

Scaffolding with Caregivers to Elevate Quality Series: Using Authentic Materials Issue #17 | December 2024

KEIS Coaching in Early Intervention Training and Mentorship Program through contract with the Kentucky Department for Public Health

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Scaffolding Use of Authentic Materials

IDEA and [KEIS guidance documents](#) outline expectations and best practices for early intervention. Providers support caregivers to choose a priority that will enhance infants' and toddlers' ability to participate and engage in everyday routines and activities using materials already present in the natural environment. Leveraging authentic materials where children live, learn and play, whether in a family home, childcare setting or the community makes the most sense. This newsletter will explore the rationale and strategies for how to scaffold use of natural materials during sessions.



The families' authentic materials are layered on top of the functional priority to strengthen routines.

Rationale for Using Authentic Materials

- Experiences are more personal and meaningful for both the child and caregiver when they select materials that are always available, easily accessible, and embedded in daily routines.
- Caregivers engage more and have more ownership over activities when they use their own materials.
- Creativity and problem-solving increase when caregivers brainstorm to select materials related to their priority.
- Continued practice and generalization with authentic materials after the provider leaves is crucial for ongoing development and learning.

Drawbacks of Bringing Materials

- Sends a message that what caregivers have isn't good enough
- Undermines caregiver confidence
- Disrupts authenticity of routines
- Limits opportunities to observe what has been occurring



Click above to see an SLP encourage the caregiver to reflect on effectiveness of her strategy to offer a choice of two different snacks



Click above to see a PT and caregivers discuss their priority related to bookshelves and baskets in the family's living room



Click above to see a DI ask a reflective question that resulted in the caregiver using another toy to make an activity more challenging

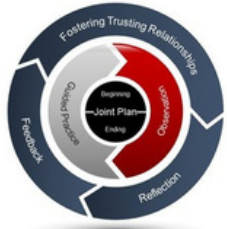
















Click above to see an OT support a caregiver to think about what she could add to potty training to motivate her twins to stay seated

The rationale for using authentic materials is strong! Read on for ideas and strategies on how to scaffold with caregivers to seek and find items to support their goals.

Support Caregivers to Use Their Own Things - *Don't Bring Stuff In*

The goal of EI sessions is to enhance infants' and toddlers' ability to participate and engage in everyday routines, using materials that are already present and a part of those activities. Scaffolding with caregivers to creatively brainstorm, problem-solve and decide which of their materials to use while targeting their priorities supports caregiver engagement, ownership, and ongoing practice between sessions. The chart below outlines commonly used scaffolding strategies for leveraging authentic materials in natural environments so that no special toys or materials are needed, excluding assistive technology included in the IFSP.



Explicitly ask caregivers what they want their child to do in everyday routines and why	<p><i>"I want him to walk from the van into the house on his own because I need my hands free to carry his sister's car seat or groceries."</i></p> <p>Potential materials: None</p>	  
Observe typical caregiver-child interactions in authentic routines and facilitate caregiver practice	<p><i>"I would like my children to be calm and occupied while I prepare meals."</i></p> <p>Potential materials: bowls, spoons, measuring cups, etc.</p>	  
Engage caregivers to think about materials and the things their child is interested in related to their priority	<p><i>"She keeps getting distracted and gets up before she has a chance to go."</i></p> <p>Potential materials: potty chair, books, favorite toy, etc.</p>	  
Support caregivers to identify relevant routines and activities to practice in real time and generalize new skills and strategies	<p><i>"Oh, I have an idea, we can use_____"</i></p>	    

Seek & Find Authentic Materials

The use of authentic materials that are always accessible promotes practice between sessions and is essential to early intervention service provision. First, we **seek** to establish and understand caregiver's priorities within their everyday routines and activities. Then, we use reflective questions to support them to brainstorm and problem-solve to **find** authentic objects and materials to target what's important to them. Think simple ~ cups, utensils, blankets, snacks, clothing, family photos, toys, etc. What else comes to mind?



What reflective questions might support caregivers to select routines, activities, and materials within their own environment to address their priorities of...?

- Feeding self with utensils
- Following directions
- Sitting up independently
- Requesting wants and needs
- Engaging with siblings
- Participating in family time
- Getting dressed
- Safely moving from one place to another
- Communicating needs
- Enjoying interactions

For more information about Coaching in Early Intervention Training and Mentorship Program:

- Click [here](#) to visit the KEIS webpage
- Click [here](#) to visit our YouTube channel