children catch with arms and body. Reduce size of the ball with success.
 - Play “Pass the Bean Bag” to music; vary the tempo. Use large boxes and baskets to make bean bag toss games, then introduce “toss and catch” to a partner.
 - Introduce children to a variety of music and do scarf dancing; vary the beat, tempo, rhythm, speed, and stop and go.

Expressive Language Skills

- ❖ Develops his/her communication skills from nonverbal communication to using language with increasingly complex words and sentences. (LLD 3)
- ❖ Engages in back-and-forth exchanges into increasingly extended conversations. (LLD 4)

- Talk with parents and learn about the child's interests, temperament, likes/dislikes, family members, pets, etc.
- Have conversations and ask questions about topics that interest him/her: "Tell me about your new shoes!" "What do you think you would like to do at school today?"
- Use photos of the children in class to illustrate the daily schedule. Also display their photos in frames, in class photo albums and scripted stories, and use them to promote conversations and language dictation activities.
- Provide time for children to talk and share about topics that interest them. Do "Show and Tell" on a regular basis. Provide topics for sharing such as: their favorite activity, area, or materials in the classroom, or items from home, etc.
- Introduce books by showing cover and asking children to tell you what they think it's about. Ask children to look closely at the pictures to help them understand the story and make predictions about what they think will happen next. Ask children questions during and after the story. Explain meanings of novel words.
- Have them draw pictures and tell you about what they remember in a story.
- Provide flannel board characters of familiar stories and rhymes for story retell opportunities.
- Use magazine pictures and children's drawings to prompt language dictation activities on a regular basis. Have children take part in group brainstorming and record their comments. Display or make classroom books to read aloud later.
- Provide real items in Dramatic Play area to enhance and promote engagement and interactions.
- Add real pictures of structures in the block area: buildings, bridges, construction sites.
- Provide materials and activities that children can use independently so that teachers can join their play and have discussions about what they are working on: "So what's your plan? How will you do that? How did you come up with that idea?" etc.
- Play memory, bingo, matching and board games; encourage naming things and discussions.

Receptive Language Skills

- ❖ Understands increasingly complex communication and language. (LLD-1)
 - ❖ Acts in response to language and responds to increasingly complex language. (LLD-2)
 - ❖ Engages in back and forth conversation that develop into increasingly extended conversations. (LLD-4)
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- Talk with parents and learn about the child's interests, temperament, likes/dislikes, family members, pets, etc.
 - Greet children and parents by name during arrival at school daily.
 - Speak to the child clearly and at their eye level.
 - Use gestures/pointing/pictures during conversations with the child: school, favorite things, clothing, shoes, pets, brothers/sisters, etc.
 - Sing the same greeting song daily to help children recall the words.
 - Provide a visual schedule of the day using photographs of classmates to support learning the names of the other children, classroom materials, and activities.
 - Introduce and repeat simple songs and chants that include finger, hand, or body movements that represent the words.
 - Have children clap when they hear a special word in the story/song.
 - Introduce listening for a rhyming word or alliteration (words with same first letter).
 - Explain the meaning of words used when giving directions, in a story, or conversation.
 - Have children join in choral or echo reading.
 - Encourage children to listen carefully to sounds and describe what they hear.
 - Play group games (The Farmer in the Dell, Simon Says, Follow the Leader, Duck/Duck/Goose, etc.).
 - Create an obstacle course and describe actions using variations of words (jump, leap, hop, hurdle or run, jog, race, dart, dash, etc.).
 - Play Hide and Seek (hide objects in yard and provide children with propositional word hints: under, behind, next to, on top of, etc.).
 - Have photos of children and families displayed throughout the classroom and in photo albums to use as vocabulary and conversation prompts.
 - Provide real items in Dramatic Play area to enhance and promote engagement and interactions.
 - Provide multiple versions of familiar books to the library area to promote recall and retelling stories.
 - Provide flannel board characters or props of familiar stories and rhymes to inspire retell opportunities.
 - Play memory, bingo, matching, and simple board games.
 - Play music and movement songs in small groups; teachers and children can model and/or imitate the actions for each other.
 - Provide a buddy or partner to model participation in routines and activities.

Articulation

- ❖ Shows increasing awareness of the sounds (elements) that make up language, including the ability to manipulate them in language. (LLD 8)
- Consistently speak clearly to the child at his/her eye level. Use simple words and sentences.
- Repeat some of the same songs and finger-plays daily to help children learn and practice the words.
- Use children's music, such as Raffi's "Apples and Bananas", to practice making sounds.
- Introduce and repeat simple finger-plays and chants that include rhyming words or alliteration. Eventually, make up rhyming or alliteration songs or chants using children's names.
- Repeat interesting words and rhymes while reading a book and at later times.
- Read aloud and repeat books that include rhymes, repetition, patterns and predictability.
- While re-reading a story, ask the children to listen and clap when they hear another word in the story with the same initial or rhyming sound.
- Have children join in choral or echo reading
- Provide familiar books in the library area to promote retelling stories.
- Provide multiple versions of familiar books to the library area to promote recall and retelling stories.
- Provide flannel board characters or props of familiar stories and rhymes to inspire retell opportunities.
- Provide a listening post in the classroom with books on tape or CD's.
- Use magazine pictures and photographs to make "letter sound" dictionaries or posters for display and/or add to the literacy area.
- Play memory, bingo, matching and board games; encourage naming things and discussions.
- Introduce and display posters, and add nursery rhyme books to the library area. Send copies of a different rhyme each month to parents for practice and reinforcement at home.
- Have photos of children and families displayed and in accessible photo albums as vocabulary and conversation prompts.
- Provide real items in dramatic play to enhance and promote engagement, interactions, and verbal language skills.

Hearing Impairment

Children with hearing loss may be classified in two ways: as deaf, or as hard of hearing.

Hard of Hearing refers to a lesser hearing loss, but one that has a definite effect on social, cognitive, and language development

Deafness refers to a hearing loss so severe that the individual cannot process spoken language even with amplification devices.

Common Methods of Communication:

Speech reading: A child learns to read what another person is saying by watching face, mouth, tongue, and throat movements.

Cued speech is a visual communication system that uses eight hand shapes in four different placements near face in combination with mouth movements and speech.

American Sign Language (ASL) is a complete, complex language that employs signs made with hands and other movements, including facial expressions and postures of the body.

Signed English is a sign language that parallels the English language; for every word there is a sign.

Finger-spelling is a system made up of an alphabet of twenty-six hand-formed letters that correspond to the regular alphabet.

Total communication is a system that combines both speech and a sign system.

The final decision about signing, speaking, or combining communication methods must be made by the parents. Teachers will need to find out from parents the method they will be using, as well as best strategies to reinforce it with their child. Teachers will choose and adapt some of the strategies listed below to best support what/how the child is communicating at home.

- Sit, kneel, or bend down to the child's eye level to talk. Look directly at the child. Children who are hard of hearing need to be spoken to face-to-face.
- Use clear speech. Talk at a slightly slower pace with careful pronunciation. Avoid an overly loud voice and do not over-enunciate (which makes speech reading difficult).
- Use brief but complete sentences and use gestures as appropriate (too many gestures interfere with child's effort to speech read).
- Seat the child directly in front of the teacher, across the table or circle.
- Face the light, which should be on the teacher's face, not the child's. Glaring light in the child's eyes interferes with bringing the speaker's voice into full focus.
- Gently touch or tap on the child's shoulder or hand to get his/her attention. Always be aware of startling a child who does not hear.
- When possible, touch, point or hold an item up when you talk about it. For example, pick up and show scissors while demonstrating cutting.

- Include children with hearing impairments in all music activities. Provide opportunities for them to participate by putting their hands on various instruments so they can feel the vibrations, allowing them to play instruments, having frequent rhythmic activities such as clapping, jumping, twirling, etc. Pair the child that is hard of hearing with a hearing child for musical games.
- Involve the child in story times by choosing books with bright, clear pictures that tell the story. Gesture and use facial expressions that give clues to the story's moods.
- Keep to a regular schedule of activities each day and use a photo visual schedule to show the child what will be happening next at school.
- Find subtle ways to let the child know when he/she is making noises that they may not hear themselves. (Put a finger to your lips and say, "Shhhh.")
- Teach peers how to get the attention of the child and remind them to look at the child when they talk.
- Place picture cards on a key chain or belt loop so that the child can show you what they want or need.
- Include books that are specific to a disability. Choose books where the character has a disability in the story but the content is NOT only about the disability.
- Make communication books using photos or drawings from home and school for children to use to initiate conversations.
- Use a story box or Velcro apron to provide children with concrete objects for children to help and manipulate during songs, stories, or finger-plays.
- Make a classroom area picture board; children can point to pictures to indicate their choices. Use matching cards that the child can carry to place on a wall pocket chart.
- Display a sign language poster in the classroom and teach the other children simple signing words to communicate to their friend who is hearing impaired.
- Use children's photos to show where each child belongs at meals, activities, and areas in the room.
- Provide toy microphone, tape recorder, and upcycled telephones to encourage speech and language.
- Make song props to use during singing activities: steering wheels, stuffed monkeys/ducks, a bear, fruits/vegetables, etc.

Vision Impairment

Vision problems vary as to cause, type, and intensity.

Low vision is used generally to refer to a severe visual impairment; these children can see shadows, colors, and large pictures or objects.

Legal blindness includes total blindness, or a person with “no vision or only light perception.” These children will require materials using touch (Braille) or sound for educational purposes.

Choose the following classroom strategies to implement based on the degree of their vision loss as well as their individual abilities.

- Familiarize the child with classroom layout, learning centers, and location of materials. Reorient the child whenever changes occur. Make orientation and mobility in the classroom skills a priority.
- Keep in mind that some children’s peripheral vision may be their best vision and seat them where they will have the best advantage, either on the right or left side of the teacher or materials being used.
- Allow the child to explore the environment even though it may mean that they bump, fall down, and need to start over. However, keep the classroom and play yard safe, orderly, and clear of toys and misplaced equipment.
- Put identifying materials on the floor, doors, room dividers, and cubbies. Hang a wind chime near the door way, put floor mats by doors to go outside, and hang a piece of velveteen in the child’s cubby.
- Provide an object schedule box using real objects that are glued or attached with Velcro to a board to help the child learn the daily schedule. Or use large or black and white photos with high contrast for daily routine, areas in the classroom, and transitions.
- Use specific wording to tell the child what to do: “Put the block on the table.” Avoid nonspecific phrases, such as, “Come here,” “Put it there,” “Be careful.”
- Give the names of everyday objects over and over: ball, cup, brush. Have the child hold the item as you provide the name and describe its use
- Provide action words. Tell the child what he is doing while he is doing it: “You are drinking your juice,” “You are brushing your teeth.”
- Describe classroom sounds and tell where they are coming from: the pet guinea pig squeaking by the window, the faucet dripping on the sink, the tick of a timer, etc.
- Play auditory games like listening lotto; use real objects, such as tearing a paper, closing a book, ringing a bell. Take small groups of children on listening walks outdoors to identify different sounds they hear.
- Teach sounds that may signal danger in contrast to those that may just be frightening: the sound of power equipment is something to stay away from, while a vacuum cleaner is something they can help push. Introduce the fire alarm and explain what they should do when they hear it.

- Provide cooking experiences to give the child and all children opportunities to learn through smell, touch, and taste.
- Introduce how to use the senses of touch and scent for sorting and discrimination activities: shape, size, texture, weight, and odors.
- Use physical prompts and subtle physical assistance with hand-over-hand guidance. Work from behind the child so that the teacher's and child's movements are synchronized. For example, when helping a child put on socks, sit behind the child. Gradually reduce assistance as the child masters the steps needed to accomplish the task.
- Provide left-to-right training to help prepare for reading; braille and other academic activities follow this same format. When using peg-boards, place left to right and top to bottom.
- Show peers how to be friends and how to be helpful. Teach children to identify themselves and to discuss what they are doing to help. "Hi, it's me Abby, and I am putting a puzzle on the table for us to build."
- Use pattern blocks: bright colors, textured surfaces, and rubber backing to reduce slipping.
- Provide sandpaper letters, sponge letters/shapes for paint or water table, foam letters, and magnet letters.
- Include books that are specific to a disability. Choose books where the character has a disability in the story but the content is NOT only about the disability.
- Provide textured border frames (corrugated bulletin borders) to help children focus on a specific area and edges of paper. Use gift boxes or meal trays to define work space.
- Have Braille blocks that support learning the Braille alphabet, and offer tactile feedback.
- Include "Scratch and Sniff" and "Touch and Feel" books in the library area.
- Provide glitter glue/crayons to add visual contrast/highlights and tactile cues.
- Use a Velcro apron with concrete objects for children to manipulate while singing songs, telling stories, or finger-plays.
- Include nesting cups in the sand or water table; each cup is visually/tactilely different.
- Include a Toddler Magna Doodle with an erasable screen to write on, and provide auditory feedback when they make a mark.
- Use plates in different colors with a high contrast to provide the daily snack and maximize success. Also use black placemats on light colored tables to help child locate materials.
- Verbally describe what the activity is: "We are using paste to attach crepe paper, sticks, strings, leaves, and buttons on our paper. This is called a collage." Help the child touch each item and support the process during the activity.

Autism Spectrum Disorder

Autism is an “umbrella” term used to describe a group of multifaceted developmental brain disorders known as Pervasive Developmental Disorders (PDD). The other pervasive developmental disorders are PDD–NOS (Pervasive Developmental Disorder–Not Otherwise Specified) Asperger’s Syndrome, Rett Syndrome and Childhood Disintegrative Disorder.

Children with autism have difficulties learning naturally from their environment. They may show little interest in the world or people around them. While all children with autism are capable of learning and developing, they may still always have differences in their behavior and cognition.

Children with autism demonstrate highly individualized learning styles and needs. Some of the listed strategies have shown to be effective with many children with autism, but certainly not all. Individualization should always be the overriding thought when creating strategies and plans for instruction.

The most successful programs build on the child’s interests, teach tasks in simple steps, actively engage the child’s attention in highly structured activities, provide regular reinforcement of behavior, have predictable routines, and use effective instructional strategies and developmentally appropriate curriculum content. Children with ASD can make outstanding progress in high-quality, inclusive settings, using suggested strategies listed below:

- Meet with parent to find out about the child’s likes, interests, temperament, and behaviors. Incorporate strategies that are effective at home into the school day whenever possible.
- Review the child’s IEP with specialists and parents to develop specific individualized strategies.
- Keep messages simple and direct.
- Use objects, photos, and actions along with words.
- Encourage the child to ask for something by name whenever possible.
- Give child opportunities to interact with children who have typical language and social development.
- Create time to show and “teach” how to enter social play and ways to maintain play with peers.
- Establish a predictable environment, including teacher’s language and behaviors, the daily schedule, and classroom furnishings and materials.
- Post a visual schedule of activities to help alleviate anxiety.
- Provide visual picture cues for classroom transitions, activity and free choice time, including outdoors.
- Provide the child with opportunities to practice skills in a variety of settings (home, school, and park) and with a variety of people (several teachers, parents, siblings, and peers).
- Reduce group size and provide appropriate seating to help minimize distractions.
- Provide frequent communication with parents and other care providers.

English Language Development

- ❖ Increases progress towards fluency in understanding English. (ELD 1)
- ❖ Increases progress toward fluency speaking English. (ELD 2)
- ❖ Increases understanding of and response to books, stories, songs, and poems presented in English. (ELD 3)
- ❖ Increases understanding that print in English carries meaning. (ELD 4)

Stages of Second–Language Development

1. The child uses her home language to try to communicate.
2. The child figures out that he is not successful using his home language with English speakers, and he enters into a period of observation and listening.
3. The child attempts to use English in a more abbreviated form through the use of one–word sentences or phrases; this is referred to as the telegraphic or formulaic stage.
4. The young child begins to use more elaborate phrases and short sentences to communicate in English.

Guiding Principles

- **Families matter**
Build relationships with families and learn about their home language and culture. In addition, find out what the parents' hopes and aspirations are for their children.
- **Recognize existing language and literacy strengths in the home language**
Understand that English learners are exposed to a variety of experiences in their home language daily: reading books, singing songs, and reciting poetry.
- **Respect the cultural values and behaviors reflected in the child's language and communication**
Understand the cultural differences in the home language and communication and incorporate these into the daily routine at school.
- **Allow children to use the home language**
Introduce new processes, concepts, and stories in the child's home language first. Home language experience should precede introduction to the English version of the same material.
- **Use language as a meaningful tool to communicate**
Promote extended conversations that include repeated turn-taking and shared experiences to communicate interests, ideas, and emotions.
- **Make children's learning interesting and fun**
Use language creatively and interactively throughout the school day.
- **Accept code switching as normal**
Understand that it is typical for bilingual children to combine their home language with English.
- **Give preschool English learners time**
Make children feel welcome without putting too much pressure on them to respond to questions or directives in English. Include children by smiling, using their names, and making it clear they are part of the group. Provide a safe setting without too many demands on their emerging English.
- **Allow for children's voluntary participation**
Provide support and let the child decide when he is ready to start using his new language.
- **Support English–language development across all domains**
Use home language to introduce activities and concepts across the entire curriculum: science concepts, math, social/emotional, creative art, etc.

Suggested Strategies For English Language Development

Families First

During the first home visit, welcome families to the program, establish rapport, and discuss some shared language and learning goals. Use family members and staff for translation support as needed. The information gathered can be used to display and incorporate cultural items, books, and written words into the classroom. In the Dramatic Play area add fabric, clothing, dishes, utensils, menus, calendars, etc. The Literacy area could include photos of family members with their titles/names printed in the home language (madre, padre, etc.). Family photos can also be added to the room display, as well as placed into albums in the library area. (Brainstorm ideas with your teaching team to elaborate on these suggestions.)

Environmental Supports

Create a learning environment that is nurturing and engaging. Give thought to the colors, learning spaces, supplies, furniture, and accessibility. Ensure that it is child-centered, co-created with children and families, inviting, user-friendly, interesting, and safe.

Learning centers should support conversations around exploration and discovery, and should be linked to classroom studies or themes. Intentionally plan and prepare centers to achieve targeted language and learning goals. Use center time to engage with children and provide language support in the moment.

Materials are clearly labeled in English, home languages, and with pictures.

Instructional Supports

Introduce lessons with the purpose in mind of what children will do and learn. An intentional message provides a framework for the content of learning experiences. Children know what to expect, and it's another way for them to process the vocabulary words that are central to understanding. "During our math activity we are going to work with blocks—we will put them into groups. Let's count the groups to find out which has more or less."

Intentionally select a picture book and use it receptively to foster vocabulary and concept development. Learn 3–5 key words from the book in the child's home language before reading the book to the class. Introduce the book to dual language learners in small groups before reading to the whole class. Promote (dialogic reading) by including brief interactions during the story. Seek support from family members, other staff, or volunteers to read picture book in child's home language.

Vocabulary Imprinting

Use photographs to create word walls using English and children's home languages to introduce new concepts and vocabulary to deepen comprehension. Add word labels to photographs, recipes, magazine cutouts, children's photos, or drawings. Add these word cards to pocket charts or in the literacy desk to promote hands-on use.

Create chants, songs, and poems in both English and children's home languages to teach vocabulary. Use rhyming words when possible. Repeat these simple songs throughout the school day to connect the words to something they do every day: hand-washing, name/greeting songs, lining up, counting, etc.

Plan to introduce new materials and concepts through teacher-facilitated learning opportunities. Once children are familiar with how to use the items, place them on shelves for children to access and explore concepts on their own and with each other. This process encourages practice and repetition, while fostering problem-solving, interaction, and rich discussion.

Advanced Learners

Some preschoolers can be fast learners, or have precocious abilities and talents. At a young age they appear to be adept problem-solvers, capable of abstract thinking, and intensely curious. Sometimes extraordinary abilities may be noticed in one Domain, such as creative arts, literacy, or mathematics. Other children may demonstrate unusual or accelerated knowledge or skills in multiple Domains. Yet they may still need a great deal of support in other areas of development where they seem to lag behind their age mates, or even have an identified disability that requires an IEP.

Individualizing the Head Start curriculum for children who display advanced development involves thoughtful and intentional implementation of good early childhood practices. Teachers need to provide an environment that invites inquiry, supplies a range of complex materials, encourages the pursuit of children's interests, promotes choice and independent decision-making, stimulates extended child-adult conversations, and nurtures creative self-expression.

Suggested Strategies to Extend Learning:

- Talk with parents to find out about the child's interests, temperament, likes/dislikes, skills and abilities. Add items reflecting their special interests to the classroom environment.
- Carefully observe individual children and identify strengths/needs.
- Enrich areas in the learning environment with a variety of books and relevant resources such as National Geographic Magazines in the Science area, Architectural Digests or posters of various structures (bridges, landmarks, towers, sky scrapers etc.) in the Block/Manipulative areas, recipe/health/first aid books in the Dramatic Play area famous works of art books and displays in the art area, and include books with extensive written text and picture dictionaries in the Library.
- Brainstorm ideas, such as, "What would happen if..." and "What else do you need to know?" Likely, the child will generate ideas the adult has not thought of.
- Brainstorm lists of materials the child would need to carry out a project or an idea.
- Provide various materials in the art area for the child to choose from for their own creations. Allow time and space for the child to completely engage and let them save their work for completion later.
- Add various game pieces, graphs, cards and boxes for the child to create their own games in the Math area.
- Provide opportunities and research materials for on-going projects. Give space and time for children to explore their interests in depth.
- Collect more unusual hands-on materials, and old electronic equipment for children to take apart and investigate.
- Encourage reading of more complex texts if a preschooler is already reading at the first grade level, and help build comprehension skills.
- Utilize education specialists, librarians, museum educators, kindergarten teachers, and the community for guest speakers, field trips, and other ideas.

The SETA Individualization Strategy Guide was based on the following resources:

1. Head Start Program Performance Standards on Services to Children to Disabilities (2015)
2. Desired Results Access Project, Special Education Division (2015)
3. The Exceptional Child; Inclusion in Early Childhood Education K. Eilen Allen & Glynnis E. Cowdery (3rd Edition;1996 & 8th Edition; 2015)
4. Adaptation for Children with Disabilities
Head Start; Office of Administration for Children and Families
Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center (ECLKC)
5. Head Start Center for Inclusion (headstartinclusion.org)
6. The Connections Project (1998-2001) The California Institute for Human Services, (2009)
7. The Head Start Leaders Guide to Positive Child Outcomes (2003)
8. Many Languages, One Teacher: Supporting Language and Literacy Development for Preschool Dual Language Learners/NAEYC (2013)
9. Children with Special Needs in Early Childhood Settings / Identification, Intervention and Inclusion (2004)

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