

Adult Learning Procedure for Promoting Caregiver Use of Everyday Child Language Learning Practices

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This paper includes a description of the approach to professional development used by *Center on Everyday Child Language Learning (CECLL)* staff to enhance early childhood intervention practitioners' abilities to promote parents' adoption and use of interest-based everyday child language learning intervention practices. The approach, called the *Participatory Adult Learning Strategy (PALS)*, is used to promote practitioners' and parents' active participation in learning experiences that enhance their knowledge, understanding, and use of *CECLL* practices. Caregiver-mediated everyday language learning practices performance checklists are used as *standards against which* practitioners assess and improve their own practices for using *PALS*. Practitioners, in turn, use *PALS* and performance checklists with parents to promote their adoption and use of *CECLL* practices (Dunst, Trivette, & Raab, 2013a, 2013b).

Center on Everyday Child Language Learning Model

The *CECLL* model for everyday child language learning is shown in Figure 1. The model includes four components: (1) child interest-based language learning opportunities, (2) everyday activities that are used as the contexts for interest-based child language learning, (3) methods and procedures for increasing child participation in everyday language learning activities, and (4) caregiver responsive teaching for supporting and encouraging child language learning in the context of everyday activities. The reader is referred to Dunst et al. (2013a, 2013b) for a more detailed description of the *CECLL* model and the four complementary practices of the model.

Each of the four components of the *CECLL* model is based on research evidence demonstrating an empirical relationship between the purposes and goals of activities in each component of the model and the intended outcomes of the activities. This includes the relationships between the characteristics of a responsive interactional style and child language acquisition (Raab, Dunst, Johnson, & Hamby, 2013), the relationships between child personal and situational interests and child language development (Raab, Dunst, & Hamby,

This paper includes a description of the adult learning procedure used by *Center on Everyday Child Language Learning* staff to promote practitioners' abilities to support parents' use of everyday child language learning practices. The approach, called *Participatory Adult Learning Strategy (PALS)*, includes four phases: *introduction, application, informed understanding, and repeated learning opportunities* to develop deeper understanding and use of everyday language learning intervention practices. Key features of the adult learning procedures include learners' active participation in learning a new or innovative practice and the use of performance checklists that include practice standard indicators for implementing everyday language learning practices.

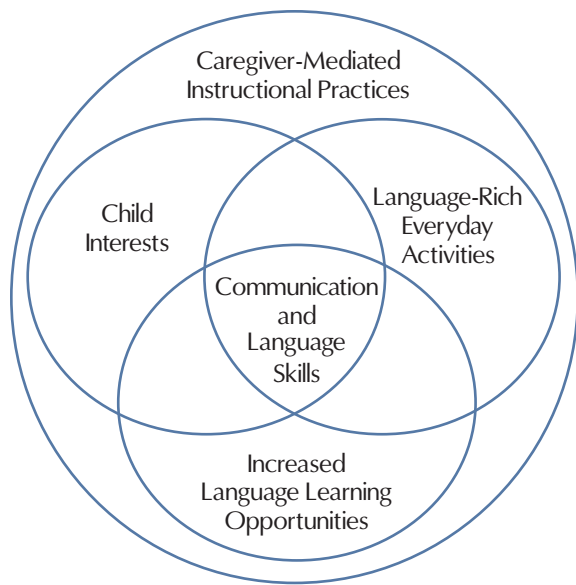


Figure 1. Four major components of the caregiver-mediated everyday language intervention model for facilitating young children’s early communication and language skill acquisition.

2013), the everyday family and community activities that are contexts for child language learning (Dunst, Valentine, Raab, & Hamby, 2013), and the effectiveness of different methods and strategies for increasing child participation in everyday family and community activities (Trivette, Dunst, Simkus, & Hamby, 2013). This evidence, together with findings from other research syntheses (e.g., Dunst, Jones, Johnson, Raab, & Hamby, 2011; Dunst, Trivette, & Hamby, 2012), constitute the evidence-based foundations for the *CECLL* intervention model and practices.

Implementation Science and PALS

PALS is a particular type of professional development practice that is used to promote use of the *CECLL* intervention practices by practitioners and parents. The professional development practice is an adult learning procedure used to promote the use of *CECLL* intervention practices to influence child learning and development and, in the process, support and strengthen practitioners’ and parents’ confidence and competence in using the intervention practices.

The distinction between professional development practices and practices used to affect changes in child learning and development is a central feature of implementation science (Dunst, 2012). Fixen, Naoom, Blasé, Friedman, and Wallace (2005), in their review and analysis of the state of implementation science research, differentiated between evidence-based implementation and intervention practices and the outcomes of the practices. Implementation practices are the methods, procedures, or activities used to promote adoption and use of intervention practices, and intervention practices are the methods, procedures, or activities used to promote improvements or changes in outcomes of interest. Accordingly, im-

plementation practices are defined as the methods and procedures used by implementation agents (coaches, home visitors, etc.) to promote end-users’ (e.g., parents) adoption and use of evidence-based intervention practices, whereas intervention practices are defined as the methods and procedures used by intervention agents (e.g., parents) to influence changes or produce desired outcomes in intended recipients (e.g., infants, toddlers, and preschoolers).

Figure 2 shows the relationships between *PALS* (an implementation practice), the *CECLL* practices (intervention practices), and practitioner, parent, and child outcomes. *PALS* is used by practitioners to promote parents’ use of the *CECLL* intervention practices to promote child language learning where positive benefits are expected to be realized in terms of practitioner confidence and competence, parent competence and confidence, and child language acquisition and a sense of mastery associated with improved language competence.

Research Foundations of the Participatory Adult Learning Strategy

PALS is based on the findings from a meta-analysis of four different adult learning methods (Dunst, Trivette, & Hamby, 2010) and the characteristics of practices of the different adult learning methods that were associated with positive learner outcomes. Fifty-eight studies of the four adult learning methods were the focus of analysis: accelerated learning (Meier, 2000), coaching (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990), guided design (Wales & Stager, 1982), and just-in-time training (Brandenburg & Ellinger, 2003).

The studies were coded in terms of six different characteristics of adult learning based on the findings of the National Research Council’s synthesis of research on human learning (Bransford et al., 2000; Donovan, Bransford, & Pellegrino, 1999). The characteristics included: (1) introducing new material, knowledge, or practices to a learner; (2) demonstrating or illustrating the use of the material, knowledge, or practice for a learner; (3) engaging the learner in the use of the material, knowledge, or practice; (4) having the learner evaluate

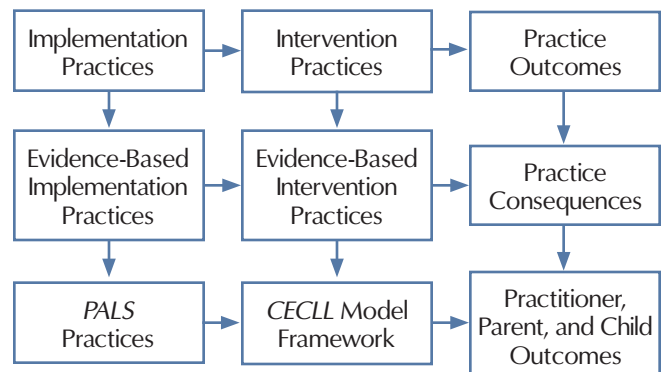


Figure 2. Framework for depicting the relationships among *PALS*, the *CECLL* Model practices, and practitioner, parent and child competence and confidence.

the outcomes of the use of the knowledge or practice; (5) having the learner reflect on his or her learning experience; and (6) engaging the learner in self-assessment of mastery of knowledge and skills as the basis for identifying new learning experiences.

The synthesis findings indicated that particular practices for each of six adult learning characteristics were associated with positive learner outcomes, and the more actively learners were involved in mastering the use of new practices, the more positive were the outcomes (Dunst et al., 2010). More specifically, thirteen different practices had moderate to large effects on learner outcomes. The practices for each adult learning characteristic that were associated with positive learner outcomes are shown in Table 1. Further analysis showed that optimal learner benefits were realized when a combination of 4 or 5 practices listed in Table 1 were used with fewer than 20 participants in real-life applied settings and the instruction or training lasted more than 20 hours and was conducted on multiple occasions (Dunst & Trivette, 2012).

Use of PALS

Different versions of *PALS* have been used to promote practitioners' abilities to use family-systems intervention practices (Dunst, Trivette, & Deal, 1988), capacity-building

help giving practices (Trivette & Dunst, 2007), early childhood intervention practices (Raab, Dunst, Wilson, & Parkey, 2009), natural learning environment practices (Dunst et al., 2001), and preschool classroom practices (Wilson & Raab, 1997). The research foundations for *PALS* include, in addition to the sources of evidence described above, studies of two outreach training projects that demonstrated the benefits of participatory professional development practices. One project promoted use of a family-systems approach to early childhood intervention (Dunst, Trivette, & Deal, 2011), and the other promoted use of evidence-based early childhood classroom practices (Dunst & Raab, 2010; Raab & Dunst, 1997). In both studies, early childhood practitioners were provided either intensive, repeated on-site training that emphasized practitioners' *active involvement* in implementing the targeted practices, or less frequent and less intensive training (Dunst & Raab, 1999; Trivette & Dunst, 2000). Practitioners in the intensive, on-site training programs outperformed their counterparts on almost every outcome measure.

The manner in which *PALS* had direct and indirect effects on practitioners' use of evidence-based classroom practices, and in turn influenced child behavior and learning, was recently the focus of investigation in 18 Head Start classrooms (Trivette, Raab, & Dunst, 2012a, 2012b). A *PALS*

Table 1
Cohen's *d* Effect Sizes for Different Adult Learning Method Practices

Learning Method Characteristics/Practices	Number		Mean Effect Size	95% Confidence Interval	<i>Z</i> -test	<i>p</i> -value
	Studies	Effect Sizes				
<i>Introduction</i>						
Out-of-class learner activities/self instruction	9	11	.64	.52 - .77	10.43	.0000
Classroom/workshop presentations	21	31	.63	.53 - .72	13.14	.0000
Pre-class learner exercises	5	5	.54	.38 - .71	6.44	.0000
<i>Illustration/Demonstration</i>						
Role playing/simulations	14	21	.55	.42 - .68	8.20	.0000
Learner informed input	4	4	.53	.34 - .72	5.41	.0000
<i>Practicing</i>						
Real life application	9	13	.94	.79 - 1.09	12.15	.0000
Real life application + role playing	5	7	.86	.61 - 1.03	6.75	.0000
Problem solving tasks	13	19	.49	.39 - .58	10.10	.0000
<i>Evaluation</i>						
Assess strengths/weaknesses	7	9	.94	.65 - 1.22	6.49	.0000
Review experience/make changes	16	24	.47	.38 - .56	10.19	.0000
<i>Reflection</i>						
Performance improvement reviews	4	6	1.27	.89 - 1.65	6.56	.0000
Journaling/behavioral suggestions	5	5	.82	.52 - 1.12	5.33	.0000
<i>Mastery</i>						
Standards-based self assessment	8	11	.86	.72 - .99	12.47	.0000

coach provided onsite training to the Head Start staff in their classrooms on multiple occasions and used intervention practice checklists to promote staff’s understanding and use of the classroom practices. Use of PALS was associated with Head Start staff’s use of the classroom practices and use of the practices, in turn, were associated with changes and improvements in child behavior outcomes.

PALS Coaching Model

The PALS coaching model (Dunst & Trivette, 2009) is shown in Figure 3. The four phases of the adult learning method included: *introduction*, *application*, *informed understanding*, and *repeated learning opportunities*. Appendix A includes a checklist of the six key elements of PALS used as standards for assessing the fidelity of use of the adult learning procedure. The checklist is used by a coach or trainer in collaboration with a learner (e.g., early childhood practitioner) to illustrate the key characteristics of PALS and to self-assess his or her learning experiences and to determine “next steps” in the learning process.

Introduction

The first phase of PALS includes the methods and procedures for *introducing* a practice and *illustrating* how the practice is used. Introducing a practice is accomplished by describing the key characteristics of an intervention practice and providing additional information about the practice (e.g., the foundations of and rationale for the practice) to increase a learner’s knowledge and understanding of the practice. Illustrating the use of an intervention practice is accomplished by

providing specific examples of the practice, showing a video of how the practice is used, or demonstrating the use of the practice for the learner.

Application

The second phase of PALS actively engages the learner in *practicing* and *evaluating* his or her use of an intervention practice. This involves the learner’s engagement in activities that facilitate his or her use of the practice together with coach guidance and feedback. These kinds of opportunities include role-playing, having the learner demonstrate his or her use of the intervention practice, and coach support and feedback on a learner’s use of the intervention practice. Evaluation involves a coach and learner jointly examining the manner in which the learner’s use of the intervention practice was consistent or inconsistent with the key characteristics of the practice and why, and whether or not the practice had expected benefits.

Informed Understanding

This phase of PALS involves the learner’s *reflection* on his or her overall understanding and *self-assessment* of his or her overall mastery of knowledge and skills related to the intervention practice as specified on a performance checklist. The learner uses the checklist as the basis for reflection on the extent to which he or she understands and has mastered the use of the intervention practice. Learner understanding is facilitated by a coach engaging the learner in self-assessment of mastery of a practice by using performance checklists to ascertain overall mastery of all of the key characteristics of a practice. Guidance and feedback are also used to assist the learner in identifying the kinds of changes that he or she could make in order to improve the use of the intervention practice.

Repeated Learning Opportunities

The *Repeated Learning Opportunities* phase of PALS involves coach-learner joint planning to *identify the next steps* in the learning process. Learners use their self-assessment of mastery of an intervention practice to identify the kinds of experiences that are needed in order to better understand and use the practice in a manner consistent with the practice standards. New information and experiences build on the learner’s understanding or skills related to a practice or to help the learner relate knowledge and skills about a practice to the characteristics of another CECLL practice. The PALS process is repeated as many times as necessary to develop the learner’s knowledge and skills and deep understanding of the practice.

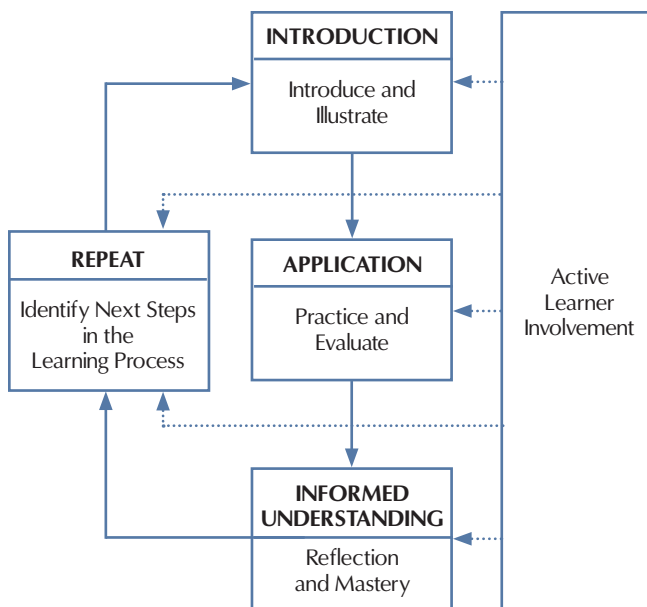


Figure 3. Major components of the PALS (Participatory Adult Learning Strategy) implementation practice for promoting active learner involvement in mastering the use of CECLL intervention practices.

Framework for Using PALS

Figure 4 shows a matrix of the four PALS phases and the four CECLL intervention model components. The matrix is a framework for using PALS to identify participatory experiences to promote learner understanding and use of practices related to each model component. The PALS pro-

cess is used with each *CECLL* intervention model component (child interests, language-rich everyday activities, increased child language learning opportunities, responsive teaching) to identify opportunities for learning the key characteristics of the everyday language intervention practices as specified on performance checklists. Intervention practice checklist indicators are used by practitioners with parents to promote children’s everyday language learning (Dunst, Trivette et al., 2013a, 2013b).

Appendix B includes the *Everyday Child Learning Activity Checklist* to provide the reader an example of this type of performance checklist. *CECLL* staff use the *PALS* process to involve early intervention practitioners in learning each of the *CECLL* practices, where practitioners, in turn, use *PALS* to promote parents’ understanding and use of *CECLL* practices for each model component. The reader is referred to Dunst et al. (2013b) for the checklists for the other components of the everyday language learning practices.

Illustrative Example

The following example illustrates the use of *PALS* by *CECLL* staff with practitioners learning to use the *Everyday Child Learning Activities* component of the *CECLL* intervention model. The practices in this component of the model include the identification and selection of family and community activities that provide a child interest-based everyday language learning opportunities.

Introduction

Practitioners are provided information about the benefits of everyday child language learning and the types of everyday activities that “make up” children’s family and community lives. The *Everyday Learning Activity Checklist* is used to describe the key characteristics of practices and for identifying everyday activities best suited for children’s language learning (e.g., interest-based, frequently-occurring,

rich in language learning opportunities).

The types and variety of children’s everyday activities are illustrated using descriptive, video, or *in vivo* examples. Practitioners are provided multiple examples of the different kinds of everyday activities that occur in children’s lives and how they provide children language learning opportunities. Video tapes of children participating in different family and community activities and the language learning opportunities that occur in those activities are used to illustrate everyday child language learning. *CECLL* staff also demonstrate how practitioners can introduce and illustrate ways that parents can identify and select interest-based everyday activities as contexts for their children’s language learning.

Application

CECLL staff actively engage practitioners in experiences that provide them opportunities to learn to select interest-based everyday language learning activities and to help parents identify and select learning activities for their children. For example, practitioners are provided opportunities to view video tapes showing children in a variety of activities, and then are asked to identify the different language learning opportunities in those activities and to choose the activities that provide the richest language learning opportunities. They can also observe a child to learn about the child’s interests and everyday activities and use that information to identify and select activities that are interest-based for the child.

Practitioners also are engaged in role-plays where the *Everyday Learning Activity Checklist* is used to practice how to assist parents to identify and select everyday learning activities of their child. Practitioners then use the practices in their interactions with parents to help them identify the everyday activities that will be used as contexts for their children’s language learning. *CECLL* staff also engage practitioners in examining each of the checklist indicators to determine the extent to which they were able to promote parents’ understanding and use of the different practices, whether their practice was consistent or inconsistent with the indicators, and what they might do to improve their use of the practices.

Informed Understanding

CECLL staff engage practitioners in self-assessment of the extent to which they are able to promote parents’ understanding of everyday learning activities and parents’ abilities to use interest-based activities as contexts for child learning. Performance checklists that include the key characteristics of a targeted practice are used to facilitate practitioners’ deeper understanding of the practice. Practitioners are asked to use a checklist to reflect on how they helped parents identify the everyday activities that make up their family and community lives and the kinds of interest-based child language learning opportunities the activities provide.

Repeated Learning Opportunities

CECLL staff and a practitioner jointly use the practitioner’s self-assessment of their experiences to identify additional learning opportunities to build upon the practitioners’

		CECLL Intervention Model Components			
		Child Interests	Everyday Activities	Learning Opportunities	Responsive Teaching
Participatory Adult Learning Strategy	Introduction				
	Application				
	Informed Understanding				
	Repeated Learning Opportunities				

Figure 4. Matrix illustrating the use of the *PALS* process to identify participatory learning opportunities for each *CECLL* model component.

abilities to help parents identify interest-based child learning activities. New opportunities might involve obtaining additional information or identifying experiences that promote the practitioner's abilities to help parents expand their understanding and use of everyday activities as contexts for child learning or help parents decide whether to continue, discontinue, or modify the selected activities, or identify new activities. Opportunities for learning about other components of the *CECLL* model might also be identified during this phase. The *PALS* procedure occurs repeatedly within and across the different *CECLL* model components.

Summary

The adult learning process described in this paper is used by *Center on Every Day Child Language Learning* staff to promote practitioners' understanding of caregiver-mediated language learning and to improve their ability to promote parents' use of the *CECLL* child language learning intervention model practices. Several features of the *PALS* adult learning procedure warrant special emphasis:

1. Practitioners and parents are *actively engaged* in all phases of the *PALS* process as the primary means for learning to use the *CECLL* intervention practices. Actively involving practitioners and parents learning the *CECLL* intervention practices is seen as necessary for supporting and strengthening their confidence and competence (Bruder, Dunst, Mogro-Wilson, & Stanton, in press).
2. All phases of the *PALS* process are used with reference to the everyday language intervention practice checklists (Dunst, Trivette et al., 2013b). Throughout the learning process, practitioners use the practice standards to intervene, reflect on, and modify or change their use of the *CECLL* practices to make them more consistent with the standards.
3. The *CECLL* adult learning process is a nonlinear and highly individualized process. There is an ongoing effort to support learning and promote deeper understanding based on observations of a learner's abilities and on learners' self-assessment of their knowledge and use of the practices.

In summary, *CECLL* staff use *PALS* to introduce the *CECLL* everyday language learning practices to practitioners, illustrate how the practices are used, engage practitioners in using the practices and self-assessing their use against practice standards, and plan new learning opportunities jointly with practitioners. In the same manner, practitioners use *PALS* and the *CECLL* language learning practice standards with parents to prompt their use of the *CECLL* practices. The outcome is continued improvement in both practitioner and parent understanding and use of *CECLL* child language learning intervention practices.

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Appendix A

Participatory Adult Learning Strategy (PALS) Checklist

<p>This checklist includes a process that early intervention practitioners use to promote parents' use of interest-based everyday child language learning activities. Practitioners use the checklist to be sure all the steps of the adult learning process promote parents' and other caregivers' confidence in using interest-based everyday learning practices.</p>		
<p><i>Were you able to do each of the following during your time together with the parent or other caregiver?</i></p>	Yes	No
1. <i>Introduce</i> information about the model component or practice and its important features		
2. Provide examples, demonstrate, or otherwise <i>illustrate</i> for the parent what the practice looks like		
3. Involve the parent in actively trying out and <i>doing</i> the practice		
4. Assist the parent in <i>examining</i> what was done, what happened, and what worked when the practice was implemented		
5. Determine what the parent <i>understood</i> and the extent to which the parent was able to <i>use</i> the practice		
6. Determine what <i>additional</i> opportunities will be provided to build upon the parents' understanding and use of the practices		

Appendix B

Everyday Child Learning Activity Checklist

<p>This checklist includes questions practitioners use to help a parent identify and select everyday family and community learning activities that would provide a child interest-based language learning opportunities. The checklist includes indicators for ensuring the most appropriate everyday activities are selected as sources of language learning opportunities. Following interactions with a parent, practitioners complete the checklist by indicating if they did (Yes) or did not (No) have the opportunity to help the parent use the practices.</p>		
<i>Did you help the parent...</i>	Yes	No
1. Identify the family and community activities that are the child's everyday life experiences?		
2. Identify those family activities that do or could provide the child interest-based language learning opportunities?		
3. Identify those community activities that do or could provide the child interest-based language learning opportunities?		
4. Select interest-based family and community activities that provide many different kinds of interest-based language learning opportunities?		
5. Select interest-based family and community language learning activities that do or could happen often?		
6. Select interest-based family and community learning activities where each activity provides many different language learning opportunities?		
7. Select interest-based family and community learning activities that are especially likely to help the child practice emerging language abilities and develop new ones?		
8. Select interest-based family and community activities that allow the child to try to use language in different ways?		