**Environmental Arrangement**

**Background**

ECSE practitioners must balance the need to arrange the environment to support independence but also communication. For example, environments might be arranged so that children are able to “help themselves” to whatever they want (e.g., at snack time). Additionally, sometimes adults provide what children want without requiring communication. These approaches inadvertently preempt naturally occurring opportunities for children to communicate. Environmental arrangement can be used to capitalize on natural opportunities to communicate that occur during the child’s day.

These strategies support the teaching/learning interaction for both the adult and the child. For the adult, they may increase awareness of the child’s potential opportunities and possible missed opportunities for communication. In addition, they can provide a context for using other communication strategies. Environmental arrangement strategies also help adults realize how and when they can increase the number of opportunities the child has for communicating. For the child, environmental arrangement strategies can provide nonverbal cues to initiate at appropriate times and support communication use in naturally occurring circumstances.

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| **Strategy** | **Example(s)** |
| **Materials of interest:**  Use materials that are of interest to the child. | During playtime, display a large, brown paper bag containing a surprise. In an enticing manner, peek into the brown paper bag, quickly close it, and look at the child/children. |
| **In sight but out of reach:** Place some materials within view of the child, but out of their reach. | During free play, Sam usually plays with cars, trucks, and a garage. Sam was able to access the garage, but the cars and trucks had been placed on a different shelf. Sam could see them, but not reach them. Sam needs to ask for help to access the car and trucks.  Suze and her mom were getting ready to go to the park. After she had put them out of reach, Mom told Suze to hurry up and get her shoes. |
| **Assistance:** Provide materials that the child would need help to activate or use | Anna gave each one of her friends a fruit roll-up at snack time. Many of the children were not able to open the fruit roll-up package independently and had to ask for help.  When playing outside, Zach likes to blow bubbles. The lid was on so tight that he could not get it off and he had to ask for help. |
| **Inadequate portions:** Provide small portions so that the child will need to request additional items. | Jason was given only a few fish crackers at snack time. Since these are his favorite, he requested more.  It was Teddy’s turn to paint at the easel. His teacher, Mrs. Green, gave him paper, a paintbrush, and a teaspoon of paint in a paper cup. He used all his paint so fast that he had to ask for more. |
| **Sabotage:** Omit some materials that the child may need to request additional materials. | Music time is Danny’s favorite. When passing out instruments, Danny’s teacher gave him a xylophone without a stick. If he wanted to make music, he would have to request one.  Jody received a new puzzle for her birthday. Jody practiced making this puzzle with her mom several times and felt ready to try it on her own. When her mom left the room, she walked away with one of the pieces. |
| **Protest:** Do something that the child does not want you to do to help the child learn to say “no” and advocate for themselves. | Chuy hates bananas, which were part of snack today. Rather than skipping over him because she knows he does not like them, his teacher offered Chuy some sliced bananas and waited for Chuy to say “No” and shake his head. His teacher honored his “no” and moved on to the next child. |
| **Silly situations:**  create a situation that violates a child’s expectations. | During free choice time, Elizabeth wanted to paint. The teacher gave her paint, paper, a smock, and a broom to paint with. Elizabeth wasn’t quite sure what to think.  Steven was in the habit of bringing his coat to his teacher, throwing it down, and saying “put it on”. The teacher picked up his coat and tried to put it on herself. Steven was not expecting this response and quickly told her the coat was too small for her. |
| **Choices:** Present two or more options for activities or materials | Before getting dressed in the morning, Shannon’s mom shows her two different outfits and asks her which one she wants to wear.  Jimmy always has a snack after he wakes up from his nap. Today, he had to choose between an apple and a brownie. |

**Guidelines**

1. Consider what materials could be used. Use preferred or novel materials.
2. Determine what the specific language targets or objectives are for the child.
3. Use strategies in daily routines.
4. When you use the strategies, keep it brief, positive, and playful. Repeat frequently.

**Microteach Instructions**

1. Develop a lesson plan in which you:
   1. Identify a child or small group of children for your microteach.
   2. Identify materials of interest for your child/children.
   3. Choose a routine (i.e., snack time, play time, activity time, or transition time) in which you can easily use the materials.
   4. Select and develop a plan to embed one or more environmental arrangement strategies.
2. Follow general microteach guidelines.