



**Beyond Bubbles and Blocks**

Information for EI Home Visitors

**Do you know the importance of providing feedback to caregivers?**

Feedback is one of the key components of relationship-based caregiver coaching. The EI Specialist gives different types of feedback, such as providing affirming statements, constructive suggestions, and guidance to the caregiver. Feedback about the caregiver’s knowledge and skills can be given during or after the caregiver-child interaction and after caregiver reflection. Reflection and feedback go well together.

Throughout the visit, the EI Specialist provides feedback to support the caregiver’s efforts to support their child’s learning and development. Feedback helps build on what the caregiver is already doing by raising their awareness. Feedback is most powerful when it is specific. An example of a specific affirming statement is: “*I like the way you positioned yourself so that you were face-to-face with Johnny. When you did that, I noticed him look and attend to you more while you were playing and talking with him.*” An example of a constructive suggestion and guidance could be: “*I notice Johnny sometimes does not answer you when you ask an open-ended question (e.g., What do you want to eat?). During those times, I wonder if he may not be answering because he doesn’t know or remember the words to say. Perhaps asking him a choice question (e.g., Do you want CHICKEN or MAC-N-CHEESE?) as a follow-up may elicit a response*”. When giving constructive feedback, “try to sandwich your feedback by providing one positive comment, one constructive comment, and another positive comment” (Childress, p. 131).

**How is feedback related to the MA EI Key Principles and Core Values?**

Feedback is aligned with the MA EI Key Principles by ensuring that caregivers play an active and vital role

in the intervention process, during and between EI visits. For positive feedback to be given, the caregiver must have done or practiced something well- meaning the caregiver was actively involved and engaged with their child. Feedback promotes a partnership between the EI Specialist and caregiver that is collaborative, strengths-based, individualized, family-centered, and based on respect. Feedback helps expand the caregiver’s learning. It promotes caregiver competence and confidence, thereby, building caregiver capacity.



**How is caregiver feedback related to PIWI?**

PIWI emphasizes that the role of the EI Specialist is to partner with the caregiver to address their concerns and priorities for their child. PIWI requires the EI Specialist to be intentional with how they are interacting with the caregiver in service of supporting that caregiver’s relationship with their child. Through feedback, the caregiver becomes more aware of their own and their child’s abilities and needs. Additionally, through feedback the caregiver gains ideas for achieving mutually pleasurable interactions with their child at home and in their community.

More specifically, the triadic strategy *affirming competence* can be used by the EI Specialist to provide positive caregiver feedback about their own and their child’s learning/skills. When the EI Specialist uses this strategy, it helps draw the caregiver’s attention to particular skills or actions of themselves or their child that are successful. *Providing developmental information* provides feedback about the child’s developmental agenda to support the caregiver’s understanding of expectations/next steps. *Suggest* is another PIWI triadic strategy that can be used to provide feedback to the caregiver about a specific suggestion for something to try.

In sum, providing opportunities for caregiver feedback is an important part of what should be happening during EI visits. Caregiver feedback promotes the Massachusetts Core Values and Key Principles and is aligned with PIWI. Using feedback can enhance the caregiver’s understanding of their child’s developmental agenda and expand their capacity to support that agenda. This, in turn, increases the likelihood of the caregiver meeting their family’s IFSP outcomes. Feedback also promotes the Family Outcomes part of the federal reporting requirement for Part C programs, particularly that caregivers will be able to help their children develop and learn.

**Reflect on how you are providing feedback**

* To what extent are you providing feedback to the caregiver? When you need to give constructive feedback, are you remembering to “sandwich” it between two positive comments?
* How are you helping the caregiver figure out what they need to achieve desired outcomes?
* How are you being intentional about incorporating caregiver feedback into your sessions with families?
* Are you aware of your own biases and how they may impact your use of caregiver feedback?
* During and after caregiver action/practice are you giving the caregiver a chance to reflect and provide their own feedback *before* offering feedback/suggestions? Are you affirming their competence?

**References**

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