

Family and Community Life as the Contexts for Supporting and Strengthening Child Learning and Development

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Context Matters...A Great Deal

The places, routines, activities, rituals, and settings that children experience day-in and day-out matter a great deal in terms of a child's learning and development.

- Some of these experiences have positive effects
- Some of these experiences have little or no effects
- Unfortunately, some experiences have negative effects (often without a person knowing or recognizing those negative effects)

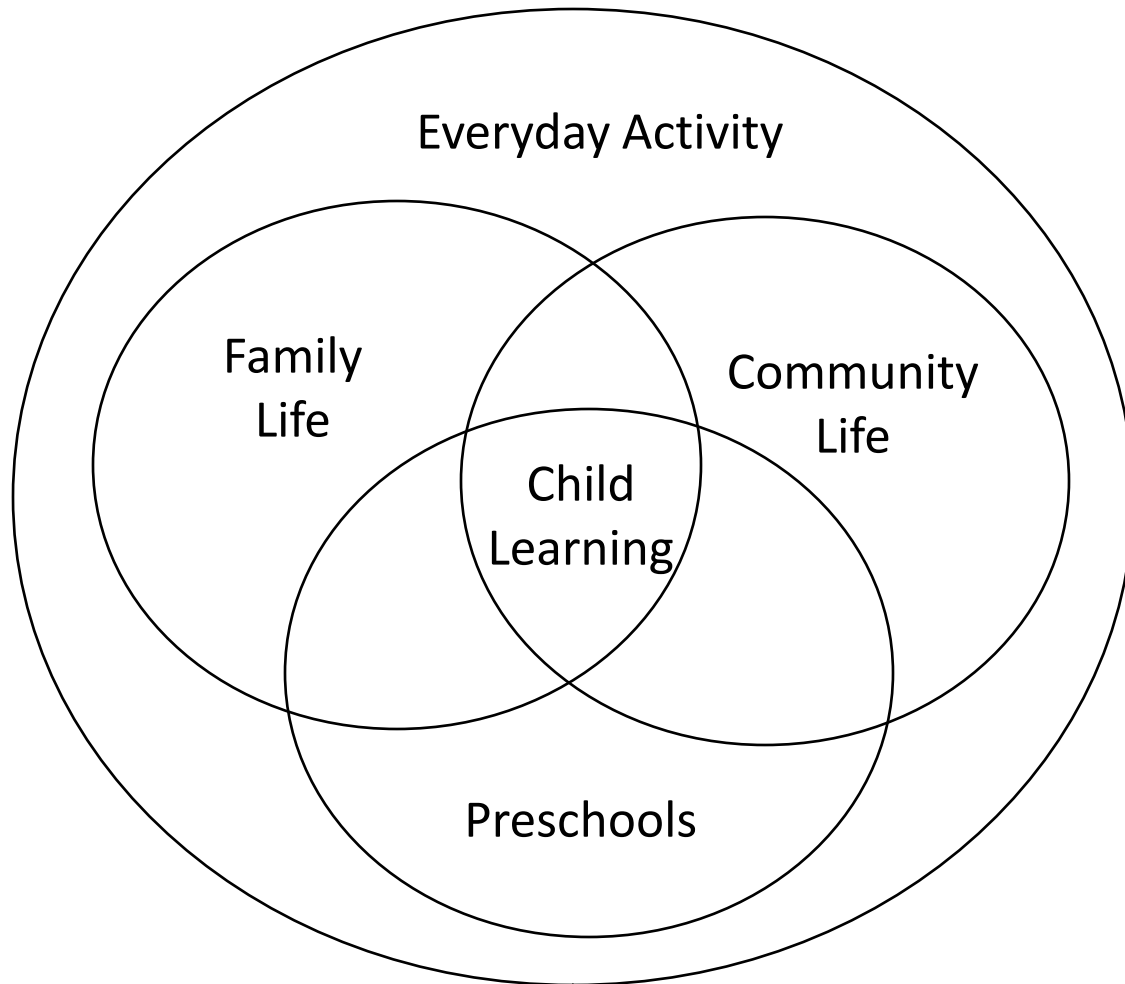
What is Contextually-Based Learning?

Contextually-based or situated learning refers to learning that takes place in everyday, real life settings that provide a basis for acquiring functionally meaningful and culturally relevant behavior. Situated learning is learning that occurs in the same place where the behavior that is learned is used.

Purpose of the Presentation

- Describe the kinds of activities and experiences that are sources of contextual learning and development
- Illustrate the kinds of settings where this type of learning takes place
- Describe the characteristics of optimally effective contextual learning
- Illustrate why certain characteristics “matter more” in terms of child learning
- Describe why contextually-based child learning is preferred to child- and professionally-centered noncontextually based intervention

Three Sources of Everyday Child Learning



Sources of Everyday Contextually-Based Child Learning

Family

Family Routines (Cooking)
Parenting Routines (Child's bedtime)
Child Routines (Dressing/undressing)
Literacy Activities (Telling child stories)
Play Activities (Lap games, nursery rhymes)
Physical Play (Rough housing)
Entertainment Activities (Dancing/singing)

Family Rituals (Saying grace at meals)

Family Celebrations (Holiday dinners)
Socialization Activities (Having friends "over")
Gardening Activities (Vegetable garden)

Community

Family Excursions (Car/bus rides)
Family Outings (Visiting friends/neighbors)
Play Activities (Playgrounds)
Community Activities (Library/book mobile)
Outdoor Activities (Nature trail walks)
Recreation Activities (Swimming)
Children's Attractions (Petting zoos/animal farms)
Arts/Entertainment Activities (Concerts/theater)
Church/Religious Activities (Sunday school)
Organizations and Groups (Children's groups)
Sports Activities (Football)

Some Examples of Everyday Activities

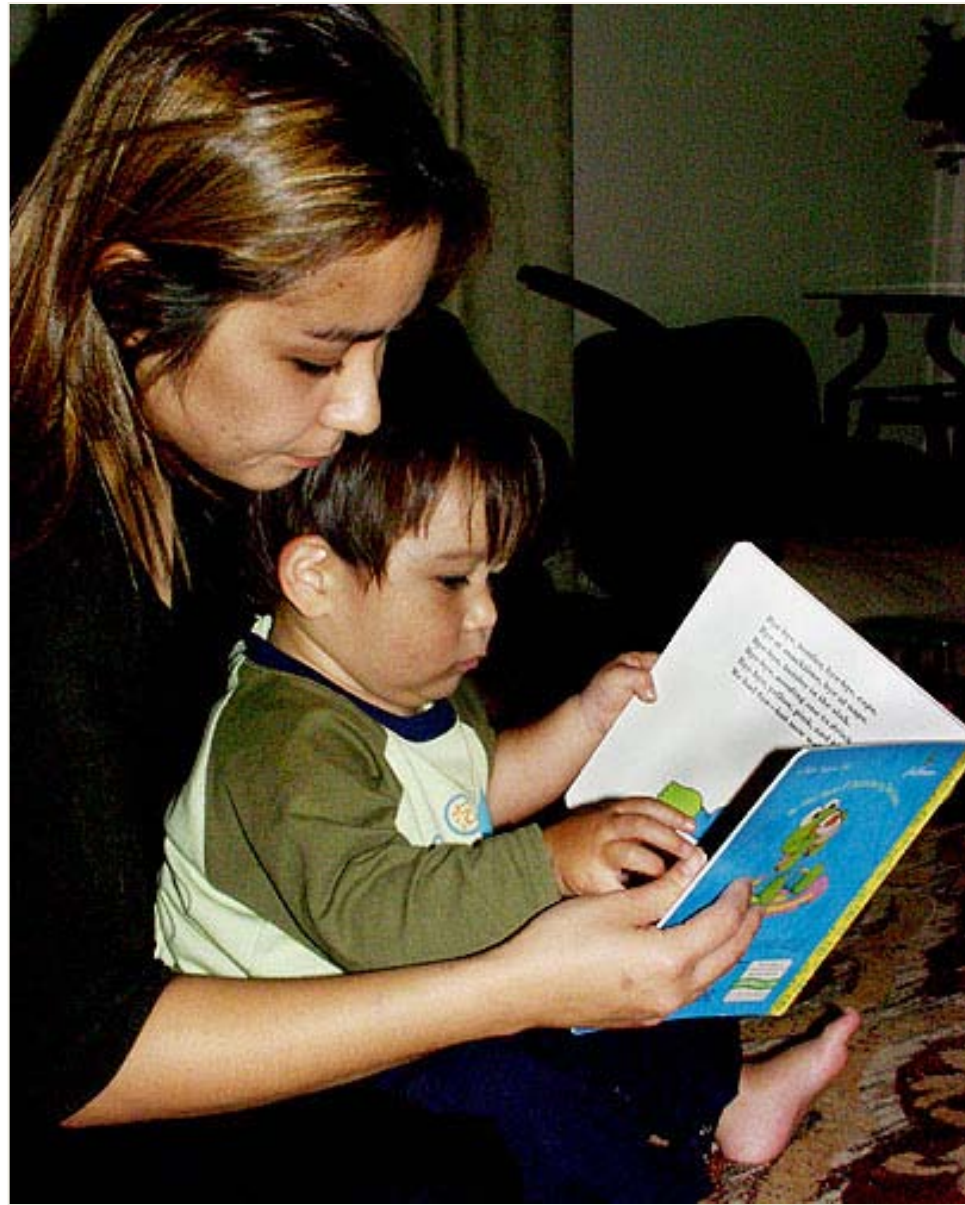


















Everyday Activity Settings as Sources of Child Learning Opportunities

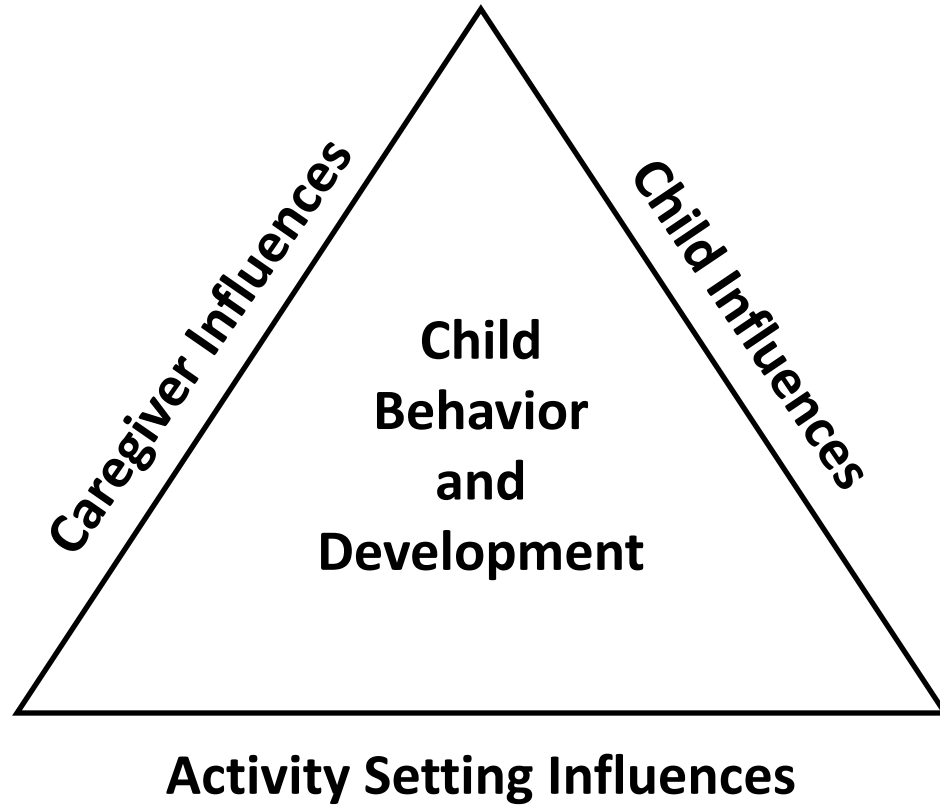
The terms used to describe everyday learning activities include routines, rituals, daily events, natural environments, and activity settings. Activity setting is the preferred term for describing contextually-based everyday child learning because it encompasses routines, rituals, celebrations, natural environments, and other settings, places, and locations.

What is an Activity Setting?

An activity setting is an everyday experience that is the context for active child participation in interactions with people and material which provide opportunities for the learning and development of functional and culturally meaningful behavior where participation is shaped and influenced by child, adult, and environmental factors.

Domingoes Fernandes at the University of Lisbon, in a review of research carried out in Portugal for more than 30 years on activity settings, concluded that this approach to examining societal, educational, and cultural experiences provides a useful framework for understanding and improving learning.

Fernandes, D. (2009). Learning assessment in Portugal: Research and activity theory. *Educational Sciences Journal*, 9, 87-98.



Caregiver, Child and Activity Setting Influences
on Child Behavior and Development

Universality of Activity Settings

The one common thread of all people and all cultural is activity settings. Every child in every family in every cultural in every place on earth participates in activity settings day-in and day-out.

Contrasting Types of Everyday Activities

- Development-Instigating Everyday Activities
- Development-Impeding Everyday Activities

Development-Instigating Everyday Activities

Development-instigating everyday activities are those experiences and opportunities that ***invite and encourage*** active child participant in sustained interactions with people and material which in turn have development-enhancing consequences.

Development-Impeding Everyday Activities

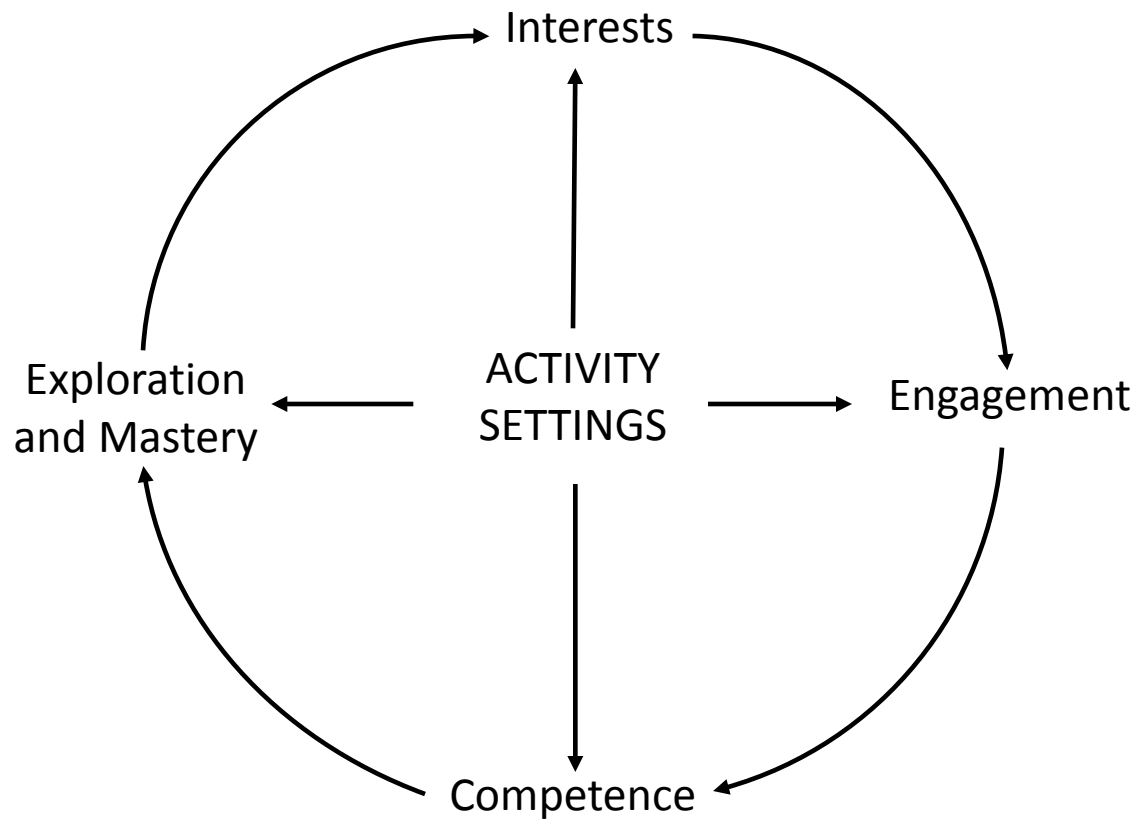
Development-impeding everyday activities are those experiences and opportunities that ***hinder and discourage*** active child participation in sustained interactions with people and material which in turn have development deterring consequences

Some Characteristics of Development-Instigating Everyday Child Learning Opportunities

- Active child participation in everyday activities where participation is the context of learning and development
- Child personal interests and situationally interesting people, material, and events that evoke participation
- Environmentally responsive materials (toys, objects) that permit a child to see the relationship between his/her actions and their consequences
- Adults who are responsive to child initiations and who encourage and support child exploration

Child Participation in Everyday Activity

Participation in everyday activity plays a central role in different models of health and development. For example, the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health includes a focus on ***participation and activity*** as the contexts for learning, interactions with people and material, and everyday functioning.



Interest-Based Everyday Child Learning

Types of Interests

- ***Situational Interests***

Personal interests are the likes, preferences, desires, etc. of a person that influence participation or engagement in different activities, events, or behavior.

- ***Personal Interests***

Situational interests refers to the “interestingness” of people, objects, events, etc. that gain and maintain a person’s attention, and “draw” the person into engagement or participation in activities.







Child Contingency Detection and Awareness

An important characteristic of learning in general, and everyday activity learning in particular, is the child's recognition that he or she was the agent of environmental effects. Interactions with material and people that permit a child to detect the relationship between his or her behavior and its consequences enhance learning and promote child development.







Caregiver Responsiveness and Child Learning^a

Parents and other caregivers who are responsive to children's behavior and attempts to initiate interactions with material and people support and strengthen child participation in everyday activity.

- Sensitivity to a child's behavior
- Following the child's lead
- Responding to the child's behavior
- Supporting and encouraging exploration

^a Richter, L. (2004). *The importance of caregiver-child interactions for the survival and healthy development of young children: A review*. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization, Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development.



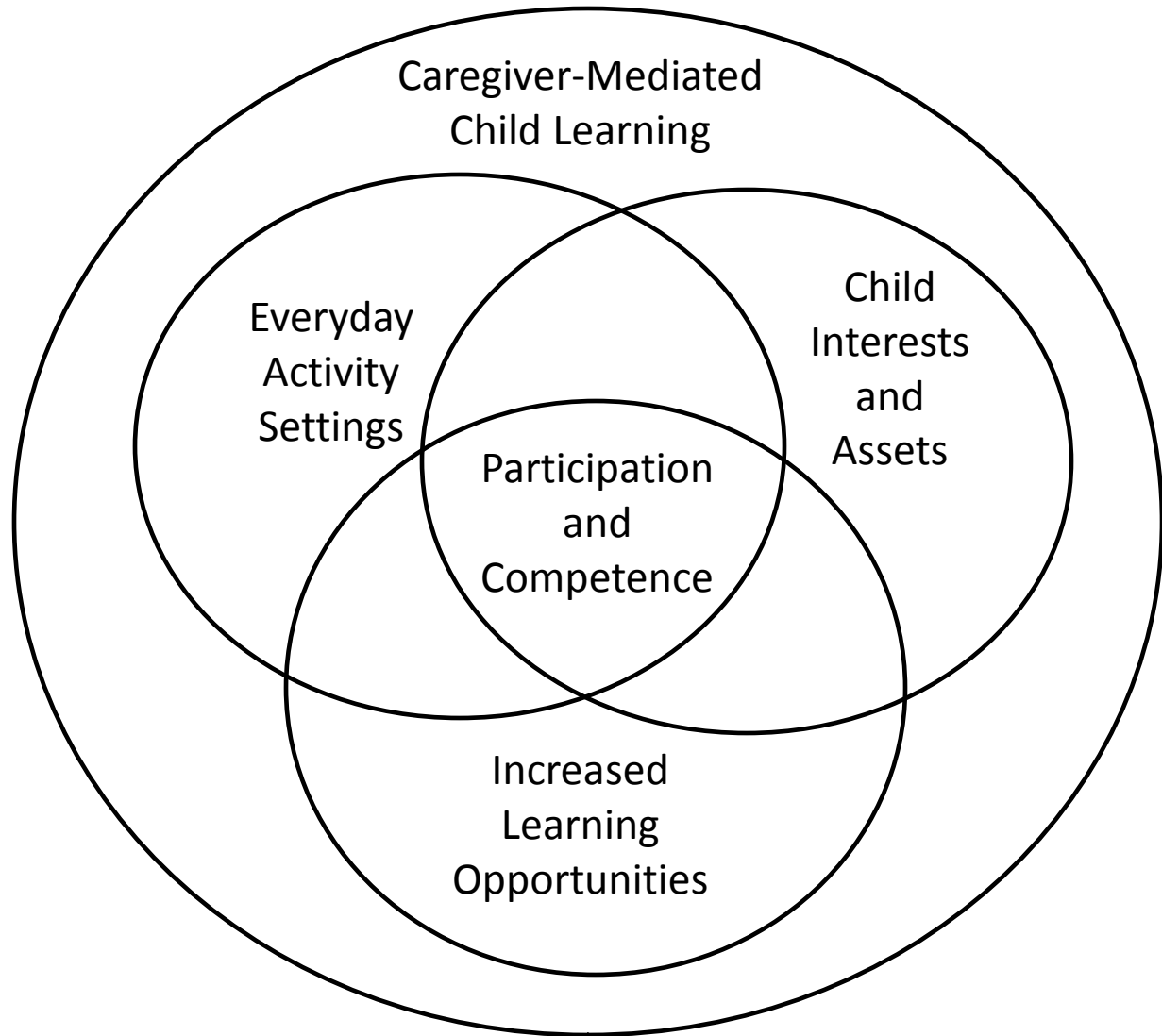




Contextually-Mediated Everyday Child Learning

Research evidence on everyday activity settings and interest-based child learning were used to develop and test an approach to early childhood intervention called contextually-mediated practices or CMP.

Contextually-mediated practices involve the provision of interest-based child learning opportunities as part of everyday family and community life by parents and other caregivers where caregiver responsiveness and encouragement are used to support child learning and the development of socially-adaptive, functional capabilities.



Contextually-Mediated Early Childhood
Intervention Practices Model

Interest-Based Learning and Child Development

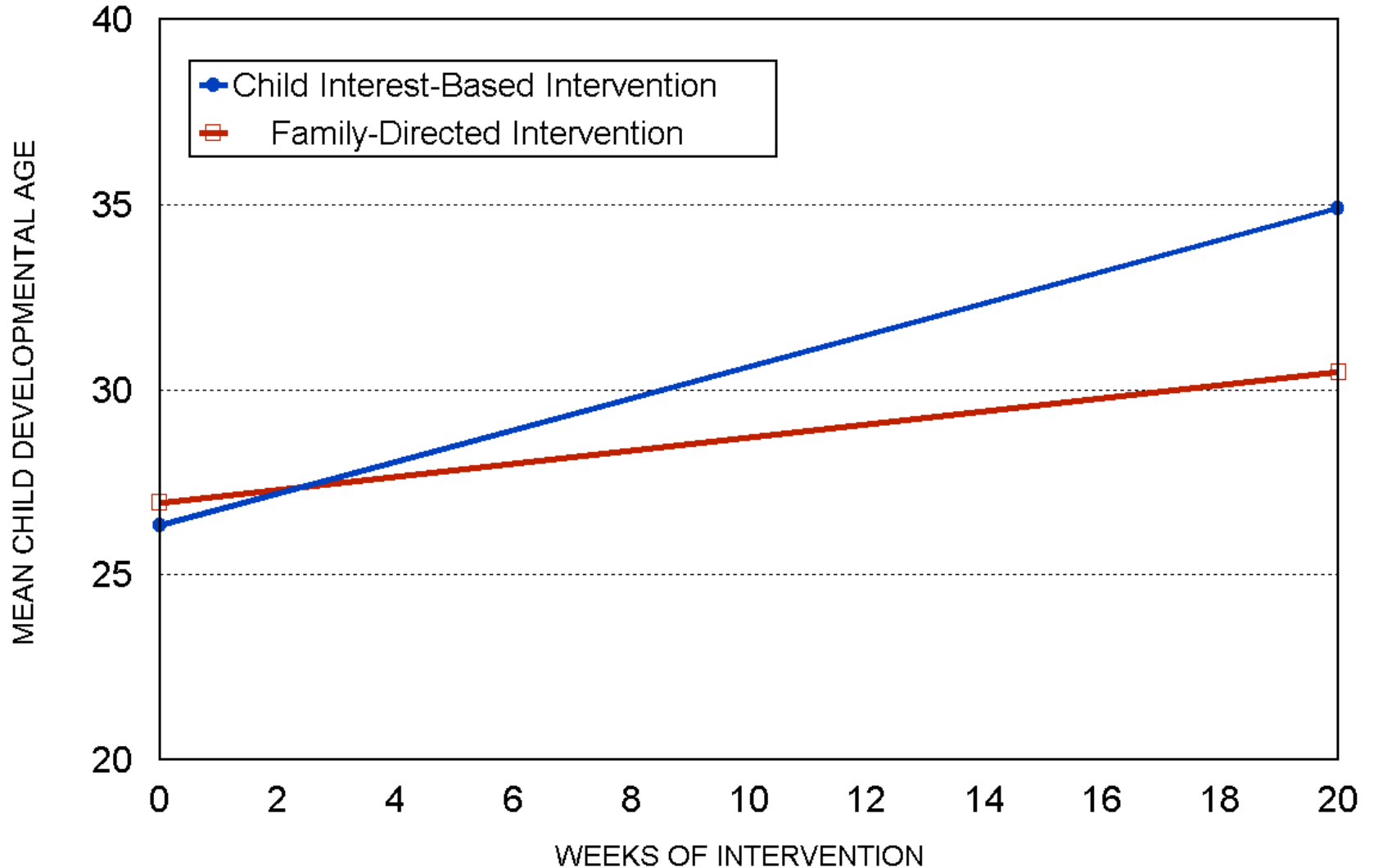
Purpose: Compare the relative effectiveness of interest-based learning vs. adult-directed learning

Study Participants: 50 infants, toddlers, and preschoolers in six United States

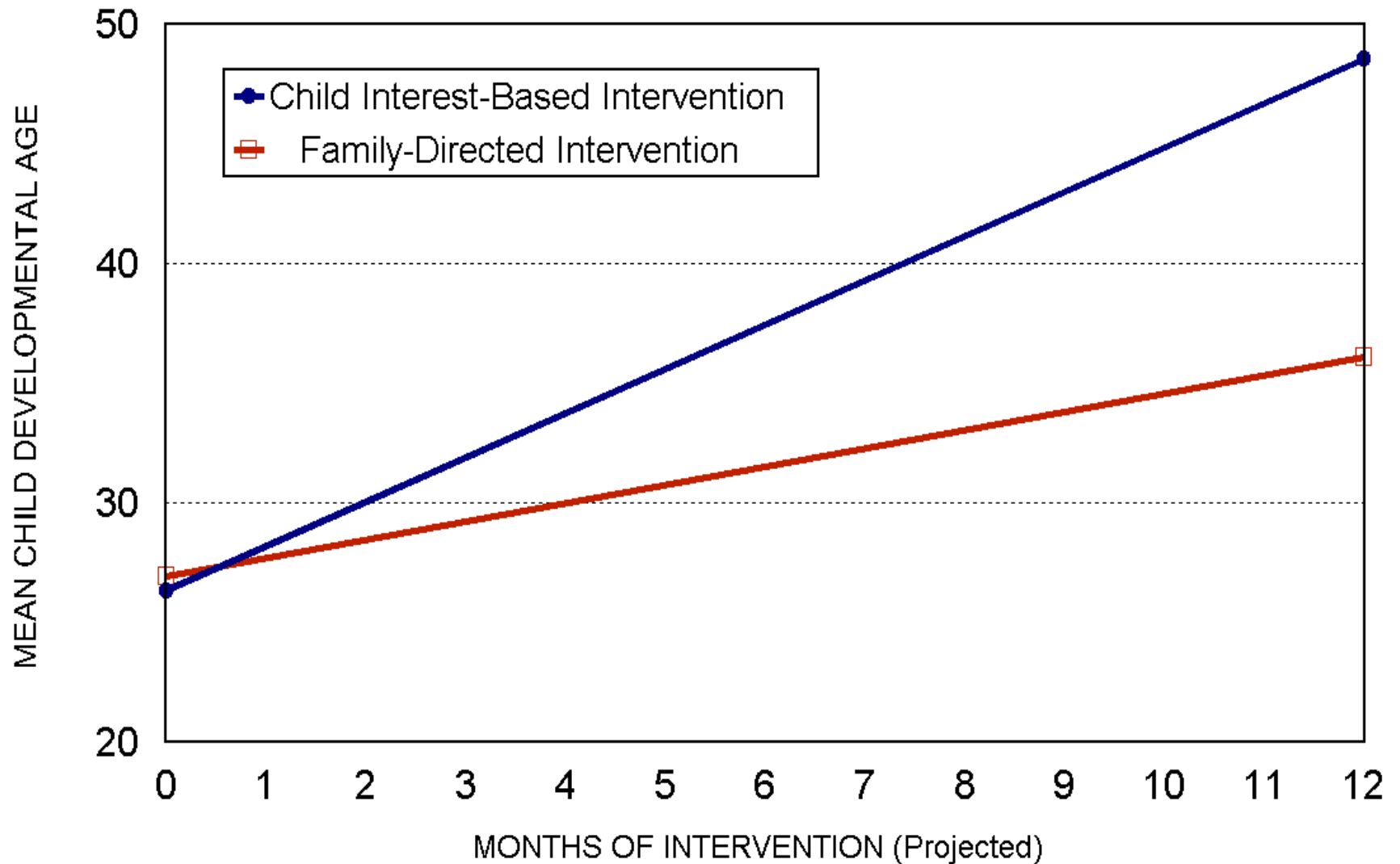
Outcome Measure: Developmental Observation Checklist Scales
(Language, Cognitive, Motor, Social)

Methodology: Linear growth curve modeling

Relative Effectiveness of Two Contrasting Approaches to Natural Environment Intervention Practices



Projected Benefits of Two Contrasting Approaches to Natural Environment Intervention Practices



Early Intervention and Everyday Activity Settings

- Increasing child participation in everyday activities as early intervention vs. practicing early intervention in everyday activities
- Research indicates that these two approaches to early intervention have quite different effects

Contrasting Approaches to Early Intervention

Outcomes	Activity Settings as Early Intervention	Early Intervention in Activity Settings
<i>Child</i>		
Well-Being	Positive	None
Child Learning	Positive	None
Child Development	Positive	None
<i>Parent</i>		
Well-Being	Positive	Negative
Self-Efficacy Beliefs	Positive	None
Competence	Positive	None
<i>Family</i>		
Quality of Life	Positive	None

A Real Life Example

A parent of a 2 year old child with physical disabilities was taking her child every three months to a hospital clinic to see several therapists and physicians who prescribed noncontextual interventions to be implemented by the parent at home. The child was involved in this type of intervention for almost 18 months. At about 18 months of age, the parent enrolled her child in a study of interest- and contextually-based everyday learning that used activity settings as sources of child learning opportunities.

Placing Contrasting Types of Early Intervention in Perspective

- Early intervention provided by a professional in the absence of parent involvement in noncontextual settings once an hour twice a week for 50 weeks accounts for only about 3% to 4% of a 2-year-old child's waking hours; hardly enough time to make much of a difference in child learning and development.
- Increasing child participation in just 15 everyday activities 4 or 5 days a week and providing a child just 10 learning opportunities in each activity would equal more than 35,000 learning opportunities per year (a very conservative estimate). On average, children birth to six years of age participate in

Conclusions

- Child learning needs to be contextualized if it is to result in functional and culturally meaningful outcomes
- Child interests are one development-instigating factor that promotes and sustains engagement in everyday activity settings
- Parents play important roles promoting child participation in everyday activities and supporting child learning in those activities
- Using everyday activities as a form of early intervention provides a child many more learning opportunities than does a child- and professionally-centered approach to intervention
- Professionals who use this approach to early intervention support and encourage parenting skills and a sense of competence and confidence